



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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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.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
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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.
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PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
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Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mining Reserve Fund

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of H. Klunder, A.C. Borgstrom, C. Woods 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.

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of K. Moore, D.V. Boboski, C. Champagne 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 hospitals food services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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 HUMBLLY PRAY 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.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World Red Cross Day

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Tomorrow, May 8, is the birthday of Henri Dunant, founder of the International Red Cross movement. This date is celebrated as World Red Cross Day by 177 Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world. Tomorrow the Red Cross flag will fly over Memorial Park to commemorate this important day.

The Red Cross is respected and known for its protection of human rights and its assistance to the most vulnerable across the world and across the street. Nowhere was this more evident than in the response offered by Red Cross to Manitoba's flood of the century. Red Cross was there throughout the disaster, bringing together more than 2,200 volunteers to answer Manitoba's call for help. At the height of the crisis Red Cross registered more than 25,000 evacuees from the flood zone. Its call centre has handled more than

26,000 inquiries relating to the flood. It reunited more than 1,250 families.

One year after the devastating floods, the Canadian Red Cross continues to provide much needed assistance to many affected by the disaster. Through the Red Cross Manitoba flood appeal fund, to which generous Canadians have donated more than \$23 million, 20,000 people have been assisted.

Red Cross is an important partner in Manitoba's Emergency Management Organization.

Manitobans should know that in times of disaster or emergency, the Red Cross will be there. As members look upon the Red Cross flag flying in Memorial Park tomorrow, please contemplate for a moment what Red Cross means and what the world might be like without the Red Cross. Thank you.

* (1335)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Just to add a few words to the minister's comments today, we too would like to pay tribute to the volunteers in the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent societies across the world.

We would like to particularly note the comments made by the minister to pay tribute to the Red Cross volunteers who worked so hard last year in our province of Manitoba. We had the opportunity at some of the evacuation centres, some of the places that were ravaged by the flood, to meet people from the Red Cross, along with people from the Mennonite Central Committee, people from our food banks and other organizations that were working so hard to help people recover from this flood last year.

Madam Speaker, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent societies work across our world and work on behalf of people in disaster or people who are living after a disaster has taken place. We would want to also heed the advice of the Red Crescent and Red Cross organizations working with people like the Doctors without Borders, who are speaking out on behalf of the victims of disasters, whether they be man-made through wars, or whether they be made through nature, that today as we pay tribute to the thousands of volunteers,

we should listen to the words of people working on behalf of those who are suffering from both man-made and natural disasters in our world.

National Forest Week

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I have a statement for the House.

Madam Speaker, every year at this time Manitobans and Canadians celebrate National Forest Week between May 3 and May 9 in this current year. As part of this campaign to help Manitobans become more aware of this special week, the Manitoba Forestry Association has provided spruce seedlings to all members of the Assembly, and we thank them for the lovely trees we have here today. Receiving a spruce seedling each spring is a reminder to all of us just how important forests are to Manitoba and to all Canadians.

The forest industry in our province is now worth more than \$700 million to our economy with the potential to be worth \$1 billion with significant forest industry development. The forest industry in our province continues to grow and prosper and benefits all Manitobans. National Forest Week follows the signing of Canada's Forest Accord and the initiation of a new National Forest Strategy.

Manitoba was pleased to be a signatory to Canada's Forest Accord and is committed to implementing the National Forest Strategy. The accord and strategy are key documents supported by many stakeholders in forestry regarding our commitment to sustainable forest management.

Madam Speaker, the new strategy represents a progressive five-year agenda for the members of the Canadian forest community. That community is represented by government, industry, aboriginal people, environmental groups, private woodlot owners and other nongovernment organizations. A series of partnership agreements were announced last week at the eighth National Forest Congress where 350 prominent forest community representatives were presented with the new strategy. The announcements included initiatives from Manitoba for an eco-based pilot project and the new forest inventory standards of Manitoba Natural Resources.

National Forest Week is a special time to celebrate our forests. I congratulate the Manitoba Forestry Association for its efforts each and every year and for the past number of years for reminding us of this valuable resource. I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in supporting their effort.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I wish to thank the minister for bringing this statement forward today. I want to join with him in congratulating the Manitoba Forestry Association for bringing this to our attention. I have a spot planned for my Colorado blue spruce in my yard already. Thanks to the MFA for providing me that tree and the rest of us in the House.

It seems like just a couple or three weeks ago, Madam Speaker, that we did already make a statement on National Forestry Week, but it is a pleasure to do so again. I want to commend the Forestry Association for its work in educating people, its efforts in educating people as to the importance of trees. I would suggest to the Manitoba Forestry Association that they work a little bit on this government and this minister so that they can become more educated on the importance as well and know how important it is to live up to the national accords that they do sign.

* (1340)

With those words, congratulations to the Forestry Association for providing us with the opportunity today in the Legislature to put a few words on the record as to the importance of trees and the rate at which we cut trees in this province. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 53—The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 53, The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act; Loi sur l'apprentissage et la qualification professionnelle, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to

the House. I am pleased to table the Lieutenant Governor's message with this.

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 Grade 11 students from Garden City Collegiate under the direction of Ms. Torrie Preteau and Mrs. Nancy Roche. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Duncan Flett Bail Hearing

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). Duncan Flett was previously convicted of manslaughter in the province of Manitoba. He had a hearing on December 16, 1997, where he was alleged to have attempted murder. On that day he was released on bail. Unfortunately and regrettably, the same individual was arrested this last weekend having been alleged to have committed a violent sexual assault.

I would like to ask the Premier: did the Crown attorney oppose the bail on December 16, 1997?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As this matter is presently before the courts, it would not be appropriate to comment on it. What I can assure the member is that our Crown attorneys, on a consistent and constant basis, ensure that their policies are responsive to the concerns of the public and the issue of public safety. So I know that I was very pleased to see the Crown attorneys issue a memorandum last week outlining the stand that they will be taking in respect of violent and gang-related offences.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the minister comments on a lot of things except the matters that are accountable

directly to the administration of justice and the activities of the Crown attorneys. He can point fingers all over the place except look in the mirror.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): why did the Crown attorney on December 16, 1997, not oppose bail, a fact that we have verified with both lawyers and listening to the tape? Why did the provincial Crown attorney not oppose bail with the alleged manslaughter that took place on December 16?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, one of the things that we have to be very careful about is the issue of the independence of these Crown officers. They, in fact, perform independent legal duties on behalf of the people of Manitoba. In that particular case, I know that the Crown attorney weighed the situation and determined then, in accordance with the appropriate process, that opposition to the bail may not be successful and would not be successful, and I will not quibble with that type of a decision. It is a difficult decision. I know that what the Crown attorneys have done recently in terms of setting a standard gives additional clarification to all Crown attorneys to ensure that there is vigilance in respect of opposing bail of certain types.

* (1345)

Crown Attorneys Operational Review

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): The minister could not comment on the case, and then he said that the Crown attorney was presuming what the judge would do in terms of the public's safety. I think it is the role of the public Crown attorney to represent the public's interest. The same Crown attorney was quoted as saying: I cannot remember exactly the case. It was a serious one. I have to deal with 70 other cases sometimes on a given day, a point that we have been trying to raise to the Minister of Justice, the former Minister of Justice and the previous Minister of Justice.

We believe the Crown attorneys are stretched to the limit. They do not have enough resources to represent the public's interest in terms of numbers, and I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): will he order an operational review of the Crown attorneys' office so the

Crown attorneys will have enough resources to represent the public's interest in courts rather than having the spectacle that we see today?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do want to indicate that, on an ongoing basis, our Crowns do review the process. I want to point out for the member that our system here in Manitoba is perhaps one of the best in Canada. That does not mean that we cannot improve it. We are constantly looking to improve it, but I simply point to the NDP government in British Columbia where right today thousands of cases are at risk of being thrown out because the NDP government there has refused to provide the appropriate resources to the Crown. So we have been taking very firm steps—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete his response.

Mr. Toews: Well, just yesterday, the member for St. Johns acknowledged that the Crown attorneys were doing a good job, and they are doing a good job, and we are not facing the critical situation that they are facing in British Columbia where today, under the NDP government, thousands of cases are at risk of being thrown out.

Duncan Flett Bail Hearing

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. This is the minister who likes to point fingers. He is pointing fingers everywhere. He has run out of points on the compass. He points fingers at the Supreme Court of Canada, the Criminal Code, the federal government, and most recently judges whose decisions are often only as good as the information they get, and that is up to the minister's department.

Now, at the Flett bail hearing, this government did not oppose bail even though Mr. Flett had a conviction for manslaughter and was facing charges of attempted murder. His victim had been left with permanent brain injury, unable to speak in hospital. Now that is information that this minister surely knew when he attacked judges in the context of that case.

My question to the minister is: will he admit that, while this minister is pointing fingers, looking for scapegoats, he has been dropping the ball, this government has been dropping the ball? That government across the way is a threat to the safety of Manitobans.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, again, the member fails to understand the very important independence of the Crown attorneys' office, and he is suggesting that political officials direct prosecutions. That is totally, totally unacceptable.

But what I am prepared to say is that the Crown attorneys, the director of Prosecutions and the deputy minister are taking every appropriate step to ensure that the public of Manitoba are safe. We are working together with the police forces to ensure that the public are safe in the streets and in their homes. We as a government are committed to implementing policies such as providing direct funding to our police department so that they can hire additional police officers to be out on the street to ensure that public safety is secure.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this minister, who only last week issued a memo directing his prosecutors, explain to Manitobans why it is this government, why it is this minister's policy not to oppose bail in cases like the Flett case, and apparently the Crown neglected to tell the court of the manslaughter conviction, and when staff clearly knew of the threat—and I will quote, Madam Speaker, from the transcript where two counsels are overheard saying to each other: you know, I hope he doesn't get drunk and do anything. The other responded: yeah, he's got manslaughter on his record.

Can he explain that policy, Madam Speaker?

* (1350)

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I know that the Crowns are doing a very good job, and I am not prepared to second-guess the Crown attorney in that particular case. I know that when I served as a prosecutor under the NDP government, we never received the type of support that I believe this government over the past 10 years has supported their Crown attorneys. I, as a

former Crown attorney, understand exactly the concerns and the difficulties that they face and that the police face. As a former Crown attorney and a person who believes very strongly in that office, I want to see that all of their concerns are met, and we will continue to meet their legitimate demands for assistance.

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

Crown Attorneys Operational Review

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Will this minister explain why—when caseloads are going up, cases are more complex, this government takes away paralegal support from Crown attorneys and takes a hundred thousand out of the budget last year—is the government rejecting our call for an operational review to make sure that the Crown prosecutors have the supports, the technology, the protocol, the organization necessary to protect the interests and the public's safety in Manitoba?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, as a result of an operational review and other reviews such as the Lavoie inquiry, we in fact have provided additional supports, additional computer hardware, additional paralegals, additional advocates for victims.

So the thing that the member wants us to embark upon, we have done. We will continue to provide more supports for our Crown attorneys to ensure that they continue to do a good job on behalf of the people of Manitoba. I know that our senior staff review general policies regarding bail and other matters on a regular basis to ensure that we remain responsive to the concerns of the people of Manitoba.

Provincial Court Act Judicial Appointment Process

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, an independent committee responsible for the judicial appointments has accused this minister of political interference. Mr. Joubert, the president of the Manitoba Bar Association, said it is an affront to the judicial independence here in Manitoba.

I would like to ask the Premier: has his Minister of Justice followed the appointment process for judges as outlined in The Provincial Court Act?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, yes.

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask the Premier: what conditions under such Section 31.(4) of The Provincial Court Act, which allow the Minister of Justice to go back to the nominating committee, which one of the two conditions was met by the government in order for them to propose new candidates to be selected for the purposes of judges? Was it the condition that one of the judges was not able to serve, or was it one of the conditions that any of the people, the seven people proposed, were unwilling to accept the position?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the suggestion that the list was to be expanded to include bilingual candidates in fact was not a suggestion made by me. It was in fact a suggestion made by the chairperson of that committee when she came to see me in respect of this particular issue. She in fact indicated that the legislation enabled her to go back to the committee to seek their consent for further names.

* (1355)

Mr. Doer: The minister never answered the question. I asked the question about what condition was met under the act. I would like to ask the minister: given the fact that the conditions of the bulletin, the bulletin that was made public, and the other conditions for selection of judges never stated the condition that the minister is stating today, what condition was met for the minister to go directly to the nominating committee under the two sections that are in Section 31 of the act?

Mr. Toews: The suggestion that I went to the nominating committee is not correct. The chairperson comes to see me on that particular issue. The discussion regarding bilingual judges has been a topic that has been ongoing between myself and the chief over a matter of months and so when the—this was an issue that the Chief Judge, as the chairperson of this committee, had discussed prior to this nominating process commencing, and this issue was specifically

raised in respect of the community representatives well in advance of the committee meeting, much less considering any specific candidates.

My sensitivity to this particular issue had in fact been heightened by a meeting with Judge Chartier, who is in fact conducting a review of French language services on behalf of the government of Manitoba. The Chief Judge, acting as a chair, was well aware of that particular concern. We have discussed that matter on a number of occasions, and that was certainly central to the thinking both of the Chief Judge and other committee members.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, of course other committee members being Mr. Joubert, who is quite prominent in the Francophone community and the legal community, totally disagrees with the minister and has accused him of political interference in the way that he has not followed the act in the way that judges and the nominating process should work. The nominating committee put seven names forward; the minister had only two conditions to reject the seven names. Those two conditions were not met.

Would the minister confirm—[interjection] Well, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) may want to answer this question. Will the Premier confirm that Mr. Joyal and Ms. Elliot were names proposed by the minister to the nominating committee?

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, I want to say that at no—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister was not recognized. I apologize; my mike was not on.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At no time did I suggest any names to the Chief Judge in terms of an appointment process. The process is outlined in the legislation, and both I and the chairperson followed that legislation. The issue of a bilingual position came up between our discussions. The chairperson, in response to the concerns that we discussed, in fact provided a solution. I thought it was reasonable and agreed with her suggestion, but I would state at no stage did I suggest any names to the committee, including the chair.

**Provincial Court Act
Judicial Appointment Process**

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Justice. There is an important law in this province to protect the public from political interference by the Minister of Justice in the selection of judges so judges are not seen as simply accountable to a political party or a particular politician and so courts are not tainted by patronage and bias.

My question to the minister is: two days after the minister talks as if he is interested in doing away with the lingering perception of some unfairness for the old boys thing in the appointment of judges in Manitoba, would he admit that he has, in fact, done the old boys thing, and more yet, he has broken the law, he has rejected seven names that were given to him by the nominating committee, and he told them to go back and recommend two specific friends of his?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): That is absolutely untrue. At no time did I suggest any names to the Chief Judge, and to come from that party where the Leader of the Opposition who was in government and appointed his own sister-in-law to the bench, that is remarkable.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, when the Law Society had recommended to the government my sister-in-law, I withdrew—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Hold it. I have a right to answer this question.

I withdrew from all cabinet discussions on the appointment of judges, and my ethics are a lot higher than members opposite who do not even know how to withdraw from the issue of the golden share.

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

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we have not heard any grounds for a

point of order; we have simply heard from an extremely embarrassed Leader of the Opposition.

* (1400)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Leader of the official opposition, the honourable Leader does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this minister, instead of pointing fingers as is his habit, Madam Speaker, deal with the serious issue that is of concern and admit that when he tells people that he needed a French judge and a third position, a third judge appointed, he had no authority to do so? The Order-in-Council specifically authorizes the filling of only two vacancies; the ads speak nothing of a bilingual judge. Will he admit that that is simply a ruse, that is, to divert attention from this minister's breach of the rules and the laws of Manitoba?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, what I can indicate is that in fact the appropriate process was followed. This was an issue that we had raised jointly as the Chief Judge and I discussed the matter of the appointment of more French-language capacity on the bench, and the suggestion that was made to me during the course of our meeting was, in my opinion, a reasonable one, and it required the consent of the committee. The committee did not consent to any expansion, and at that point, that matter ended. I will categorically say that at no time did we reject the list of seven.

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

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, a simple question to the minister: he was presented with seven names; why did he not simply accept, make a recommendation to cabinet from those seven names? Who is telling the truth, the president of the Manitoba Bar Association or this minister?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I cannot comment on the statements of Mr. Joubert as he was never present at any of the meetings between the Chief Judge and I, but I do want to say that I have accurately conveyed the

substance of the discussions between the Chief Judge and I on this issue. The committee ultimately makes the determination of the names that come to the minister and then to cabinet, and I want to say that there was nothing inappropriate in that. The committee considered the request made to them, not by me but by the chairperson, and that committee, I understand, rejected that request.

Health Sciences Centre Bed Availability

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. In the last 10 or 12 days I have spent a number of hours at the Health Sciences Centre. I was not snooping around or anything, but I would like to compliment the work and the service that was received at the Health Sciences Centre. I was advised during my visit there that, two weeks ago tomorrow, there were four patients that were admitted and were to be in daycare surgery. They were to be admitted on a long-term basis, but the lack of beds—two of them had to be sent home that evening and to be returned on Monday.

Can the minister advise if he is aware of the situation and what he is doing to rectify the problem?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if the member was at the hospital for personal health reasons or in his family, I wish him or his loved ones all the best and a speedy recovery.

As the member knows, the cases he is probably referring to I do not have specific detail, but I would suspect from his description that they were elective cases and the Health Sciences Centre, in managing its resources, elective are of course not as high priority as urgent and from time to time procedures are bumped. That is part of the management of that system. I can tell him that yesterday we announced here the construction of a 120-bed long-term care facility at Concordia Hospital which will allow for the conversion back to acute care beds of some 60 long-term beds currently housed in that facility. As well, there will be some other announcements coming in the weeks ahead regarding adding bed capacity to the system in Winnipeg which should relieve some of the pressure that he refers to.

Mr. Gaudry: To the same minister: can the minister advise what is happening on a short-term basis at the Health Sciences Centre to look after the problem of lack of beds?

Mr. Praznik: The issue around bed management, there has been a great easing of the pressure that took place on the system this winter. In the reports that I have received from the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, hospitals are now managing far more around their normal rate, but in any large institution like the Health Sciences Centre that is our major trauma hospital, any particular events or any emergencies that arise from time to time can put pressure on that system and change the mix. There is always usually some wait for people waiting for elective procedures, and I am not aware of the type of surgery of which he speaks, but we all know that people on the list, for example for elective heart surgery, may in fact have it postponed if an urgent case comes up. So those are the kinds of situations that have always been part of our health system, and we do recognize the need to take some stress off our bed situation. That is why we have committed to over 500 additional personal care home beds in this year's budget.

Health Care Facilities Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): To the same minister, Madam Speaker: in regard to the kitchen facilities: can the minister advise what number of jobs will be lost when the changeover happens at the Health Sciences Centre?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): As we have discussed in Estimates during the course of Estimates debate—and I know that all members cannot be in each committee because we are running three committees—but the Urban Shared Services have indicated that they are working with the human resources people in each facility and between the new jobs that are available, the voluntary separation incentive that many employees are availing themselves of, and the additional resources that were put into retraining and matching those employees with other job opportunities in the hospital system, they are still on track to have zero layoffs in this particular process throughout the system.

**Brandon General Hospital
Physician Resources—Pediatrics**

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health.

There is indeed rising anxiety and concern in the community of Brandon regarding the decision of Brandon doctors not to deliver babies at the Brandon General Hospital starting tomorrow. The doctors believe the Brandon General Hospital is unsafe due to the lack of pediatric services, and I can assure the minister that there are very strong feelings on this issue among the doctors.

So I ask: why has the Minister of Health allowed this situation to develop to a crisis stage when the problem has been known for over a year, and has the government a plan to deal with the crisis situation that is on our doorsteps and beginning tomorrow? Expectant mothers and their families want action now, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Brandon East for raising this particular issue. I know the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) and I have been working on this diligently over the last while. The word that the member uses with respect to a crisis is, I would suggest, not accurate. What we have is a strike. We have a labour dispute.

I would like to table for the information of the member a letter, that he quite likely has not seen, from the College of Physicians and Surgeons that indicates very clearly that the obstetricians in Brandon are perfectly safe and able to continue to carry out the nonemergency or nonhigh-risk births in the city of Brandon, that they are perfectly capable of doing that which accounts for approximately 60 percent of the births. So there is no medical reason for the stoppage on those low-risk births tomorrow.

* (1410)

Mr. L. Evans: Well, will the minister then, in view of his last reply, Madam Speaker, advise if he will take steps to resolve or somehow mediate the situation since it appears that he is prepared to treat the withdrawal of

services as a form of strike action? I want to ask the minister: does he realize that Brandon is in an extreme crisis situation now that more doctors may be leaving, including obstetricians, and that the hospital may be more incapacitated in the very near future if some resolution is not found to this situation?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, about a year ago at this time we went through very much the same situation with respect to emergency services at Brandon—and I know the member for Brandon East will recall that time—and we had a strike in the emergency room. We had all kinds of requests for band-aid solutions to a problem. It was our position then that we had to address these issues on a province-wide basis in a fair and methodical way.

The result today is that Brandon now has the best emergency medical service it has ever had in its history—it has four full-time emergency doctors—and it is our intention to do the same thing in pediatrics. I am pleased to inform the member that we have authorized up to four positions in Brandon on contract between \$185,000 and \$205,000 a year contract range, which is about \$30,000 more than pediatricians in Winnipeg.

Given the fact that we have not detected any interest in the MMA solving this particular issue, in this instance we unilaterally will be increasing fees for obstetrics some, I believe it is 20 percent over the next three years in certain categories, and we announced that today.

Mr. L. Evans: Well, Madam Speaker, very briefly: is this minister telling us that there is parity or better than parity between Winnipeg and Brandon, because the doctors have a sense of injustice in terms of the compensation, and they believe they are not being treated fairly and that there is not parity, and that is the basis of the problem that has arisen so far?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, just by way of background, the Manitoba Medical Association told us very clearly months ago that this would be a place where they would actually turn on the heat in their general issue. So I think that puts the context of which we all may be used as part of their bargaining tactics. But let us remember that Brandon physicians in all categories of the fee tariff, if I remember correctly,

have a 2.5 percent premium over Winnipeg today. As well, with the contracts for pediatricians, we have authorized those contracts, because Brandon does need four pediatricians, in a contract range of \$185,000 to \$205,000 per year, which is about \$30,000 more than the average billings of pediatricians in Winnipeg. So, yes, Brandon and those rural points with that service are receiving higher remuneration, or will be, than their counterparts in Winnipeg.

Provincial Court Act Judicial Appointment Process

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to again ask the Premier, who said that he is confident that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) did not interfere in the judicial appointment process, as stated and articulated by the president of the Bar Association of Manitoba—another member of the committee for judicial appointments was Colleen Suche, a person who is a representative of the Law Society of Manitoba, a person appointed by this government and respected by this government to carry on many functions on behalf of the public here in Manitoba, a person whose word is trusted in terms of the people of this province. I would like to ask the Premier: did he contact Colleen Suche, another member of the committee, to see whether Mr. Joubert is telling the truth about political interference of the minister, or the minister is?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I think the point that the member opposite should be aware of is that neither Ms. Suche nor Mr. Joubert met or talked with the Minister of Justice on this issue. So whatever it is that they are commenting on is something that they are alleged to have been told by somebody else. There is absolutely no evidence or indication that they met with—so how did he interfere with their actions when he did not talk to them or see them? That is the preposterous thing that we are having brought here by way of innuendo and hearsay.

Minister of Justice Removal Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, Colleen Suche is a person on the committee who has been working for months on the selection

process, appointed by the government. The committee proposed seven names to the government early this week. Then they were given messages and instructions back from the minister. We have the president of the Bar Association calling on the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) for political interference.

I would like to ask the Premier if Colleen Suche also says that the minister intervened and interfered in the process of selecting judges. Will the Premier do the right thing and fire the Minister of Justice?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member, representing the presumed comments of the various individuals from the committee that he has now referred to, one and possibly a second, alleged that the government through the Minister of Justice had rejected the seven names that were submitted to him. That is patently wrong. So now, based on false information and wrong information, he is trying to create some other kind of issue here. I suggest to him that rather than deal with innuendo, rather than deal with rumour, he ought to deal with facts and not bring forth false allegations to this Legislature.

Minister of Justice Independent Investigation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, we have the president of the Bar Association accusing the Minister of Justice of political interference. We have other individuals on the selection process very concerned about the judicial independence or the process of the Minister of Justice and what he did with the seven names that came forward from the nominating committee. I would like to ask the Premier today, if he is interested in facts: will he bring Ted Hughes into Manitoba and investigate—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: I know you are afraid to investigate the word of the Minister of Justice. Why are you afraid to bring Ted Hughes in to investigate the integrity and the word of the Minister of Justice? Are you just afraid that he will find out that the Minister of Justice did interfere with the judicial appointment process, and that would become clear with an independent investigation?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, it has been demonstrated that the member opposite is dealing with hearsay and innuendo. The minister did not meet with either of the individuals that he is referring to, and he did not speak with them. He did not meet with them. Based on that, we are supposed to have an independent inquiry by Ted Hughes. This is absolute nonsense, and the member ought to know better than coming here and going on a wild goose chase based on innuendo and rumour.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on a new question.

Mr. Doer: It is not innuendo and it is not rumour when the representative from the Bar Association accuses—who has been sitting—a representative of the government's nominating committee has gone public and accused the Minister of Justice of political interference. It is a major allegation. It is not a rumour. It is a strong allegation from the head of the Bar Association. Further, Madam Speaker, we have other comments made from the Law Society that have similar words.

I would like to ask the Premier: why is he afraid to have an independent review? Why is he afraid to have the nominating committee, including the Chief Judge of Manitoba, review the process that took place from last Friday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week that led to very prominent members of the government's own nominating committee accusing the government of political interference in the selection of judges here in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows that the individuals to whom he is referring have not spoken with the Minister of Justice, nor met with the Minister of Justice. Knowing that, how can he possibly make this allegation with any confidence? Unbelievable. Unbelievable.

Provincial Court Act Judicial Appointment Process

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice: would the minister, who now changes his line from what appears in the media this morning where he said he, that is the minister, contacted Webster, not the

other way around like he just said this afternoon—he contacted Webster, the Chief Judge, and asked her if there were any qualified bilingual candidates, and if so, would the committee, he asked, consider adding them to the list? He said he would recommend such a person to cabinet for an appointment.

When was he telling the truth, Madam Speaker, to the reporter yesterday or in the House now, or are they both lies, are they both ruses, I ask the minister?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that the honourable member for St. Johns withdraw the word "lies." It was made in direct reference to the Minister of Justice.

Point of Order

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I think if you will review Hansard, you will see very clearly that the statement made by the member for St. Johns was in reference to statements, had no reference to any member of this Legislative Assembly; therefore, I ask you to take this matter under advisement and review Hansard in this regard.

Madam Speaker: I will take the matter under advisement to peruse Hansard and the written record to see the context in which the member's words were spoken.

* * *

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, here the member has specifically attributed words to me that are not in quote, and he specifically did that and misled this House by not even suggesting that those were not even my words, and they were not my words. I can indicate that the judge came as a chairperson of that committee to my office on Monday with the list. The list has never been rejected by this government. That process continues, and I have absolutely no faith in the ability of that member to communicate the accuracy of what occurred on that day.

* (1420)

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, then I quote from a quote, his own quote in the Winnipeg Free Press this morning. He said, "I needed a French judge . . ." He needed a French judge, not the Chief Judge of Manitoba. When was he telling the truth?

Mr. Toews: We have in this province two provincial judges who are bilingual French and English. One of those judges is going on a leave of absence. Another one of those judges is conducting a review of French language services which we know will impact on our ability to deliver French language services in court. The member would be the first to come to this House if we could not provide the adequate, constitutionally required French language services in a trial, and if that case was dismissed, I would get the blame. Yes, Madam Speaker, I need a French language judge and the people of Manitoba need a French language judge.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Women of Distinction Awards

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to pay tribute to the Women of Distinction honoured last night at the YM-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards Dinner.

The winners of last night's awards were Tina Hildebrandt, who has over the past 30 years provided safe and loving foster care to 82 children; Dennice Leahey, senior vice-president and general manager of the Royal Bank of Manitoba, Northwestern Ontario and Nunavut. Dennice Leahey has used her corporate leadership to spearhead many projects benefiting the community, including aboriginal people, individuals with disabilities and women.

The third winner, Mary Pankiw, is a former educator. She works to promote awareness and raise public perception of seniors' needs. Mary Scott is a leading advocate for women who has, since her retirement, played a pivotal role in the formation of the United Nations Platform for Action Committee Manitoba and chairs the Information Technology Committee. The

final winner was Leslie Spillett, a longtime proponent of aboriginal culture and cross-cultural awareness issues. As general manager for the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, she has worked tirelessly to ensure the workers' rights were respected as well as developing training programs such as English as a Second Language.

Also each year the Gerry Hammond Memorial Award of Promise is given. This award was established to honour Gerry Hammond's many accomplishments throughout a long and distinguished career in politics, volunteerism and her ongoing support of women. I am pleased to say that Arlene Kent, an honour student at Balmoral Hall, was the winner.

So please join me, colleagues, in wishing all of the winners and nominees continued success in their future endeavours.

Canada Transportation Act

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on July 1, 1996, the federal government proclaimed the Canada Transportation Act. This act broke virtually every promise and statement the Liberals had made during the previous decade. On the issue of rail lines, subsidies were ended. Railways were given the right to abandon any line they wanted to without any public approval.

The major railways wasted no time in taking advantage of their new powers. The next day, notices were filed by CN in The Toronto Globe and Mail stating that the Sherridon lines, Cowan, Winnipegosis and Steep Rock lines in Manitoba would be put up for scrap or sale. A major fight was launched to save the Sherridon line.

My colleagues, the members from Flin Flon, The Pas, Thompson and Rupertsland played a major role in the successful effort which resulted in OmniTRAX purchasing the Sherridon line and the Bay Line from The Pas north to Churchill. Sadly, attempts to save the Cowan, Winnipegosis and Steep Rock lines have not been successful. CN has started to tear up the lines on the Steep Rock line. Attempts to negotiate a short line for Winnipegosis have failed, and the Cowan sub line that people are negotiating on is facing difficulties

because CN is maintaining crucial parts of the line that are necessary for short lines to operate.

Now CN has given notice that they want to tear up the Irwood sub from north of Swan River to Birch River by July 6. This will have a major implication for farmers and producers in the area. Already, Manitoba producers are paying heavily for the loss of the Crow rate benefit which was eliminated by the Liberals.

Unlike Saskatchewan, this Conservative government in Manitoba has been silent on rail line abandonment. As a result, they have given CN and CPR the green light to go ahead despite the cost to producers and municipalities, and I urge this government to get their act together and start standing up for Manitobans.

*(1430)

Economic Growth

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I want to note to all members of this House two pieces of tremendous news reported in the newspapers this past week. Firstly, thanks to our government's continuing commitment to the concept of living within one's means, balancing our budget and paying down our debt, the province of Manitoba has received an upgrade to its financial rating from Moody's Investors Service. Previously, Manitoba had been rated A-1 stable, but prompted by our strong and diversified economy Moody's has rated Manitoba an A-1 positive.

Secondly, as reported in today's Winnipeg Free Press, Manitoba has emerged as a growth leader in job creation, according to the chief economist at Nesbitt Burns. The help-wanted index for our province rose to a Canada-wide high of 157 in April, up from 152 last month. As a result, our unemployment rate remains at 5.2 percent.

Today, more Manitobans are working than ever before, and more individuals and businesses are recognizing Manitoba's economy for what it is: healthy and strong. This increasing recognition is resulting in more investment and more employment opportunities. So I firmly believe that as we approach the new millennium Manitobans will find that our government, through strong, progressive policies, has made our

province the best place to live, to work, to invest and to raise a family. Thank you.

Brandon General Hospital

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement with reference to the Brandon General Hospital, and not only the current crisis, but what has been happening over the last few years because I have seen, very sadly, a decline in the ability of Brandon General Hospital as a regional facility to offer the quality services that we all want to see it achieve and provide.

We have a crisis developing tomorrow, and I appreciate the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is concerned about it. He wants to do the right thing; I know that. Nevertheless, this has been a situation that has been developing for well over a year. There has been a shortage of pediatricians. We have known that there was a need for four; we only had two. Then the two of course eventually withdrew their services for on call. So, as a result of the lack of that backup, the family doctors do not want to be involved in delivering children because they believe it is unsafe, according to their statement.

I know that the government is making an effort to obtain pediatric services by advertising and so on, but the fact is tomorrow we have a crisis. It looks, according to the minister, that we have some form of strike action, and it seems to me that it is incumbent on this government, on the minister, to do something. At least this is what the people who have contacted me want. They want some action. The expectant mothers do not understand this. They do not understand this. [interjection] Well, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) should talk to some of the people about their concerns.

Madam Speaker, beyond this—if I could conclude—I am concerned about the loss of other specialists, the pending loss of other doctors, including obstetricians, who I understand may be leaving. Of course, there is trouble with equipment declining, and the building itself is in very bad shape. So it is very, very sad that the Brandon General Hospital, as a true important regional centre, has deteriorated to the extent that it has.

Judicial System—Independent Review

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I want to just take the opportunity to follow up on a couple of Question Periods, where I posed to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) questions with respect to the need for a judicial review.

Earlier today in Question Period the Leader of the New Democratic Party talked about the need for an operational review of the Crowns office. I think that what we do need and what Manitobans need to see is some sort of an independent judicial review that takes a look at the different components of our judicial system. I respect the need for that judicial system and its independence, but I also believe very firmly that there needs to be a higher sense of public accountability even for this independence with respect to the judicial review.

So I stand up today just to suggest that, primarily because of the question that was being posed earlier about the operational review of the Crowns office. I think there is a much greater need, and that is an independent review of our judicial system. I think there are many different ways in which Manitobans could be better served by getting those that have the expertise to sit down, take a look at what the problems are that we are facing in courts procedurally—because perception is important. I think more and more Manitobans are losing confidence in our judicial system, and this is something which can restore that confidence, which would be to the benefit of all Manitobans. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I would seek the leave of the House to allow us to move to Bill 31 for a few moments, no more than three minutes, so that the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) might introduce Bill 31 for second reading.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable Minister of Health to give second reading to Bill 31? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), that Bill 31, The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act; Loi modifiant diverses lois sur les professions de la santé réglementées, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Praznik: The need for amendments to health professions legislation concerning confidentiality of information provisions was identified during the development of The Personal Health Information Act. Self-regulatory bodies are not included as trustees under the PHIA.

However, Madam Speaker, in the course of carrying out their responsibilities as self-regulating bodies where they do come into the possession of information which may relate to the practitioner or to the individuals to whom a practitioner has provided a service, there is a need to safeguard that information. Currently eight of the acts have no confidentiality provisions, while others have a provision, but there is no consistency from act to act.

Bill 31 will amend 16 acts governing the regulation of health professionals to include a confidentiality provision with respect to information that may be obtained by a regulatory authority in the course of an audit or investigation. The provision will essentially be the same for each self-regulating body. In addition, the offence provisions for contravening these confidentiality requirements will be the same. The maximum fine for a breach of this provision is proposed to be set at \$50,000, which is the same maximum as in The Personal Health Information Act.

These provisions are essentially the same as those contained in Bill 20, The Medical Amendment Act, and Bill 30, The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act, which I very recently introduced into this House. The bill, it is proposed, will provide for the repeal and replacement

of existing confidentiality provisions, and in cases where there is no existing provision, it will add such a provision. This proposed legislation will ensure that information which comes into the possession of self-regulating bodies is protected, while at the same time allowing the body to disclose information in appropriate but limited and defined circumstances. I look forward to comments of members opposite on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (1440)

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I wish to obtain the unanimous consent of the House to vary the Estimates sequence established under subrule 71(9) and tabled in this House on March 24, 1998, when the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs have been completed by setting aside the Estimates of the Department of Health to consider the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Madam Speaker, this change would apply until further notice.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House that when the Estimates of the Department of Northern and Native Affairs have been completed by setting aside the Estimates of the Department of Health to consider the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism until further notice? [agreed]

As previously agreed, we will resume in Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

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

This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 9.4. Child and Family Services (a) Child and Family Support, page 56 of the Estimates book. Shall this item pass?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Do we have unanimous consent to go back to Community Living for a few minutes?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there unanimous consent to revert to Community Living? Would the honourable member be able to indicate what line you want to revert to?

Mr. Martindale: Would Adult Services be the right line?

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, is there unanimous consent of the committee to revert to item 9.3.(b) Adult Services? [agreed]

* (1450)

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I would like to thank the minister for agreeing to revert back. I gave her a copy of a letter that I received just this morning, although I note that it is dated April 8. I do not know why I just received it, but she may have just received it as well. It refers to a program that is called Network South Enterprises located in the honourable member for Osborne's (Ms. McGifford) riding, but the parents of the adult in question live in my riding.

I really am simply wanting to ask the minister if she would undertake to examine the issue carefully and as urgently as she can raised by Norman D. Magnusson of 6 Windemere Bay. Essentially they are saying that they value this program enormously because it provides a much higher quality of life for their dependent child, adult really, than would be available in a facility-based program.

The program has a loss of about \$70,000 a year, which the parents have tried to raise, but as she says in her letter: Currently our program serves 13 individuals,

which results in a net loss of \$70,000 annually. We are engaged in fundraising, but we have not been able to come close to reaching this figure. The parents who are on our board are exhausted by their efforts.

I have had, over the years, some experience with similar programs, and with the level of energy and effort that parents and advocates put into them and the degree of burnout that happens after some time, mainly from striving to close the gap between funding that is available from government and the true costs of the program.

I wonder if the minister could indicate whether any action has been taken to provide additional support to this specific program and whether she would be able to undertake to review the problems involved in this program and to see whether it is possible to find a way for the program to survive because obviously the parents and those involved in it benefit greatly from it. I do appreciate her agreeing to allow this to be raised in the Estimates today.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for raising the issue here through the Estimates process. Network South Enterprises Inc., I understand, is an offshoot of Sturgeon Creek Enterprises, where they wanted to provide support to individuals in other parts of the city.

I want to indicate that there has been a slight increase in their funding this year. It is a 1 percent increase, but, nonetheless, the letter does indicate an issue around a net loss of \$70,000 in the program. I certainly will undertake to have staff meet with the individuals involved in the program and see what the issues are and whether there is any resolve that can be found.

Mr. Sale: I appreciate the minister's response, and I am sure the family will be very grateful to be able to meet and to discuss how to ensure this program can survive and that the board and those supporting it do not burn out in the process. So I thank the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: We will now revert to Section 9.4. Child and Family Services (a) Child and Family Support (1) Child, Family and Community Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits, since the section (b) Adult Services had been passed

previously. (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,899,800.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I think we were talking about hotels before we adjourned at noon and I had some questions about numbers, and maybe the minister has some statistics for us now.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think there is only one new person at the table, and that is Dale Robinson. He is responsible for Agency Relations.

The question, I think, that was asked before was the average number of children in hotels per night for the last few months. We do not have March's figures yet, but for February the average was 19 in hotels. I think I had indicated earlier around 15, but it was 19 actually in February, and the number in four-bed units was 58.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, so it seems that there are fewer children in hotels. Actually according to the numbers, there are fewer children in hotels, but there are many more children in—well, not necessarily, there are many children in four-bed units. According to figures I have from a year ago February, the numbers are actually quite similar, but it concerns me that these children are still not in a foster home or have any kind of permanency. So the problem remains the same, it just does not look as bad because they are not in hotels.

I believe it was in either the Operational Review or the Environmental Scan, perhaps in both, concerns were raised that now Child and Family Services was operating like a housing agency. I am wondering if any progress is being made in moving children out of these kinds of placements, which are certainly temporary and perhaps even emergency type placements, into some sort of permanency for these children.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think the first and foremost priority for the agency was to reduce the hotel placements, and as we can see by the numbers, they have made a significant impact in reduction in those numbers. I do know that they have undertaken very proactively a foster home recruitment process, which appears to have been successful. My figures from last May, I guess, in the four-bed units were 66, down to 58 in February of 1998, a slight decrease, but not a significant decrease.

I do not think you can fix a system that has been running a certain way overnight. I think they place their priorities in the right place on the hotel units, and there certainly is more work to do in trying to find solutions for the short-term placements in four-bed units. So I look forward, through their strategic planning and their foster parent recruitment process, to seeing those numbers continue to decline.

* (1500)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, well, I am a little disappointed in the minister's answer because some of these documents are starting to get old now. For example, the Operational Review: Briefing to Executive Management that I have—well, first of all we have the Environmental Scan dated August 28, 1996. Then we have the Operational Review: Briefing to Executive Management dated September 9, 1996. We have an Operational Review: Final Report, dated March 26, 1997, and yet the minister cannot give me concrete examples of what is being done in response to my question. I suppose maybe no progress is being made in spite of the fact that some of these observations and comments and findings are quite pointed.

For example, in the Operational Review dated March 26, 1997, the executive summary, one of the main findings says: No. 3, the foster care and emergency housing systems, including residential care, are failing and forcing the agency to rely on expensive alternatives such as hotels and residential care.

So the minister has had over a year and the Winnipeg Child and Family Services has had over a year, and I would like to know what progress is being made on finding more appropriate alternatives for these children.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think we need to review the activities in the Winnipeg agency since the final report, which was received I guess on March 26, 1997. That was just over a year ago now, and there were several recommendations on strategies that needed to be undertaken.

I think my honourable friend is aware that the CEO of the Winnipeg agency had indicated at the time of the Operational Review that he was retiring and they were in the process of recruitment of a new CEO for the

Winnipeg agency. So that was the first priority, to get a new CEO in place, and I believe he was hired in August of 1997.

Within a month, the steering committee met with the new CEO to identify some of the main priority recommendations that needed to be acted on, and there was a joint process with the department and the agency that resulted in six priority areas to be looked at. Number one was the operating budget, and I have indicated that we have worked through the process of the budget and they have identified line by line where efficiencies might be found. One of the other priority areas was review of the special rates, acquisition of computer hardware, emergency capacity, foster care resources and transfer of jurisdictional responsibility for the rural component. Those were the six areas of high-priority agreement that work needed to be done, and all of those areas are being looked at.

I tend to disagree with my honourable friend when he says nothing has been done. If you look at numbers last year that indicate that an average daily occupancy of hotel beds was 48 and we were down to 19 in February, that is a significant decrease. I do not call that no progress. When I look at the active foster home recruitment activity that has been undertaken, I do not call that no action. I have indicated clearly that, you know, we have a system that needs significant improvement and significant change and some refocus. I have to say that I think with the recruitment of a new CEO and sort of his learning curve and getting up to speed on what the issues are in the Winnipeg agency and what needs to be done that we are moving in the right direction. I have every confidence that we will see significant improvements.

But you do not take a system that has been running in one direction for many, many years and think that you are going to have an overnight turnabout. I would love to see changes tomorrow that would see no kids in hotels and no kids that needed support through our child welfare agency. That is not reality, that is not going to happen, and it is not a system that you move overnight.

I think we have to monitor year by year what progress we make and how we can work together. There are no easy answers in this business. I would not agree with

my honourable friend when he says there has been no improvement. I believe there has been. I believe we will continue to see changes in the system that will better manage our resources, will recruit new resources, and will look at new ways of delivering services.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to go through some of the main findings, one at a time, because they raise many very serious concerns.

The first one says systemic and sustained increases in the number of children at risk, which are expected for the next 10 to 15 years barring any change in the economic condition of aboriginal residents of the city. This is in reference to why costs are escalating.

This finding ties in with other research that has been done. For example, another review looked at the risk factors that cause children to come into care and identified them as poverty, single-parent status and being aboriginal. I have been told that if you look at socioeconomic data for inner city neighbourhoods, that if you know how many single parents there are, how many of them are aboriginal and their income, one can predict fairly accurately how many children are going to come into care.

In several of these reports and in several places, it is pointed out to the government, not just to Winnipeg Child and Family Services—in fact, I would not be very critical of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Their mandate is to provide protection for children. There are a lot of external forces that they have no control over, such as the rate of poverty, such as children being more medically complex coming into care and fiscal restraints imposed by governments, both federal and provincial, and these reports point out that when there are contractions in service in the health system, in the education system and in family services through other parts of this department, it often means more pressure and even more children coming into care by Winnipeg Child and Family Services. That is something that, as I said, the agency does not have a lot of control over, but this minister and this government do.

* (1510)

I am wondering if the minister understands and if she is encouraging her government and her cabinet

colleagues to stop withdrawing resources to children, so that more children do not come into care, or to replace those resources so that fewer children come into care.

I wonder if the minister understands these recommendations and observations and their implications for her department, her government.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I do not think that any of the comments or many of the comments that my honourable friend has put on the record certainly are fair comment.

I do not think anyone disagrees that the whole issue of an urban aboriginal strategy that goes above and beyond Child and Family Services is due. That is exactly what my colleague the Minister of Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) has been working on, and I think very shortly we are going to see the results of the committee that was struck to look at an urban aboriginal strategy. We are going to see the results of that report and the recommendations that will be made to address some of the issues that have been identified. So we are very aware of the need to have a co-ordinated strategy around aboriginal issues in Winnipeg.

I do want to indicate that we have not been standing still. We know the statistics. There are many reports that have indicated the statistics about the large numbers of aboriginal people who are coming to the city of Winnipeg, the large numbers of aboriginal people who live in poverty, the large number of aboriginal young single parents there are who may need the supports or the use of our child welfare system. We do know that 70 percent of the children in care in the city of Winnipeg are aboriginal, and yet they certainly are not 70 percent of the population in the city of Winnipeg.

So it is a significant issue, and it is not an issue that we can address in isolation of the aboriginal community. That is why we have just announced and set up—and it was as a result of the consultations around The Child and Family Services Act and recommendations that we look at an urban aboriginal child welfare strategy that a committee has been struck involving the Winnipeg agency and, of course, my department, along with the Manitoba Metis Federation,

the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the urban Aboriginal Council, Ma Mawi, the Social Planning Council, the Child and Youth Secretariat and the Native Affairs Secretariat. That committee has been struck to look at what some of the options might be in dealing with aboriginal child welfare in the city of Winnipeg.

I must say to you on a personal note, and these are my personal feelings, that the solutions are going to be found in conjunction with the aboriginal community but specifically with aboriginal women. I honestly believe that they are the people who are going to help us find the solutions to some of the issues, not only dealing with child welfare but with issues around families and aboriginal families in Winnipeg. There is a strength that is developing, and it cannot be an us-and-them solution unless we work together.

I am committed and prepared to work as aggressively as possible with aboriginal people, but specifically with aboriginal women, because I believe that in the traditional aboriginal culture that women do have very much a responsibility for family issues and family matters, and they are going to be the ones that are going to help us find those solutions. I know they are, so I am prepared and committed. And the issues are different in Winnipeg. You know, a lot of aboriginal people that are in Winnipeg have left the reserve for a very number of reasons, and some of them are as a result of some of the untenable situations on reserves that have brought them to Winnipeg. You know, the community is different, the culture is different, but the reality is they do not necessarily want their home bands to be making the decisions on what their personal solutions are as they have moved and made Winnipeg their home.

So I know that from personal dialogue with many individuals, and I am committed to find a solution. No easy answers to this one, but we have to find the answers and the right answers. You know, I would say to my honourable friend, this is not about politics in any way, this is about all of us putting our heads together and making suggestions and giving us concrete ideas on how we find solutions in this area.

So I believe that when we see 70 percent of the children in care in our Winnipeg agency that we need more appropriate, trained aboriginal people working to find the solutions in the system. I am not sure what the

answer will be, and I am not sure that a separate aboriginal agency is the right answer in Winnipeg either. I am not convinced, because again I do not know how you would ever set that up and how you would ever manage that and where the first place of referral would be, but I am interested in hearing what those that are involved in the committee have to say and how we can move forward from here.

So that committee is working, and hopefully we will get some recommendations on how to address some of the issues. But I do know that there are some positive things happening in some of the programming that is taking place, and I know a lot of it is community driven and neighbour driven, and both the federal government and provincial governments are putting resources into some of that programming.

I know aboriginal head start programs have been quite successful in some instances. I do know that the new programs that we are announcing right now, the BabyFirst and the Earlystart programs, I know my honourable friend has some familiarity with north-end ministries where one of our BabyFirst projects is running. Although it is not absolutely, completely aboriginal focused, I think it will meet the needs of a lot of aboriginal families in that neighbourhood, in that community. So that is one program that we have introduced. Another one, of course, is the Earlystart program, and that is working with children to get them from the ages of two to five to prepare them for school.

I know that many of those projects are run through child care centres, many in areas where there is a high aboriginal concentration population. I believe that they will be very positive programs. These are working with families and mentors and child care providers who have some experience and expertise in early childhood development, but it is also bringing the parents into the programming, so we are hopeful that some of these early intervention strategies will have a positive impact. It is not going to deal with the kids that are necessarily in the system or entrenched in the system today, but hopefully it is going to have some impact in the future on children coming into the child welfare system and hopefully prevent the need for some of the intervention that needs to be provided through child welfare, because we get to them and create healthier families before they get to that point.

* (1520)

We also know, too, and I will be making an announcement very shortly on adolescent pregnancy. We have talked about fetal alcohol syndrome and Stop FAS, the program that was announced, and I think very positively received by the whole community that will try to prevent the birth of a fetal alcohol child. We know that very often those children create significant problems in our education system and need the services in a significant way from our child welfare system. So if we can stop those kinds of births from happening and try to ensure that children are born healthy, you know, all of these things that do not have an impact right today on the system as it exists, but we hope that they will have a positive impact on what happens and what comes into the system into the future.

Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I will be shortly making an announcement around adolescent pregnancy, and also an announcement around nutrition programming, so these are all initiatives that we know, and based on research, should have a significant impact on healthier, better-adjusted families and less need for child welfare in the future. Unless we put our money in at that level, at that entry point, we are going to continue to see the growing need for more resources in our child welfare system. There is no easy answer, and there is no quick-fix solution to this.

I have made a commitment to work with the aboriginal community in Winnipeg to see where the solutions are, and we are including very much the community organizations that deal in areas where there is a high concentration of aboriginal people in Winnipeg to see where the answers are. When the community identifies the need, I think it is our responsibility to be there to support with programming dollars the activities that they believe will make a difference.

Mr. Martindale: Since the minister is supportive of leadership by aboriginal women, perhaps she would like to go to two dinners tonight and attend the fundraising dinner called Seven Homes for Seven Families at the friendship centre. However, I think the minister probably has another commitment tonight.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I could just respond to that, we, through the department, have got a table, and staff will be attending. I would have loved to have been there. There are several conflicts tonight, but, anyway, we are supporting and we will be interested in hearing any suggestions or ideas that come forward in dialogue.

Mr. Martindale: Then we both hope they have a successful dinner tonight. It is good to see both parties supporting this fundraising effort.

The minister tries to imply that these solutions are not about politics. I think that was the expression that she used: it is not about politics. However, everything is political in this building, and budgets are about political choices. While the minister's rhetoric is nice and fine, talking about all the good things that her department, her government is doing for aboriginal people, at the same time, her government is cutting funding to students to make it much, much harder, impossible for most, to go to the Winnipeg Education Centre, an affirmative action post-secondary university education program, cut funding to access programs, cut funding to New Careers.

So there are many choices that this government has already made that adversely affect aboriginal people. In her own department there used to be a SOSAR program. It is gone. So people on social assistance, single parents can no longer be funded to attend university. The minister wants to brag about their urban aboriginal strategy, but it took 10 years of being in government and it still is not announced. We still do not know what their urban aboriginal strategy is yet. So this government has a long way to go when it comes to dealing fairly with aboriginal people in Winnipeg and in Manitoba.

It involves far more departments than just aboriginal and Northern Affairs. For example, the second main finding in the executive summary says: as key institutions in the education, health, and social services sector retreat to their core mandates because of fewer options and increasing demand, Winnipeg Child and Family Services finds itself with less scope to assist children.

So it is going to require the co-operation of all departments to see that the lives of children are

enhanced so that fewer children come into care, because we know, as these reports tell us, that when you cut funding in Health and Education and other departments and in Income Assistance, it has an impact on the caseload for Winnipeg Child and Family Services, which is one of the reasons for their budget going up every year, because these main findings all relate to the reasons that costs have escalated.

So I wonder if the minister understands, and what is she doing to see that there are not cuts by other government departments that adversely affect her department, especially funding for Winnipeg Child and Family Services, which, as these reports point out, causes their costs to go up?

For example, in the original report, it also says on page 34: changes in one element of the human service sector have immediate and direct consequences for other elements. For example, a reduced scope in the health care system has a profound effect on the child welfare system. We know that there are effects from government cutbacks in other departments on this department and on Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

I do not have the Postl report on children in front of me today, but this minister is quite familiar with it, because I have quoted from it, and it talks about poverty, child poverty, and makes recommendations that the funding level actually be increased for food allowances for children. I am just going by memory, and I would be quite happy to get the Postl report during the break, because it is a government report and it has excellent recommendations and we are still waiting for this government to implement some of them. Dr. Postl and many people in the community, myself included, believe that, if some of these things were implemented, it would have a positive effect on children in Manitoba and in Winnipeg, but I am not convinced that this minister understands that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I am really glad my honourable friend has raised the Postl report because I just received an update from the Child and Youth Secretariat on how we are doing on implementation of recommendations from the Postl report, and I think my honourable friend might be very pleasantly surprised to see how those recommendations

and the implementation of those look. I know it is up on my desk, and we can have a discussion here or we can have a discussion under the Estimates of the Child and Youth Secretariat, but quite frankly, I think we have made significant process on that report.

I do want to correct on the record, before I get into any other further comments, that the SASAR program is—[interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Do we want to put this through the Chair and perhaps put it on the record?

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, referring to these programs with acronyms is difficult sometimes. I thought there were two. One was SOSAR and one was SASAR. My understanding was that SOSAR was for single parents to fund their post-secondary education, and I can remember fighting on behalf of some individuals who were studying; one, I remember, a student from The Maples who was studying nursing, and we had to fight to get her funding grandfathered because the program was terminated. I fought successfully on her behalf to get her funding continued so that she could continue to attend university. It was my understanding that that is no longer true, that single parents on social assistance cannot get university education funded anymore. If I am wrong, I would be happy to be corrected.

* (1530)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Just for the Chair's clarification, what did you perceive SESAR to be? [interjection] Okay, so you are not aware of that program?

Mr. Martindale: No.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Okay.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I would just like to correct for the record that there are presently some 93 income assistance clients currently participating in the SASAR program, which is a program for Study Assistance for Social Allowance Recipients. So we have had 35 new clients enter the program since August of 1997, and we have had students access the Access

program since August to pursue career options and opportunities too. So I am not sure, I think what I am doing is correcting the record and indicating to my honourable friend that these programs have not been discontinued.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I am happy to be corrected. This has to be one of the best-kept secrets in government, but we will make sure that it is publicized and you will get lots of applicants. I will put it in my householder the next time, and we will see what happens.

I guess I would like to repeat my original question: does the minister understand these recommendations and observations in these reports about the effects of government cutbacks on the caseload in Winnipeg Child and Family Services?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, I think, I just want to indicate that we are not a government that is standing still. I mean, many of the training opportunities for single parents certainly involve single parents, many of whom might be aboriginal. If you just look to the Taking Charge! program, I think you will probably see a lot of aboriginal women accessing that kind of program. We have more money for training opportunities on a year-by-year basis. So there is not restriction.

A lot of our training opportunities—and I make no apologies for this—are focused on where employment opportunities exist. We no longer do training for the sake of training, but training very much with a focus to employment orientation. Again, I say that I think that is the best use of our tax resources when, in fact, we can see people moving off the cycle of poverty on welfare into paying jobs that increase their income and provide a better life for their children. I no longer—and one of the reasons that we changed our policy on single parents and tried to ensure that we considered single parents whose children are six years old or in school full time as employable was that we did not ever want to leave the impression that a life of poverty on welfare was all the expectation we had for single parents.

We wanted them to know that we cared enough to try to put in place some options and opportunities for them to move off of welfare and into the workforce. We know that it is certainly a much more positive

alternative to the cycle of welfare and the commitment to a life of poverty that existed with the old policy. So I am extremely confident, based on the economic activity and the number of new jobs that are available in the province of Manitoba that we will be able to work with more individuals to try to help them develop their personal job plans, the direction they want to go, and then put the supports in place to make that happen.

I can only just again state some of the things we have done as a result of our redirection of dollars through the National Child Benefit, and that is, you know, another \$5 million into the child care system to ensure that people that are in training or moving into the workforce have the opportunity to access quality, affordable child care so that they can work and they can train and they can upgrade themselves.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I know that through Taking Charge! we have seen, once the program got up and running, significant numbers of individuals who are now moving into the workforce through that program. Training and Education has, and I cannot get into their specific programs here, I think it would be more appropriate to ask the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), but I know that we have allocated on a year-by-year basis more money into making welfare-work initiatives, where we have partnered with the private sector. So I believe that we are doing some very positive things to help break the cycle of poverty and give people the ability to work, to feel good about themselves, to be positive role models for their children and ultimately to try to ensure that the opportunities are there.

We are working with people to focus on what their job plans and what their life plans might be. I know we are moving in the right direction. My honourable friend may not think it is fast enough, but we also do know that when you have a policy that commits people to a life of poverty on welfare and you change direction and change focus and look at the supports that need to be put in place on an individual basis for people, you do not work miracles overnight.

In fact, we are putting the supports in place. We are working with individual women, and it is a one-on-one type of situation. We do know that our single-parent

caseloads have dropped considerably, about 1,800, I think, since May of 1996 when we implemented Employment First and welfare reform, that are now off of welfare and into the workforce. We know significantly more individuals are claiming some earned income than ever have in the past. I think it is up by about 40 percent.

So people are moving even if they do need some support from social assistance, are obtaining some income earnings, which I think is positive, is a move in the right direction.

But you have to think for every single parent that moves off of welfare and into the workforce that the lives of at least one child, for every one of those single parents, has improved considerably, and in many instances it is significantly more than one child. So not only are you impacting the lives of the individuals who are working, but you are having a positive impact on the lives of their children.

So we will continue to work in that direction, and we will continue to ensure that if moms are at home with children under the age of six that we are putting the support programs in place, the early intervention programs like the BabyFirst and the Earlystart. I know that the federal government, through the Healthy Start for Mom and Me program that they implemented through CAPC, is working with parents.

The key for us in the whole child welfare system is to try to ensure that we do not work with kids in isolation of the families that surround them but that we bring parents into the picture and make sure that the positive things that are happening with children when we take them outside of the home into child care facilities or whatever are being translated into positive supports in the hours when they are not getting that formal instruction.

* (1540)

Parental involvement is critical and all of the programs that we are looking at do have parental involvement. They also do all have a nutritional component, whether it be learning how to prepare and serve nutritious meals, whether it be in the BabyFirst program, the whole issue of lactation and breastfeeding

as a positive option for parents with their children to get their children off to a good nutritional start. There are components of that in all of the programs we are looking at on the early intervention side.

Our focus is a positive, wellness focus. Hopefully, as we measure the outcomes of the programs, we will determine, because we know that the programs that we are implementing have had a lot of research behind them and we have seen them work successfully in other jurisdictions.

When the Earlystart program is taken from the Hawaii Healthy Start program, which has had great success, when outcomes have been measured in the health status and the wellness status of children who enter the school system as a result of that program—oh, pardon me, the BabyFirst program is the Hawaii Healthy Start. No? Earlystart. I sometimes get my BabyFirst and Earlystart programs mixed up. Yes, the Earlystart program is the Perry preschool program that I think we all had an opportunity to hear about, and the BabyFirst is the Hawaii Healthy Start model. Those are tried and proven programs that should have a significant impact on our ability to prevent before we have the need for the child welfare system. So small starts, but certainly steps in the right direction.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I now have The Health of Manitoba's Children, known as the Postl report in front of me, and I would be interested in knowing if the minister knows how many of the 116 recommendations her government has implemented, and I am quite sure that No. 32, that food allowance within the social assistance programs be increased to allow for adequate nutrition of infants as reflected in formula costs, has not been implemented; No. 42, that food supplements be considered for prenatal women who are living in poverty as a means of reducing the incidence of low-birthweight babies; and No. 46, that the food support within the welfare system be adequate to support childhood needs.

As far as I know, none of those recommendations have been acted on by this government. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have a report that was compiled by the Children and Youth Secretariat that indicates that we have implemented, or implemented and ongoing, 75

of the recommendations, 21 are in process, 18 are being worked on in specific departments and another one under consideration. There is one that there has been no action taken on, and that is to do with the Child Protection Centre, and I think there are still some outstanding issues that need to be resolved. As far as the rest go, I can go through one by one the recommendations now, if my honourable friend would like, and indicate to him what the status is of each one.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to move on to No. 3. The minister did not answer my question because the ones that I named in the Postl report have not been implemented and they are within her department.

Number three of the executive summary—

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, those that have been referred to my department are probably under consideration or in process and will have to await the final results of the response to the recommendation through announcements that may be upcoming.

Mr. Martindale: People on social assistance will be pleased if those recommendations are implemented. Of course, we are expecting lots of pre-election good-news announcements as this government spends money to get re-elected. These recommendations have been out since March 1995 and so, you know, within a year of an election, they are going to be implemented even though they are three and probably by the next election four years old or maybe even four and a half years old.

Going back to the main findings, the Operational Review, No. 3 says the foster care and emergency housing systems, including residential care, are failing and forcing the agency to rely on expensive alternatives such as hotels and residential care. We already discussed this a little bit, but this issue really ties in with concerns about foster care and especially foster care rates, and there are observations about this in these reports saying that one of the reasons that Winnipeg Child and Family Services has difficulty getting foster homes is because of cuts in rates, and so I would like to know what this minister and her government are planning to do to address the shortage of foster homes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: You know, the issue of foster rates, I think, is an issue my honourable friend raises without

true knowledge or understanding of exactly what happens. Yes, there is the basic rate and one can argue whether the basic rate is adequate or not adequate, but I think the thing he is failing to recognize is the issue that most of the children that are in hotels awaiting placement would be children with special needs that would get certainly special rates. I do know that special rates go anywhere from—[interjection]

You know, the average rate for foster placement in the city of Winnipeg is \$44.85, and I want to indicate to my honourable friend that those are tax-free dollars also. So they are not dollars that are taxed in any way. I know that rates go up to \$80 a day or more for significantly high-need individuals, so you are looking at specialized foster parents that can deal with the kinds of issues that might be needed to support those kinds of children that might be waiting for placement in hotel accommodations or in some of the other short-term placement areas. So I am not sure that, when he raises the issue of foster rates and the lack of ability to recruit foster parents, that he is really speaking about the true issues that need to be addressed.

When we talk about recruiting foster parents, they are foster parents in many instances that would need some special qualities or qualifications to deal with children with higher needs. So I just do not want him to ever leave on the record that we do not pay when there is a requirement for a special rate, additional support to foster parents.

Mr. Martindale: These reports refer to a number of problems, including with special rates, for example, No. 9 says many activities such as foster care and special rate determination are fragmented across the four service areas. Another problem is that Winnipeg Child and Family Services often recruits foster parents, trains them and places children with them and they get experience, and then when they find out that if they contracted with Marymount or Macdonald Youth Services as specialized foster homes or treatment foster homes, they can get a much higher per diem, so Winnipeg Child and Family Services loses these foster homes to these other agencies.

I am wondering what this minister is willing to do about that problem. It seems to me that those kinds of rates should be available in Winnipeg Child and Family

Services so that they can keep their homes in their system, or at least keep these foster parents and not lose them to other nonprofit organizations that have the specialized or treatment foster homes with the much higher rates.

* (1550)

Mrs. Mitchelson: That was an issue that was identified in the report, certainly an issue that we have been dealing with Winnipeg agency on trying to ensure that there are standard rates and uniformity right across the city. We should not be treating foster parents in one area of the city differently from others, but that is an issue that the agency must address.

We are working with them to address that and also the Winnipeg agency is meeting with the treatment centres to try to deal with the issue and work things out so there is some consistency. It is not resolved yet, but certainly there are discussions ongoing to try to resolve the issue.

Mr. Martindale: "Discussions" sounds rather vague. I wonder if the minister can give me more detail. What is it that is being discussed? Are you hoping to allow Winnipeg Child and Family Services foster parents to become treatment foster homes if they meet the criteria?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed that the executive director or the CEO of Winnipeg Child and Family has met individually with the treatment facilities and he is meeting collectively with them and we are working with them. There is not a resolve to the issue but the ultimate end result will be to have some sense of consistency throughout the system on specialized foster rates.

I cannot say anything more than that except the meetings are ongoing. It was not like there was one meeting and it is finished. This is a process that will take some time to resolve but, in fact, it is an issue that is on the table for discussion and the ultimate end result would be to have a uniformity across the system for special foster rates for all children.

Mr. Martindale: Just for clarification, does uniformity across the system mean that Winnipeg Child and

Family Services will be allowed to have foster homes that are treatment foster homes or special rate foster homes?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed that they do now and that will be maintained.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am a little perplexed then. You know, I have heard these complaints from staff—actually recruiting staff—in Winnipeg Child and Family who are looking for foster homes, and their complaint is they are losing these foster parents to Marymount and Macdonald Youth Services and the reason seems to be the daily rate.

Now, I understand there is currently a difference in what is being provided, and having talked to staff at Marymount and Macdonald Youth Services, I know that they are providing a different kind of service. They are providing treatment foster homes and, you know, it is my understanding that those foster parents have different qualifications, different standards, but why can we not allow Winnipeg Child and Family Services to provide those kinds of homes, as well, so they do not lose foster parents to the other organizations?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess it is an issue that the new CEO at the agency certainly has identified, and there are ongoing negotiations and discussions. I am not sure I can say anything more than that at this point except that he wants to try to ensure that there is some sort of uniformity throughout the system, so we do not have to worry about people moving back and forth from the agency to treatment facilities, that if, in fact, there is a need for a certain level of care, whether it be agency provided or residential treatment, whether it is through the residential treatment system or through the Child and Family Services system, there is some sort of standard support for foster parents that require that level of training or expertise to deal with children. So it is not something that has been resolved, but it certainly is something that the CEO of the Winnipeg agency is working through with the residential treatment facilities.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I guess we will look for announcements again. The minister will be interested to know that I got taken to task by a foster parent who said that we should not continually talk about money,

that they are not being foster parents just for the money, they are doing it because they love children. I think it is a point well taken, but if you look at these reviews and if you look at what they are saying, over and over again we hear that agencies are having trouble finding foster parents. They say that one of the reasons is the need for adequate rates so that parents will stay home and foster. The cuts have been in the basic rate.

I do not hear complaints about people who are—well, I hear some complaints, but I do not hear complaints about people who are getting rates that are near the top of the scale. We also have heard this from the Children's Advocate, who in his 1993 recommendations recommended to the minister that rates be restored that were cut by 11 percent and there were cuts in 1994, several of them.

In 1995, there was a 6 percent rollback for special needs children in foster care, so I am wondering if the minister is willing to look at the rates and see if there is not a relationship between the rates and the willingness of people to foster because that is what we are being told, that is what these reports are saying, and I am interested in knowing what the minister is willing to do about it.

* (1600)

In fact, I believe it is in the executive summary of the operational scan, it says the recruitment training and retention of foster care is seriously troubled. Winnipeg Child and Family Services is experiencing difficulty in securing sufficient foster care within the city and relies extensively on foster homes in rural Manitoba. So we are seeing it in these reviews, we are hearing it from people in recruitment, we are hearing it from the agency, we are hearing it from parents. What is the minister going to do to encourage more foster homes so that we have fewer children in hotels and fewer children in four-bed units? Obviously there is a relationship here.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I hear my honourable friend's comments, but I do want to indicate that I have had the opportunity to have discussions with individual foster parents throughout our community too, and the biggest concern I hear from foster parents is the whole issue of training and connection. It is certainly an issue that I

have raised with the new CEO of the Winnipeg agency, where they believe there is not a strong enough network between foster parents to understand the issues of the children that they are dealing with and the unique circumstances that do arise from time to time.

So I think part of the overall strategy at the agency in the recruitment of foster parents is looking too at how training needs to be done in a more significant way and how we start to connect and recognize foster parents for the valuable contribution that they make. I know that one specific foster parent that I have spoken to on many, many occasions talks about—and here, you know, sometimes I look at British Columbia and I raise the issue of British Columbia with my honourable friend, but she is a foster parent that did foster in British Columbia before they moved to Winnipeg.

She was telling me about the connection of foster parents to foster parents and how the agency—and, I guess, it would be a government agency in British Columbia—made sure that they did foster parent recognition and brought foster parents together on a monthly basis. They did training sessions, and they also recognized specific foster parents for the contributions that they had made. It was an informal process, but something that she felt was extremely valuable and was wondering whether—and she has felt really isolated since she has moved to Manitoba to foster. I have raised this with the CEO at the agency. I think, as part of their foster parent recruitment strategy and their dealing with foster parents, they are starting that kind of activity here.

I know that Lance Barber was really open and really receptive to taking a look at that issue around the training, around how you bring people together and share the positive experiences that fostering brings into a family and into a community. So we have learned something, I think, from someone that has moved from a system in one province that works better than what is happening here. Her complaint has never been the financial resources that she receives but the connection and the training and the opportunities for training. We do—a few years back gave 50 cents per day per child in care to the agencies to provide that training. I think what we want to do is ensure that the foster parents do have some connection and do feel that they are valued in our community and in our society.

So those are some of the things that are happening and that hopefully we will see take place in our Winnipeg agency. I know that rural Manitoba—and we have not even talked about the northeast piece yet of the Winnipeg agency and what might happen there, but I know that they do depend a lot on the rural communities that are part of the Winnipeg agency for foster placements.

One of the recommendations in the Operational Review was to look at some sort of a central inventory of foster homes right throughout the province so that you did not have one agency with vacant foster homes and foster parents hoarding them in case they needed them where another area or another agency had real need and there were not enough foster parents. So those kinds of things need to happen. I know that we are working away at the recommendations that were made to see whether some of them can be implemented, what makes sense and how we can have a better system. I also do know that the agency certainly has focused in Winnipeg on recruitment of foster homes, and hopefully we will have, as time goes by, more and more homes available to us.

I know that we have attempted to work with Ma Mawi. I know the Manitoba Metis Federation has raised the issue of training and recruitment of Metis foster families. We will be working through the committee that we have set up in Winnipeg to see whether there is the ability to recruit and train foster parents in the aboriginal community, so we have culturally appropriate homes. Mr. Chairperson, those things are all in progress at some stage or another, but the discussion, the dialogue is happening, and, again, no easy undertaking, but it is a direction we have to move.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement for the committee to take a five-minute recess? [agreed] We will resume proceedings at 10 after four.

The committee recessed at 4:08 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:19 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Would the committee please come to order. When the committee recessed, we were on line 9.4. Child and Family Services (a) Child and Family Support (1) Child, Family and Community Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I really do not know how this minister has the nerve to talk about foster parents feeling isolated and not supported when it was her government in 1993 that cut the grant to the Manitoba Foster Parent Association. Ever since then, we have been hearing that foster parent feels isolated and unsupported. It is really strange to hear this minister five years later talking about foster parents feeling isolated and unsupported when it was her own government that cut the grant to an organization that did try and provide support to them.

I am wondering if the minister is willing to help a new organization to get organized that could provide support to foster parents.

* (1620)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it might be interesting information for my honourable friend to note that the foster parent that I talked to that moved here from British Columbia indicated that there was no formal foster parent association that received any government grant in British Columbia to support ongoing operations, but it was, in fact, the agencies that—and, I guess it is a central agency in British Columbia; they do not have mandated agencies under their legislation. Do they or do they? [interjection] It is partial. But interesting to note that there was not any government grant or support to a formal organization or structure, but there was more connection in British Columbia than there is here. So I just wanted to put that information on the record, and she felt that there was no necessity to support that formal structure.

I think that in discussions with the CEO in the Winnipeg agency, he believes they can play a significant role in supporting foster parents through the grant that we give them, the 50 cents per day per child in care for training and support for foster parents.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the Operational Review on page 111, in addition to saying that the

foster care system is in crisis and that foster parents are receiving poor support, says that there is a need for a program of subsidized adoption because, as they say, a foster parent who cares for a high-needs child stops receiving financial support on adoption. This is a powerful disincentive to the adoption of children who cost well above basic rates.

Is this something that the government is willing to consider?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we heard about the issue of subsidized adoption and some recommendations to the Zuefle report, too. Through our new adoption legislation, there is provision for financial support for adoptive parents. It was there under the old legislation, too, but it certainly was not a well-used piece of the legislation, and we are certainly encouraging that kind of activity and the financial support.

I guess I have always had a bit of a hangup on the word "subsidized" adoption, because I do not think we ever want to say that we are going to pay people to adopt children. But if there are special needs required by children as a result of additional medical needs or special educational needs or additional supports rather than the normal supports that you would provide to your own child or an adoptive child, there is provision in the act. I guess it was not a well-used piece of legislation, but we are encouraging that to happen to enhance the ability for some children with higher needs to be adopted. So it is there. The provision is there, and we are encouraging its use.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, moving on to another topic since we are running out of time for this section, could the minister tell me if there have been any meetings in recent months or even in recent years to discuss the establishment of a mandated aboriginal child welfare agency, and if so, what were the results of those discussions and what is your government's position?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That has been a recommendation that has been made from time to time in different reports, and that is the sole purpose of the committee that I talked about a little earlier that has been set up with the MMF, the AMC, the Aboriginal Council of

Winnipeg, the Social Planning Council, Child and Youth Secretariat, the Child and Family Services agency in Winnipeg, my department and Ma Mawi. It is to look at exactly that issue and make recommendations on how to deal in the most appropriate fashion with aboriginal people in Winnipeg needing access to the child welfare system.

I am not sure what the results of that dialogue and discussion will be. We have had three meetings already of that committee and the fourth is scheduled for next week. I will await their recommendations on what they believe needs to happen in Winnipeg.

Mr. Martindale: In the absence of a mandated agency or in the meantime until one gets established—if that eventually happens—is the minister interested in providing more resources to existing agencies, such as Ma Mawi, who are providing nonmandated services, but there is always the possibility of giving an existing agency more responsibility or more funding for doing some of the things that they are already doing?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are always interested in looking to provide better services for families, and one way that we have helped to support Ma Mawi is through the family group conferencing process, the announcement that we made for Ma Mawi as the lead organization in pulling together members of the community, the professionals and family members to look at how we can better meet the needs of individual family members in conjunction—it is the one at Gilbert Park.

Ma Mawi is the lead with the Gilbert Park housing association, Nor'West Co-op, the police service, the Child and Family Services agency, I guess public health through Nor'West. I think those are the partners that are involved, and Ma Mawi has the lead on that, and there are dollars available for that project.

So those are ways, concrete examples of how we can work in a co-operative way when there is community need. I also have been having discussions, ongoing discussions with Ma Mawi around adolescent pregnancy, and there certainly may be some partnerships that can be formed and may be announcements made in the near future around how we might deal with some of those issues. So we are working in a very significant way with them.

Quite frankly, a lot of the work that is being done today is on the prevention side in the Winnipeg agency too, and if, in fact, we can partner with community and have community in some instances take the lead on some of those prevention activities, there may be less of a requirement for the mandated agencies to do all of that work in isolation.

That is what the community told us when we did our community consultation on Families First, was that sometimes it is a little more nonthreatening to families if someone from a community organization works with them rather than the agency that is there to snatch and grab your kids. So, if we can develop those kinds of partnerships where community can take the lead, I think we may be able to have better results with families and working with them before we get into a crisis situation.

* (1630)

So we are and will continue to do those kinds of things as they make sense, while we work through the process of whether a mandated aboriginal agency is the right solution or not. I have to say that I think sometimes there is a bit of differing opinion between the urban aboriginal people and the bands that have responsibility. There are some issues to work out in that respect.

I am not sure we will have a quick resolution to a mandated agency in Winnipeg. I mean, some of the issues that have to be worked out, of course, is who would have control. Is it the urban aboriginal population or is it the bands or the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs that would take responsibility and control of a mandated agency? There is no easy answer here, but there has to be a meeting of the minds, and we have to all work together around that. In the meantime, if there are things that we can do in a nonmandated way to ensure that there is more aboriginal presence and participation, we will do that.

I do want to indicate too that outside of Winnipeg, in the Lynn Lake example, where we set up the family group conferencing, it is in partnership with the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre who is the lead up there on that project. So those are ways that we can involve the community and the aboriginal community in trying to find the solutions, even without a mandate.

Mr. Martindale: I have in front of me an article from the Winnipeg Free Press from March 29, 1997, that says, the headline says, Fast end to Anishinabe turmoil vowed. I believe Mr. Bruce Unfried is still there. The word "fast," I guess, is open to interpretation, but I am wondering if the minister can tell me how long she thinks her staff will be managing this agency and when they will be back on a self-managed basis.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have been following this issue and I understand that we are getting close to a very positive resolution in Anishinabe, that we certainly have, through the services of Bruce Unfried and the department, established a very stable and co-operative relationship, have worked with the chiefs and band councils and we have a very much more stable financial and service delivery in that area. My understanding is that they have recruited or are in the process of recruiting a First Nations individual to run that agency and are very close to finding a resolution. No offer has been made as yet but it—[interjection] Oh, an offer has been made, pardon me, and we are just awaiting acceptance of that offer, and so it has been a positive process, not an easy undertaking but a positive resolution, I think, to a difficult situation.

Mr. Martindale: When Seven Oaks Centre was shut down, it was replaced with a stabilization unit. Can the minister tell me if this unit is accessible 24 hours a day?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think the shutdown of Seven Oaks, there were several components of the new service delivery system. One was the crisis stabilization unit, the other was mobile crisis teams, a 24-hour help line or phone line, a brief treatment team.

Mr. Chairperson, I have some statistics to tell you what has happened since, I guess this is since May, no, this is at May 1998, and I guess it is our experience from January till April 30. There were 574 requests for service, and as a result of the 24-hour phone line, 121 of those cases were resolved by telephone intervention and the mobile crisis team was involved in 453 cases. Out of those 453 cases that the mobile crisis team responded to, there were 365 different children served.

There were 88 repeat requests for the mobile crisis team. Of the cases that the mobile crisis team dealt with, 122 were referred to brief treatment, and the brief

treatment therapy workers followed up, and I guess those 122 required up to one month's follow-up by a brief therapy worker.

Okay, the crisis stabilization units, the boys operated by Macdonald Youth Services and Neecheewan had 54 admissions. There were 39 different individuals, different boys. Fifteen were readmissions, 18 boys were returned home to the same placement after the stabilization period and 21 boys were relocated.

The girls stabilization unit, there were 89 admissions, comprising 64 different girls so that meant there were 25 readmissions. Forty-six of the girls returned home or to the same placement they had come from and 18 were relocated. All children who were admitted to one of the crisis stabilization units are followed up or supported by a senior case manager.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for those statistics. Is the girls crisis stabilization unit at Marymount?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, it is. I am sorry; I may not have mentioned that.

Mr. Martindale: Are they both 24-hour-a-day units?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The crisis stabilization units are 24-hour-a-day service units, so kids are there for a full 24-hour period. The access is through emergency referral services, so the phone lines are open 24 hours a day.

You may want to know where the referrals come from. Some of them, I guess there were 35 referrals from Winnipeg Child and Family Services after-hours program and generally from Child and Family Services, primarily Winnipeg but some rural agencies referred 103. Those are day-time referrals.

Thirty-five requests for support after hours, 103 during the day, 33 from foster parents, 45 from group homes, 12 from residential care facilities, 27 from the psychiatric health centre. Individual referrals and/or crisis situations were 181, and others, that would be schools, crisis lines, probations, police or youth shelters, there were 17. That makes up the 453.

* (1640)

Mr. Martindale: I guess what I really was trying to find out was whether or not the crisis stabilization unit is open 24 hours a day to accept children. Is it accessible 24 hours a day?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, there is the ability to admit to the crisis stabilization units 24 hours a day, but I think that the first and primary focus is to try to deal with the issue without moving them into the crisis stabilization unit, and therefore we have mobile crisis teams that go into the home and try to provide support in home to see if the situation can be stabilized with supports that come in and deal with that. If the ultimate end result has to be that they are admitted or have to be removed from their place of residence, then that is where the stabilization units kick in. There is the ability to access those or be admitted to those 24 hours a day. The main focus is to try to stabilize a family or an individual so that removal and placement in the stabilization unit does not need to occur. When it does, the beds are there and the ability is there to admit 24 hours a day.

Mr. Martindale: And they take children or youth up to the age of 18?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, there is the capacity to admit up to age 18, but I think the experience in our crisis stabilization units is similar to the experience in Seven Oaks and that is that the children are, on the most part, younger than 18. But there is the ability to admit up to 18 if that is required.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, is someone keeping track of where the children go, whether they are admitted to the stabilization unit or not, if they are referred somewhere else? I know the minister gave me a lot of statistics. Are there statistics being kept on where they go after they are released from the stabilization unit? Perhaps the minister is giving me some of those as well.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are in the process of trying to get that information available through technology, but we can manually pull together that information and provide it. But we are keeping statistics on where they go if they are relocated, and we are keeping statistics on how many reunifications there are, people who go back into their own homes or back into the same placement that they came from. So we can get that information.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I am aware that there was a proposal submitted to Winnipeg Child and Family Services by New Directions for children, youth and families for a neighbourhood resource for juvenile prostitutes sometime around April 1997, and that the original proposal was to use a unit in Lord Selkirk development. But my understanding is that the tenants were not in favour of that and probably was not a good location for it but that the request is still there for a neighbourhood resource centre.

I am wondering if that is still being given active consideration or if it has already been approved or what is happening to that proposal.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it has not been approved as we speak. I think what is happening presently around the whole issue of child prostitution is a bit of a broader strategy, and it is being worked on through the Children and Youth Secretariat involving everyone, including New Directions, Child Find, juvenile prostitutes themselves, the police service—[interjection] Yes, I indicated I think the City of Winnipeg Police and Corrections.

As a result of the steering committee's report and recommendations on child prostitution, the Children and Youth Secretariat have certainly been working towards trying to find a solution. It is not a circumstance that is unique to Manitoba. I know the secretariat was involved in the forum in Victoria that dealt with child prostitution, and we are looking at an overall strategy. I guess the last meeting—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister was in the process of responding to a very important question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think if I can indicate that it is an issue that everyone in the community involved in child prostitution is working on, no easy answer again to this one, but I think some of the things that we have done as a government—certainly on the Justice side, could have an impact, and that is the confiscation of cars when men are caught sexually exploiting children—are changes to The Child and Family Services Act that allow us to include third party sexual offenders which would include johns on the Child Abuse Registry. Those kinds of activities have been undertaken.

But as I said, there is not one easy answer to all of this, and we have everyone in the community who might have some interest in dealing with the issue of child prostitution involved in a process with the Child and Youth Secretariat to see whether we cannot come up with some other answers.

* (1650)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I am pleased that the minister brought up the judicial system.

I have with me a clipping from the Winnipeg Free Press from January 17, 1997, which talks about johns' names going on the Abuse Registry, which was something that this minister did through amending The Child and Family Services Act. But the former director of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, Mr. Cooper, says if the law very clearly stated that sexual exploitation of children included purchasing sex from them or counselling them for prostitution, there would be much more concerted action against the johns.

Now, I do not know whether we are talking about amendments to the Criminal Code or Manitoba legislation, either in the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Toews) department or this department, but is that something that is under active consideration?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we did what we could do under The Child and Family Services Act and certainly identify a child that is being sexually exploited as the child in need of protection and therefore can charge johns with child abuse and therefore put them on the Child Abuse Registry. That was what we had the ability to do under our legislation. The issues that, I think, Keith Cooper was talking about, there would be criminal code activity, and that would be a responsibility of the federal government.

Mr. Martindale: I would hope that this minister and her government would encourage the federal government to make those changes to help attack this very serious problem.

Yesterday, the Leader of the official opposition and I asked questions about 16- and 17-year-olds, and I have some questions on it, but I am wondering if the minister would like to use this occasion to reply to

those questions that were taken as notice. If you want, it would be entirely appropriate to do it here.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I could try to respond to them and provide information on the record. You know our policy to 16- and 17-year-olds has not changed. I mean, The Child and Family Services Act is still very specific on what service is to be provided to children under the age of majority, and our policy for 16- and 17-year-olds really does have, I guess, a few different components. Certainly, if a family is in a crisis and we can work with that family to resolve the issue, we do that. If, in fact, it is deemed advisable for a voluntary placement agreement to happen and all parties agree that that is the right direction to go, that happens.

I guess the issue comes when there is a youth that is not prepared to participate in any type of treatment or activity. I know, under The Child and Family Services Act and children that are in need of protection in Winnipeg, there are approximately 100 youths in independent living situations.

Now our policy states clearly that, when a child in care is not prepared to actively be involved in a service plan, agency involvement may be limited to the provision of financial support based on levels provided to a single unemployed person with the Social Allowances Program, but it says in our policy that agencies will monitor these placements through the direct administration of the monthly support payments. So that is our policy clearly.

It is my understanding that in most instances cheques are not just mailed to kids in independent living situations, but that they are provided to—the money is provided through bi-weekly contact with workers in the agency. It is my understanding that there is always an attempt to connect those that are in need of protection to some sort of formal or informal treatment, but we cannot compel children that do not want to be involved in treatment to take treatment, so I do not know how many questions that answers.

I certainly got the indication from reading through the questions that there was some sense that there were some children out there that did not feel they were being served well through the child welfare system.

Certainly I would want to know of any specific cases of individuals who felt that they wanted treatment and the agency was not willing or able to provide that kind of support to them.

If there were any specifics, I would certainly investigate that, because our policy states very clearly that if the individual wants to be involved in any type of treatment activity the agency should be working with them to try to find the proper supports.

Mr. Martindale: Obviously, we are dealing with a very difficult situation here. and I suppose it really depends on one's point of view. maybe even one's point of view of human nature or childhood growth and development. I do not know. Because on the one hand you can say it should be up to the youth to make a choice, that if they want treatment or if they want help, then it is much more likely than anything that is done for them or anything they do is going to be successful, that if they do not want help and they do not want treatment, they are probably going to run, to use the slang, or they are going to resist treatment or the treatment is not going to be successful, so I suppose that is one view.

The other view and the one that I hear is from parents who are saying we want the agency to take the child into care and we want them to force treatment. Just this morning, I was asked to go as an advocate with a parent who lives in Burrows constituency, and I was unable to attend, sent my constituency assistant to the psych health unit, children's psych health unit where discharge plans were being made for a youth, and the mother was saying he is engaging in high-risk activities, he is on the street. In fact, I talked to her yesterday, and she phoned me this morning—can you call these people to order, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would ask that committee members, outside the member for Burrows and the minister, when they are in discussion, refrain from extra discussion beyond the committee.

Point of Order

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, actually discussing the water qualities and whether the quality of water being served

might, in fact, meet the quality standards for families. So I am sorry, if we disrupted.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Burrows, to continue with your question.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, for calling the members to order.

Yesterday when I talked to this parent, she said that her son was involved in high-risk activities. This morning when she phoned to see if an advocate, myself or someone else would be at that meeting, she said that she was just informed that he has hepatitis C. So, you know, we are talking about a youth who is at risk to himself and at risk to other people, and a voluntary placement agreement broke down. He was in treatment for substance abuse, and upon discharge went AWOL. She wants the agency to take him into care so he can be forced into treatment. I have had similar discussions with other parents in the past.

I have three pieces of casework with me where the situation is quite similar and where I was talking to the agency, and in every case the agency says we are not prepared to do anything because the youth will not cooperate. If they do not want to participate in the plan, then there is nothing we can do. The parents are saying we want our son or daughter to be forced into treatment. If you look at the Operational Review, on page 129, it says at this point relatively few children over 16 are apprehended and brought into care.

The big concern here is that because of high caseloads, because of lack of time, because of overburdened staff, for a whole lot of reasons, we keep hearing from staff that 16- and 17-year-olds are getting very little service. In fact, in meeting with the Children's Advocate's office, what we were told was that the staff have a big sigh of relief if the youth get apprehended by the police and get taken to the Manitoba Youth Centre because then they are the problem of the judicial system, and then Child and Family Services no longer have to deal with them.

There is no discharge plan for them when they get out of a detention facility because the workers do not visit them there. Then they are involved with two systems or they have had a history of involvement with two different systems, the judicial system and Child and Family Services.

I guess my question is what is the minister going to do to make sure that the needs of 16- and 17-year-olds are being met?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., and as previously agreed, committee rise.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs.

When the committee began consideration of these Estimates this morning, it was agreed that the questioning would be free-ranging and would not be done on a line-by-line basis. I now open the floor for questioning.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister if, when we are talking about capital projects, infrastructure and so on, and I have recommended this to previous ministers, to two of them that we have had before, and I have also been approached by NACC communities along with some chiefs and councils particularly in the northern area where some are wondering whether it might be more feasible to, because the NACC communities have to wait such a long time before they get infrastructure, and I am talking specifically sewer and water. Everybody likes to have sewer and water in their homes.

Sometimes I get asked a question: Why do the community council and the chief and council not get together, especially those communities where the reserve and the community council is right adjacent to each other—why do they not get together, the provincial government and the federal government, to see about maybe having joint capital projects, thereby making the

money go longer and probably benefiting a lot more people that way?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs): We encourage that and hope you will support us in that encouragement and get more results in, I think, a changing set of attitudes, where what was seen to be virtually impossible because of the unwillingness to collaborate is being replaced by more good will and sense of practicality which is creating an environment where that may be now possible. We would look forward to working with you to make that possible within areas in your constituency.

* (1450)

Mr. Lathlin: Perhaps I will ask the minister: Has he ever been approached by community councils and/or chiefs and councils, and secondly, does he have an idea of how many communities there are in the North where this kind of an arrangement would be feasible?

Mr. Newman: We have the beginnings of that kind of arrangement to varying degrees in Easterville, Norway House, Cross Lake, and it would also be a very viable thing to do in Moose Lake and Berens River.

Mr. Lathlin: I would like to ask the minister now whether the capital planning process, not from the government side but from the side of the community councils, has it changed from the days when community councils would be asked to come to Thompson or The Pas or wherever and a Northern Affairs representative would go through the capital plan? In this case we were always talking about \$2 million, and these community councils, representatives would come there with their list of capital projects. They used to call them wish lists, and then get together, prioritize projects and, you know, keeping in mind that they only had \$2 million to work with. Has that changed at all?

Mr. Newman: The situation has changed from those days. We now have community participation, representation by community on a board. The community through participation on the board has created criteria. We have a neutral chair, and the prioritization process is done by public participation

and submissions and application of the criteria by that board.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister tell us what would be the criteria before, say, if I were from Cormorant, because Cormorant is more advanced according to the minister's formula—for example, if I were from an aboriginal community—oh, I am going to pick, say, somewhere in Skownan, a small community, for example, if I wanted to put in sewer and water in my community that has 50 homes, what would be the criteria before my project ever got on the list?

Mr. Newman: The capital approval board process bases their recommendations on three categories and within funding available. The categories are these: legislative, maintain existing, and new justified projects. The \$2,379,600 allocated is spread throughout these three categories on the following percentage basis: legislative, 70 percent; maintain existing, 20 percent; new justified projects, 10 percent. The legislative requirements include the following criteria: water must be Canadian drinking water standards; sewer must be Manitoba environmental act and regulations standards; the building codes, standards and safety standards required by health and safety laws and regulations. Maintain existing is based on maintaining existing standards of service such as vehicle replacement, building upgrading repairs and road upgrading. New justified projects are based on applications for other municipal infrastructure and equipment.

Mr. Lathlin: This year in the planning process, if I were to come in with my proposal to build sewer and water, how would I be treated? How would the minister determine whether or not I got funding for my project?

Mr. Newman: That particular situation would fall under the legislative category and the criteria that I mentioned. The extra \$1 million in this budget devoted to capital would simply enhance the funding for those applications.

Mr. Lathlin: I do not know if the minister, Mr. Chairperson, has already answered my question. I was going to ask him: given what exists there now in terms

of availability of funds and so on, I wonder how long I would wait before my project was ever funded.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, to give you an illustration of the time lapse between application and funding, the commitments for the 1998-99 fiscal year were made in September 1996 for one half year '98-99, and for the second half of '98-99, commitments were approved in September 1997. So there is that lapse in terms of applying, approving and then there is another lapse in terms of actual implementation. It has been pointed out to me, there is a design time in there as well before the actual construction proceeds.

* (1500)

Mr. Lathlin: What if my project were not to be funded, what would happen then?

Mr. Newman: They would reapply the next year if they still wanted it or they would come up with some creative way for addressing the problem using their own initiative, either themselves or in collaboration with other communities and jurisdictions and funding sources.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister if—I believe he said, or somewhere along the way I picked up this multiyear planning. Is there that type of a planning system with regard to capital that Northern Affairs—and again, I would like to ask him, if there is a long-term multiyear plan for capital, how is it updated to determine what projects are going on line next?

Mr. Newman: Consistent again with the philosophy of the sustainable self-reliant community strategy, the communities in the applications and the invitations to apply must address a multiyear approach, and they must advance multiyear approaches. It is up to their strategizing, their own planning, their own capabilities, knowledge of the amount of dollars that are available and the support and assistance of resources in the department that the multiyear plan is created and revised. So it is community driven.

Mr. Lathlin: I have two short questions here. Well, maybe they are not short. The first one is short anyway. He mentioned something about a constable

who had gone out for training for one week, a community constable, I guess. I would like to ask the minister, Mr. Chair: Where would this constable go for training, what kind of training would he be getting and who provides it, and thirdly, how many community constables do we have in the NACC communities?

Mr. Newman: My staff are checking to confirm the number of existing constables.

The answer to your questions are: where—D Division provides RCMP, and the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba provides drug and alcohol training. The exact number I will undertake to get for you, hopefully before the day is out.

Mr. Lathlin: Is the minister aware of how First Nations train their RCMP, Mr. Chairperson?

Mr. Newman: Yes, and we partner with them in that training process from time to time.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairperson, I know some First Nations still follow the—I do not know what I would call it—band constable training program, I will call it, because I do not know what else to call it, whereby constables from the reserve are sent out for training, usually one or two weeks, but more and more First Nations are going to a more comprehensive training. As a matter of fact, we have quite a number of graduates now who have gone through the RCMP training depot in Regina where they train for six months, come back and work for First Nations as band constables with exactly the same kind of training as the RCMP get, except the First Nations constables are not allowed to have guns on them.

I am just wondering: Would the minister not agree that that would be far more or far better training for community constables, rather than just sending them for one week training at a time?

Mr. Newman: The answer to your question is by all means this is something that we have not only looked at and we understand but our community members have been involved in from time to time very successfully. I attended a policing meeting with the Southeast Tribal Council and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) just last week, and it struck me very positively when the

lead RCMP person represented at that meeting identified himself as being from Camperville, and he was an aboriginal person, a Metis, he said, who had started off and worked his way up through the system. So we have some wonderful role models like him. Wherever I go, I see Constable Sam Anderson and people like that, who are role models.

My deputy advises me that there are a number of success stories like that that have come out of the Northern Affairs communities, and we are very aggressively supportive of further involvement like that. Some of the programs the First Nations are involved in through summer programs and the intern program are excellent programs which are working well and we would certainly love our community members to be involved in as well.

The answer to your question about how many community constables there are, I am advised that there are 11 from 11 different communities, Northern Affairs communities. I can give you the names of those communities if you want. To illustrate the numbers of community members for the record that I am advised have become RCMP officers and therefore role models from their Northern Affairs communities, two have come from Barrows, one from Manigotagan, one from Berens River, and one from Moose Lake, for a total of five, and I have already indicated the one from Camperville.

* (1510)

Mr. Lathlin: The next question I have, Mr. Chair, is I just wanted the minister to give us an update on this. I am not sure exactly what it is called, but somebody told me at one time that it was called a round table on—it was a committee anyway where I believe the previous Minister of Northern Affairs at one time had gone to Thompson and had a meeting with several community leaders, and from that meeting emerged this round table. One of the issues they talk about all the time is highways and transportation. Committee members are comprised of representatives from MKO and I believe NACC and from the towns in the North like, I believe, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids and Thompson.

I was just wondering if the minister would care to update us as to whether that particular round table is

still relevant. If so, who is in it, and what really is its mandate?

Mr. Newman: I had the privilege of concluding the memorandum of agreement with MKO, then represented by Grand Chief George Muswagon, and urban industrial communities by Bill Comaskey and NACC president Sonny Cline in 1997, in the spring or early summer.

The concept at the initial stages was to have a huddle group, a group of leaders of the northern communities, and that is the aboriginal population in the North representing First Nations through MKO, the NACC community committees, committee councils through NACC, the urban industrial communities of the North representing communities like Thompson, Flin Flon and The Pas, Lynn Lake, et cetera, to have them get together with the support, encouragement and resource support of the provincial government through me who would be also the means of accessing other government departments, and when appropriate, the Economic Development Board which I sit on.

The MKO, I know, not only has supported it by signing the agreement and participating at meetings, but actually, as I understand it, provides the office for the northern round table. I know that the Thicket Portage mayor, Bob McCleverty, operates out of that office.

The identified current members of the northern round table are MKO Grand Chief Francis Flett, Nelson House Chief Jerry Primrose, Lynn Lake Mayor Ollie Dulewich, Thompson Mayor Bill Comaskey, Camperville Mayor and NACC President Sonny Clyne, and Wabowden Councillor Reg Mead.

Mr. Chairperson, when I am invited to participate in the meetings, I have never refused and have enthusiastically participated. When asked to share my ideas, I shared my ideas. When I was asked to help them access—I know in Lynn Lake I had suggested they look to the credit union movement when the CIBC chose to close the branch, and facilitated access to the Credit Union Central, arranged a special meeting in Winnipeg during the Mining and Minerals Convention November of 1997, for them to meet with the credit union movement and get all the details, not only for the benefit of Lynn Lake but all Northern Affairs

communities and urban industrial communities. Pursuant to that, I know a feasibility study was done by the credit union in a shared expense way by a particular credit union and Lynn Lake. I know Wabowden was looking at a credit union. I know Thompson had its interest, so that was a kind of exercise that we went through collaboratively.

We have discussed housing issues and the problem of offers there of housing while people are going to school in Thompson, for example. We have discussed northern transportation issues: Hudson Bay railway and their problems with quality of service. There were meetings arranged, and to my delight my latest report through Bob McCleverty is that things have improved considerably in terms of standards of service.

In the area of challenges in the forestry industry, there were concerns about Tolko so we had staff go to work and gathered the facts and ascertained policy and worked with the concerned communities. Particularly I know Wabowden had real concerns. My understanding is that things have been worked out generally to the satisfaction of the concerned people at this time. I know that pursuant to this I had a one-on-one meeting with Allan Thorlakson of Tolko to make very clear my position as minister and what I expected from Tolko.

That, hopefully, gives you an idea. There are no limits on the kinds of things they can consider, and I have invited them to absolutely come up with the best ideas and come up with a plan. If the kind of collaboration you referred to is supporting, could be led by these community leaders, we will be there in resource and support ways to facilitate achievement of those kinds of things.

Mr. Lathlin: The other question I had for the minister, Mr. Chairperson, when allocating funds to the various Northern Affairs communities, how is that determined in terms of how much money a community might get? How do you determine the level of funding, for example, Norway House would get?

Mr. Newman: Up until the self-reliant communities initiative being approved, the department had operated on a need basis. The initiative as one of its component parts as a funding formula approach and the formula

has been developed to allocate municipal grants in a fair, consistent manner taking into consideration the geographic and remote conditions of individual communities. There is a base for the formula, based on the existing infrastructure and services and service and industry standards. We wanted to make sure that the formula had integrity to it that was objective, so we had it reviewed by outside expertise and got some feedback, so refined it and incorporated the recommendations we got.

I can go on to indicate the areas of emphasis under the formula we touched on earlier, but I will only deal with that if you want me to take the time.

* (1520)

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairperson, I just wanted to know what helps the minister determine when deciding how much money is supposed to go to Norway House; that is what I wanted to know. I guess I am more interested in the base, you know, like what base do you use. In some communities, for example, or in some funding formula, government agencies will use the population figures, for example. That is where you start and then from there you factor in geographical area, environment, remoteness and so on. Is that basically how it works at Northern Affairs?

Mr. Newman: I want to make sure that this is precise in terms of accuracy, Mr. Chairperson. The guiding principles in the development of the funding formula were: (1) sustainability, (2) accountability, (3) shared responsibility, (4) fair and consistent, (5) guaranteed safe environment, (6) appropriate level of maintenance standards, and (7) simple and understandable.

The priorities incorporated in the sustainability formula were: provision for vehicle replacement and sufficient maintenance capability to ensure health and safety standards are met; flexibility to meet unanticipated costs like water breaks, vehicle breakdown, et cetera; audit and insurance capability; improved salaries to attract qualified staff and an allowance for training; consideration of the cost of living in the salary scale; basic standard for locally generated revenue; administrative standards set; recreation applied to communities based on criteria for part time or full time; allowance for constable where

RCMP service is not readily available; allowance for fire department; remoteness or geographic factor included in operations and maintenance costs along with industry standards; formula is infrastructure- and service-driven; performance and accountability standards included.

Mr. Lathlin: The other thing I wanted to ask the minister is: the population for the NACC communities, is it static or is it going down, coming up, or where is it at?

Mr. Newman: It diminished noticeably after Bill C-31.

Mr. Lathlin: Could the minister tell us: does he have any idea approximately by how much?

Mr. Newman: It diminished from about 10,000 to 8,000, roughly.

Mr. Lathlin: Does the minister, Mr. Chairperson, allocate any funding at Northern Affairs based on population figures?

Mr. Newman: Our Municipal Tax Sharing Programs are based on population and also the VLT grant.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I only have a few questions. I would like to refer back to what my colleague, our critic, was asking previously, and that is in the area of how funding is determined for each community council. On behalf of my colleague the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), who had to leave because of a previous engagement that she could not miss later on today, one of the recurring, or an issue that comes up periodically and rightly so probably for many years, particularly in the community of Barrows that she represents and also other communities including areas that I am familiar with, Seymourville and Manigotagan, there appears to be—I would like to ask the minister how funding is determined for salary.

Now he indicated previously, just a few minutes ago, that naturally each community council would like to get the most qualified staff members, but it would appear that people like clerks and equipment operators and people that are employed by community councils have not had their salaries increased for several years now,

and certainly in some communities one could argue that the salaries of some of these hardworking staff people are not—there salaries are not comparable to doing equal work in another area of the province, for example.

My question, simply, Mr. Chairperson, is: how do we determine for the staffpersons working for community councils, how is it determined that they are receiving the adequate salary, and who determines that salary, I guess, is what I am asking?

Mr. Newman: The department has guidelines for salaries, but it is nothing but a guideline, and again, consistent with the philosophy of the self-reliant communities initiative, the councils can establish the rates, and they must never be less than the minimum wage. As indicated in the movement towards sustainability, it is recognized that to retain and attract the quality people necessary to perform increasingly challenging tasks that, with relinquishment of the responsibility by the department and the entrusting responsibility of the community leaders, there is a need to have better trained staff. That is why resources are being dedicated for the purpose of training and for increasing the capacity to pay larger wages to the employees of the councils.

Mr. Robinson: Along the same line, in the area of benefits and pensions for these staff members for community councils, I wonder if the minister could give us an idea as to how that is being factored in with the new initiative and, also people that are not in the new initiative as yet but have probably the same workload as people that are now looking at opting into the new initiative.

* (1530)

Mr. Newman: All employees of Northern Affairs community councils are contributing members to the municipal benefits board, and their pension and other group benefits come through the auspices of that organization.

Mr. Robinson: I would like to refer back to the subject of community constables. The minister told us that there are 11 community constables in 11 different communities currently. One of the big initiatives right now with respect to First Nations, and again the

minister made reference to that when he was indicating that he was at a meeting with, I believe it was Southeast Resource Development Council, certainly the First Nations policing policy, which is a 52-48 program with the federal government and the provincial government throwing in their 48 percent and 52 percent of course representing the federal government, Manitoba is one of the provinces that lacks behind, together with Newfoundland, in this particular program, although the argument will be made by the government that the Dakota Ojibway Police Service has been funded under this very progressive program.

I would like to ask the minister whether or not some of these NACC communities that do have community constables could opt into such a program, or, at the very least, side agreements could be made in areas where it would be deemed appropriate. I am thinking of a community like Berens River which is next door to a big reserve, for example. In the event, let us say southeast embarks upon an agreement with the federal and provincial governments on the First Nations policing policy program or the 52-48 program, whether or not there could be a side arrangement for the community council at Berens River to latch onto the Berens River First Nation which is next door to the community.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chairperson, I thank you for raising that idea because it coincides with my own thoughts, and absolutely. The honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) made a point about collaborating on capital projects, and exactly the same rationale we discussed there justifies the collaborative effort with First Nations in terms of a policing service and having heard the RCMP's proposition and having heard their apologies, together with the federal government's apologies, for not moving forward with more dispatch over the years in these kinds of initiatives.

There is no doubt the RCMP are making the overtures and the commitments to do these kinds of agreements, and by all means the Northern Affairs communities are encouraged by me, will get my support, my staff's support and having input into these opportunities, and if they enhance the chances or the priorities of a neighbouring First Nations community to get that sort of local police support and presence, we will be enthusiastically supportive.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, not for a moment am I implying that independence or local authority by local community councils be given up in these maybe side agreements that we are talking about with policing authorities. The scenario could be that a year from now we will have a First Nations policing policy agreement in southeast, for example—that is what I am implying—but I do not want to say for a moment that the Berens River community council should lose their authority to police their own community. I believe that the minister and I are on the same wavelength in that regard.

There is an issue that my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) raised and that is the issue of the municipal tax-sharing arrangement, or perhaps the minister was the one who raised this. I want to talk briefly on the subject of unconditional grants. Now I understand this to work this way. It comes from Finance to Rural Development and then ultimately to the Department of Northern Affairs, and then at that point, it is allocated to the communities, including First Nations communities in the province of Manitoba.

One of the common complaints that we get on a regular basis from our constituents is that in recent years we have seen a decline, or there is perceived to be a decline in the population of some First Nations communities and some Northern Affairs communities—and the minister just pointed out that there has been a decline in Northern Affairs communities because of the Bill C-31 law. However, it has been argued by First Nations communities and other aboriginal communities that the decline is based on old statistics, population statistics that are not up to date.

So I wonder if the minister could comment on how these unconditional grants are determined, not only for First Nations communities but indeed some of the NACC communities that are part of his responsibility.

Mr. Newman: The provincial government distributes the provincial-municipal tax sharing grant to all municipalities, Northern Affairs communities and First Nations, and the population data utilized in allocating the grant is 1996 Stats Canada data for the current year, and the grant is distributed under The Provincial-Municipal Tax Sharing Act.

The criteria for grant distribution under the act is No. 1 under subsection 4, sub 4 of The Income Tax Act, Manitoba. It provides the percentage of personal tax payable under the federal act shall be 52 percent, of which 2.2 percent shall be for municipal purposes. Subsection 7, subsection 4.1 of The Income Tax Act, Manitoba provides that an amount equal to 1 percent of the taxable income of corporations earned in Manitoba shall be for municipal purposes.

A restructuring of provincial-municipal tax sharing payments was approved in 1993. The municipalities, Northern Affairs communities and First Nations receive a basic, per capita payment, and municipalities with direct RCMP policing costs receive a supplement equivalent to triple the basic per capita payment in recognition of policing costs. Municipalities which have a direct responsibility for the costs of policing are identified as municipal cost communities, whereas those that are policed at provincial expense under RCMP agreement are identified as provincial cost communities.

* (1540)

Annually, the Minister of Finance forwards to Northern Affairs the amount of unconditional tax sharing grants, funds to be distributed to all Northern Affairs communities and all First Nations in Manitoba. Upon receipt of monies the Minister of Northern Affairs forwards to each community and First Nation the appropriate amount based on the latest Statistics Canada numbers available. Northern Affairs communities and First Nations are not subject to RCMP policing costs. Their portion of the provincial-municipal tax sharing grant decreased in 1993.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, the answer to the question is helpful. However, I want to ask the minister whether or not the provincial figures, particularly in areas that it is responsible for, like NACC communities, where it would appear that the unconditional grants or the amount has dwindled the most, but that is not to say that First Nations people and First Nations communities have not experienced similar declines in the grants that they previously received.

Would it make more sense that the numbers the province has at their disposal be more useful than using 1996 StatsCan figures?

Mr. Newman: My deputy, who has been around for many years dealing with this particular issue, advises me that is the way it used to be done and it used to cause a lot of arguments. They find that the Stats Canada reference is a better basis to make those determinations.

Mr. Robinson: I will just leave the subject at that, Mr. Chairperson. I want to just make a few closing remarks, and I do have a question or two for the minister as well. There are several issues that are facing aboriginal people across this nation and indeed in this province, including poverty, justice related issues, airstrips, roads in northern Manitoba, healing initiatives, the need to assist the survivors of the concentration camps that were known as residential schools.

I know that this is a federal government responsibility for the most part, and also there have been repeated calls by many communities to upgrade sewer and water needs in many communities. The Hydro rates, again, are continually raised with us. In spite of the surplus that Hydro realizes, aboriginal communities and First Nations communities still pay among the highest rates in the province of Manitoba and that could be argued as well.

Mr. Chairperson, alcoholism, drug abuse, solvent abuse, family violence—these continue to plague, unfortunately, the aboriginal reality in this province. Urban relocation continues because of one reason or the other. For the most part now it is primarily because of health reasons that many of our people have to relocate to urban environments like Winnipeg, and then what we are faced with now is what can be described as anything less than a dilemma. I know the minister is quite aware of these issues that I have just raised, also the gang-related problems that are existent not only in the city of Winnipeg now, but indeed in other towns and communities throughout the province of Manitoba.

So we have a vast number of issues, a vast number of problems that continue to plague the aboriginal population in this province. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, in the tabling of their report, which was quite comprehensive, and I do not believe anybody here can claim that we read the report in its entirety, but certainly we have made an effort to have a look at some

of the major recommendations contained in the Royal Commission's report.

One of the recommendations in that report was in the area of housing, and certainly First Nations people are considered to be Manitobans as well. One of the recommendations is that governments have to become active in catching up with the housing shortage that is being experienced in many First Nations communities throughout this province. The provinces have been called upon to be a participant in this initiative together with the federal government.

I am wanting to ask the minister as to whether or not the minister has had an opportunity to review that very serious and very needed recommendation, that being an area of housing, where the commission calls on the national government and provincial governments, together in partnership with the First Nations communities, and aboriginal communities, I might add, in order to catch up with the housing backlog that is evident in many communities. I represent many communities, unfortunately, that have two to three families in one dwelling. Sometimes it is not uncommon to see 20 people in a two-bedroom house in some of these communities that I represent.

So I just wanted to solicit the comments of the minister with respect to this very serious issue.

Mr. Newman: Thanks for raising that issue. It is not only timely, but it is certainly one of the highest priorities we have in our whole healthy sustainable communities approach for First Nations and for the Northern Affairs communities that I am directly responsible for.

I will share with you an opportunity, and with it an invitation to provide the support of the First Nations and Northern Affairs communities in your constituencies. We are going to be going to a Native Affairs ministers conference in Quebec City on May 19 and 20, and the federal ministers responsible for my kinds of responsibilities in Manitoba—Minister Goodale and Minister Jane Stewart will be there, as will ministers from the provinces and territories who have responsibilities for Native Affairs. This is pursuant to the Premier's meeting that was held in December of 1997 in Winnipeg.

The approach that we are taking may be unique—I am not sure what other jurisdictions are going to follow this—but we have the opportunity to have a delegation of eight people at that meeting, including myself, and I will be there with our director Harvey Bostrom and one other staffperson, and the other five parts of the delegation will be representatives of the aboriginal community in Manitoba. The whole goal there is to build a collaborative approach at a national table to try and get a focus of the federal government and the combined support of the provincial governments and territories through their Native Affairs ministers to raise that item up.

* (1550)

I have asked those representatives of the aboriginal community to indicate what their top priorities are, and my initial meeting has disclosed that the First Nations appear to want housing to be the No. 1 item, as you have indicated. As a result, I am willing to bring that to the national table and welcome your support in working with them with yourself and your staff support, whatever, in helping us to put together a provincial position which will have some not only chances of being listened to but can be brought to fruition, can actually achieve some practical, tangible results in the short term and the long term. So I describe that as very much an opportunity.

My own view is that, rather than just looking at responding in old ways to old problems, I am encouraging some very creative thinking which might necessarily involve collaborative approaches. My own experience in life and experience in the department and what my northern community members have been telling me is that the best solution to housing is obvious from history, and that is private ownership of housing. People tend to be more responsible for their housing. There is less maintenance, and there is more self-esteem. You build up a competence to practise ownership. That can lead to employment; it can lead to healthier families and all of the things that grow out of—sometimes the personal development that grows out of a better approach to housing, not to speak of the advantages of just more sanitary conditions and less crowding and that kind of thing.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So what are some creative examples? I will share them with you because I think the more ideas that can be put on the table, the better. I have heard ideas like why not deal with problems, the on-reserve problems, such as I have heard on-reserve landlords speak of problems of getting tenants into housing that they own. These are First Nations people on reserve that own houses; they have problems getting tenants in those houses. There are people that choose rather to live in a CMHC house where they get the social assistance to pay for the housing. CMHC and Indian and Northern Affairs will not pay for housing in that commercial-owned house by the landlord. So it does not even encourage people to own houses and rent them out on reserve.

So a novel kind of approach, that I have heard and it is very intriguing to me, is what if you—where you have a Northern Affairs community beside a reserve—converted Crown land into private property, built housing units, condominiums, whatever kinds of housing units people want to live in and rented them out on a commercial basis to people that did have income. That would then at least take some of the pressure off and you would be right adjacent to your communities.

I say to Northern Affairs communities, that is great, they can provide a tax base for the community that can provide customers for services. It can reattract people who are prepared to pay rent or own housing, own condominiums, own homes; it could be subdivisions. All of those kinds of things I am open to listen to. Through multidepartmental involvement, involvement of the private sector, involvement by organizations like Habitat for Humanity and the Mennonite Central Committee, funding bodies like the Communities Economic Development Fund, there are First Nations organizations that do financing, through a more visionary approach by the federal government, those kinds of things can be done.

I could go on and on, honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), on this issue, and I invite your full participation in these kinds of initiatives, working with your constituents, because we are going to be there with them. We like you with us and having a full understanding of what we are doing, and where you think we are doing the right thing, work with us,

where you think we are doing the wrong thing, tell us why but be part of the solution.

We invite that, and in working towards the Quebec meeting, I encourage you to let your views be known to the AMC, let your views be known to the Manitoba Metis Federation, let your views be known to the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

Mr. Robinson: Certainly in preparation for the meeting in Quebec, Mr. Chairperson, on the 19th and 20th of May, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and I will certainly add our voices to some of the areas that we view as troubled areas and areas that need immediate attention, and the minister rightly identified housing as being one of those important needs in many aboriginal communities throughout the province of Manitoba.

I want to conclude by thanking the minister and the staff. Many of the staff we are quite familiar with and certainly are accustomed to sort of work in the environment that we come from, the member for The Pas and myself.

One final question, Mr. Chairperson, before you go line by line, and that is the area of northern transportation and that is airstrips and roads. These things are troubled areas and whenever we are asked, we are in a dilemma because when it comes to northern Manitoba and transportation, we not only have to consider the minister responsible for that particular department, but many times, perhaps the minister will realize this with phone calls to his office that he, being the Native Affairs minister in the province of Manitoba, he being responsible for Northern Affairs for the government of Manitoba is often called upon to add his voice to these much needed services for the safety of the travelling public in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson, we need all the help we can get in northern Manitoba to upgrade situations of not only short airstrips but navigational equipment that will help pilots, who are very brave in my opinion, who travel to these northern communities and a project like Wasagamack and Ste. Theresa Point who are trying to twin their communities and trying to further their needs of having that airstrip built in the very near future, so I simply want to end by asking the minister to add his

voice to those many hundreds of aboriginal people and northern Manitobans generally, that northern Manitoba does need some safety or some consideration for some attention to be paid to the northern transportation system.

Mr. Newman: Once again I extend an invitation to you and your constituents and any other organizations which your constituents are involved in to support our provincial effort to get more federal support for transportation in this province. We are certainly supported by UMM, MAUM and Northern Affairs communities.

We would welcome the support of AMC, MKO, MMF and the New Democratic Party through you, to persuade the federal government to pay back to Manitoba the money that it takes out in the form of fuel taxes and give us our just entitlement, and also reflect to Manitoba the kinds of contributions that are made to other jurisdictions in the country with respect to transportation.

We also would solicit your support for involvement in any federal infrastructure programs. We think the federal government should do more. We would love to see more of that focused on northern socioeconomic development, and we also solicit your mature leadership and guidance with respect to collaborative initiatives in conjunction with the private sector that sometimes has to build roads.

For example, certainly organizations like Tolko and Tembec, in their forestry businesses need roads, and sometimes if they need roads that can be a partner. The Province of Manitoba can be a partner; the federal government can be a partner; communities that are going to benefit from development can be partners, other industries, tourism.

So we encourage collaborative approaches to address that challenge, and thank you for raising that one as well. Again, if the desire of the representatives of our delegation federally is to make that the second priority, we would certainly be prepared to consider that as well. My understanding is that the other priority may be employment generally, particularly youth employment.

* (1600)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we will go line by line now.

Item 19.1. Northern Affairs Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$245,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$126,500—pass.

If at any time members would like to—just sing out, if you will, because I might not notice you. Okay?

Item 19.2. Northern Affairs Operations (a) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$335,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$121,000—pass.

Item 19.2.(b) Program and Operational Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$178,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$90,300—pass; (3) Community Operations \$5,540,800—pass; (4) Regional Services \$691,300—pass; (5) Grants \$253,700—pass.

Item 19.2.(c) Community Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,315,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$498,200—pass.

Item 19.2.(d) Technical Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$130,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$67,800—pass.

Item 19.2.(e) Northern Affairs Fund (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$259,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$63,700.

Item 19.2.(f) Inter-Regional Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$381,900—pass (2) Other Expenditures \$101,100—pass.

Item 19.2.(g) Agreements Management and Co-ordination (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$602,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$187,200—pass; (3) Northern Flood Agreement \$1,174,600—pass.

Item 19.2.(h) Native Affairs Secretariat (2) Other Expenditures \$140,100—pass; (3) Aboriginal Development Programs \$444,900—pass; (4) Partners for Careers \$200,000—pass.

Item 19.2.(j) Communities Economic Development Fund \$1,345,000—pass.

Resolution 19.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,552,300 for Northern Affairs Operations for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Item 19.3. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Northern Communities \$3,379,600—pass; (b) Community Access and Resource Roads \$235,000—pass; (c) Less: Recoverable from Capital Initiatives (\$1,000,000)—pass.

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,614,600 for Expenditures Related to Capital for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Consideration of the minister's salary, the last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs, is item 19.1.(a) Minister's Salary \$13,100.

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

Item 19.1.(a) Minister's Salary \$13,100—pass.

This completes—no, pardon me, we have got one resolution here.

Resolution 19.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$385,100 for Northern Affairs Executive for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

This completes the Department of Northern Affairs. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are Estimates of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? [agreed]

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 (d) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Two things, Mr. Chairman, before I provide the answer that was asked just before we broke. Introducing to you, Erika Kreis, Pat MacDonald. I think both have been at the table and introduced before, but they are back now to continue on. We have Ron and Mr. Greg Baylis at the opposition's request to do some jumping back to another line on Systemhouse early this morning. So we have with us now this afternoon Ms. MacDonald and Ms. Kreis, as well as Carol Loeppky and John Carlyle.

I am just seeking clarification for the benefit of staff, so that I can give them some indication of their time lines today as to, do we know yet the hour of completion today?

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will rise at five o'clock today.

Mrs. McIntosh: Five o'clock. Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we broke this morning, I had been asked a question about professional development and the types of things the department does to assist. I should indicate that we are providing a fairly wide range of different opportunities for professional development related to new curricula. We provide regional orientation sessions related to all new curriculum documents, and we know, and I think I said earlier, that implementation of curricula is a shared responsibility with school divisions.

We also provide implementation opportunities that align with divisional priorities and the ways in which they want their own PD provided. For example, in one region the superintendents have worked with the department to develop a train-the-trainer model which has been used successfully in that region and which is that region's preference, but there may be different methodologies preferred in others. Program implementation, I think I indicated we will be hiring another math expert and that person will be working

with the field. That was a priority that the Winnipeg region identified to us, also the North had indicated that to us, as well, but since the establishment of a Regional Teams Unit in the School Programs Division, yearly consultations with school division administrators have taken place to establish regional initiatives.

A portion of each regional budget is assigned to support regional initiatives that are identified. They address identified needs within the region. They are identified priority areas of Manitoba Education and Training. They are partnerships between the regional divisions and Manitoba Education and Training. They are sustainable ongoing plans.

* (1450)

The following areas have been targeted for regional initiatives: the Parkland-Westman, southeast Interlake regions will be targeted for literacy and English language arts; leadership in the Parkland-Westman, Winnipeg, southeast Interlake, North and South Central; curriculum implementation in math in the Parkland-Westman, North, southeast Interlake, Winnipeg; curriculum implementation for English language arts in the North and Winnipeg; curriculum implementation general for the Parkland-Westman, Winnipeg, southeast Interlake regions; and aboriginal education in the Parkland-Westman, Winnipeg, southeast Interlake—pardon me, that is curriculum implementation; aboriginal education in Parkland-Westman and Winnipeg; technology in the Parkland-Westman, North, South East and the Interlake; differentiated instruction in South Central and Winnipeg. These regional teams unit dollars will be used to support regional initiatives that are of mutual importance to school divisions, and Manitoba Education and Training has met with an extremely positive response.

Following meetings with school division staff, each region will be identifying initiatives for the 1998-99 school year with priority being given to Phase II, implementation of curriculum and continuation of some projects currently underway. In terms of curriculum implementation, education renewal initiatives, including new curricula, require from our perspective some support of implementation in the field by the School Programs Division; hence, Manitoba Education

and Training has produced and disseminated a support document called A Vision to Action: Supporting Curriculum Change. That Vision to Action document will provide superintendents, school administrators, teachers and parents with the framework of practical background information, ideas and process tools to support the implementation of new curricula and other educational initiatives.

The Program Implementation Branch accessed operating dollars through an initiative called New Directions: Implementation Partnership to support school divisions and districts and regions in implementing projects that relate to the priority areas outlined in New Directions. Current status for that, Mr. Chairman, is that the School Programs Division supports province-wide implementation of curricula through regional in-services, summer institutes and training of local teacher trainers through planned collaboration with school divisions.

In collaborating with school divisions, the regional teams and provincial specialists units develop regional initiatives and set regional priorities that support the implementation of curricula and other educational initiatives, including leadership training to enhance effective school planning, English language arts and mathematics implementation by means of teacher training and integration of technology into the curriculum. Implementation support includes what we call A Year at a Glance. A Year at a Glance contains New Directions time-line charts—I am going to pause for a moment, Mr. Chairman. The New Directions time-line charts, we call them A Year at a Glance, had been sent to all divisions in June 1997. I still have my voice—it is going, but it is still here.

This listing was created to assist the local decision-making process for the implementation of new curriculum, and Manitoba Education and Training supports professional development through the Professional Development and Support, and that is \$437 per instructional unit through the school funding model; provision of up to 10 days for professional development and administration for teachers through The Public Schools Act; provision of resources for special programs through grants such as English Language Enrichment for Native Students grant, Students at Risk formula grant, early identification and

education program grant and technology, professional development grant. Targeting of operational dollars and staff allocations to program priority areas identified by regional teams in consultation with regional superintendents groups. Provisions of opportunities for educational partners to partner with each other and the department on a number of implementation initiatives directly related to New Directions.

The Program Development Branch on Assessment and Evaluation unit also dedicate resources to staff development through the development process, the field validation process and the curriculum assessment orientation process. As well, for classroom-based assessment, the Westman-Parkland and Winnipeg regions have identified classroom-based assessment as priority for their regions.

Background in classroom assessment has been a factor in selection of these particular regional consultant positions. Ten divisions in the Westman-Parkland region are participating in a needs survey on which to base training sessions for classroom-based assessment. Workshops for administrators and teachers on classroom-based assessment is ongoing in the Winnipeg region.

Differentiated instruction is another topic. A focus for professional development activities in the province continues to be in the area of differentiated instruction. Four two-day summer institutes on differentiating instruction were offered in August in 1997 in Dauphin, in Carman and in Winnipeg. There were approximately 250 participants there. More emphasis has been placed on integrating differentiating instruction with curriculum outcomes and assessment strategies. Co-facilitators from schools and school divisions are encouraged to participate in the workshops. Several school divisions and regions are developing long-term plans for implementing differentiating instruction.

We have authentic assessment, we have a document on authentic assessment being developed to assist schools in the valid use of classroom assessment practices and the anticipated release date of that document is next summer.

A six credit-hour summer course called Celebrating Creative Teaching: The Bridge from Curriculum

Outcomes to Differentiating Instruction and Reflective Assessment has been planned jointly with the University of Manitoba Faculty of Education, and Manitoba Education and Training and it will be offered in the summer of 1998.

Manitoba Education and Training is committed to collaborating with school divisions to provide innovative and creative professional development opportunities for the implementation of curricula. I have provided just now a few of those to give the member a sense of what we have been doing, the types of things we are doing to assist school divisions, not all, of course, but I mean, I could go on at some length and I think, from my indications, that probably is not what the member would like to have me do. But we also—just one last little bit of information and then I will conclude for the moment here—our home page also provides information about all of the orientation workshops that we have organized or that are being organized and it provides that up to a year in advance to support schools.

* (1500)

On-line registration will be available for the first time for the 1998-99 sessions, and that is new electronic assistance which we believe will augment again some of these things that I am talking about plus the others that we are doing.

I want to just take a minute to thank Hansard. I know that members thanked them the other day for how swift they are in getting the documents, and I really do appreciate that. I also appreciate them bearing with me through my laryngitis, trying to decipher words when my voice keeps disappearing on me. I appreciate their efforts in doing that, and then getting it out as quickly as they do is really quite to their credit.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, at the end of the last session, meaning just before lunch, the minister had said that some divisions had gotten out of the habit of professional development, and I wondered which divisions the minister meant.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do not recall having said that, because I do not think any division that I know has gotten out of the habit of doing professional

development. I will have to check Hansard to see what I said, but if that is what I said, it certainly was not what I intended because we were talking about assessment. I am not sure. Oh, maybe have gotten out of the habit of doing their own professional development in certain areas. I do not recall the comment. I will check Hansard, but I do not know of any division that has gotten out of the habit of doing professional development.

This may be what the member is referring to. Staff has just passed me a note saying that they think I made a comment about some divisions being out of the habit of teaching the curriculum. I think I did make comments to that nature, that in some courses in some school divisions the teachers who are teaching good material, interesting material, to students but not necessarily the curriculum.

By marking tests and seeing the outcomes that are sought, they had a better understanding of why those outcomes were requested in the curriculum and are going back into the school and getting into the habit of following the curriculum because they could see the worth of it. An intent to that effect was something I said, maybe not those words but that intent.

If I said that school divisions were not in the habit of professional development, then I said something that was wrong because all the divisions that I know do professional development, value it, and want more from any source that they can get it.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I have one request and one question. This is another section of the department which has a fair amount, in this case, this year \$890,000, for professional fees. I would like the minister to table, at some point during the Estimates, the list of contracts that were let in the past year in this section of the department and their completion dates and the amount that they were for.

My second part is a question. I am interested in professional development in areas of technology. The minister mentioned them in her lists, and I wonder if she could give me a more detailed sense of what the department does, for whom it does it, how many teachers or administrators have been reached through the department's professional development and

technology areas, and what kind of professional development is emphasized.

* (1510)

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we will be able to table at the next sitting a listing of the \$890,000 of professional fees. These are fees for document writers, curricula, distance delivery courses, support documents, policy documents, and all of those offer therefore both print and electronic media.

In terms of the other information that the member asked in terms of technology PD, we have had nine information sessions throughout the province in September in '97 to provide an opportunity for educators to view the software. We provided it with details with regard to the licensing and to answer any questions, and we had a total of about 190, to be specific we had 193 educators attending those CHEL information sessions.

We had 21 two-day CGL training sessions held across all regions of the province during that same fall '97. A total of 360 teachers attended these training sessions. Over 200 schools were represented from 51 school divisions, and the purpose of the training sessions was twofold, one to allow teachers an opportunity to become familiar with the Learning Equation Mathematics 9 software and print resources and to spend time discussing implementation issues.

At the CGL training session teachers received one copy of the TLE student refresher print resource, and each participating school received one copy of the TLE teachers manual. At the completion of the training, each school received the number of sets of TLE CD-ROMs that they required to implement TLE in their schools. Right now, currently, third day follow-up sessions are being scheduled where teachers who participated in the training sessions will observe teachers using TLE with a class of Senior I mathematics students, and the remainder of the day will be a discussion on what was observed, as well as participating teachers sharing their own experiences with TLE.

Regarding the Curriculum Multimedia Integration Project, we just call it CMI, all of this work has been

done using a professional development approach with our pilot teachers. I should also indicate that we worked in partnership with the Manitoba School Superintendents Association as one of the major conference topics was technology. But in terms of Curriculum Multimedia Integration, or CMI, this project was initiated to integrate technology as one of the four foundation skills into Manitoba curriculum. Integration of multimedia with curriculum provides Manitoba teachers with curriculum that illustrates in a four-column format how prescribed outcomes can be achieved through the application of multimedia learning resources to instruction and assessment.

The goals for the integration of multimedia in Manitoba curricula are to provide linkages with curriculum that will enable multimedia to form a meaningful part of resource-based learning in Manitoba schools, to illustrate how multimedia can facilitate a variety of instructional strategies and to illustrate how multimedia can facilitate forms of authentic assessment.

To date, we have results that include the following: Senior 2 Science at 20S, Senior 3 Physics 30S, Senior 3 Chemistry 30S and Senior 3 Biology 30S foundation for implementation. Pilot documents have been integrated with multimedia. This integration involves the identification and field testing of multimedia resources and Internet links which are then included in the suggested learning resources. Suggestions for instruction and assessment describe how these learning resources can be used.

In 1988 and 1989, the incremental resources approved will be used to initiate curriculum multimedia integration in kindergarten to Grade 8 mathematics and English language arts. Resources approved are five full-time equivalents and operating funds of \$367,400. In the future, in terms of multimedia and curriculum integration, we will see the completion of the multimedia integrated biology 40S, chemistry 40S and physics 40S pilot documents by June of this year, the end of next month.

Multimedia integration of the senior year science foundation for implementation documents will continue as the senior year science curricula are redesigned to be consistent with the Pan Canadian Science Framework of Learning Outcomes K-12.

In 1998-99, the incremental resources approved will be used to initiate curriculum/multimedia integration in kindergarten to Grade 8 mathematics and English language arts. Other revised K-Senior 4 core curricula in English language arts, mathematics, for example, applied mathematics 20S, 30S, 40S, and social studies will require multimedia integration to address technology as a foundation skill. The implementation of these courses will require similar technology-related supports.

I just want to indicate that two regions, North and Southeast Interlake, identified technology as a priority, and one consultant in each region is providing professional development support to schools. Also, the department's commitment to support schools includes an increase of six staff people in this area this coming year. We have the interdisciplinary middle years multimedia project as another project going in terms of technology, and that one, in terms of background, it is a IV phase curriculum-based research and development project which is arising out of Renewing Education: New Directions as a result of technology being identified as a foundation skill area for all curriculum.

The purpose of this project is to develop an effective instructional model that is interdisciplinary, supports the integration of multimedia technology throughout provincial curricula, facilitates implementation of the interdisciplinary units as required, and through the project of multimedia computer hardware-software seed is provided in representative middle years pilot schools throughout the province through the distribution of grants; that is 70 percent government funded.

* (1520)

Grants do not exceed \$14,000 per school. A minimum of 20 pilot schools will be selected in each of the four phases. Phase 1, Grade 5, took place over the '95-97 school years; phase 2, Grade 6, took place over the '96-98 school years; and in phases 1 and 2, each of the pilot sites received \$14,000 to implement a preselected \$20,000 hardware-software model. That phase 1 in '95-96 and '96-97, we had received 88 applications for phase 1, Grade 5, by the deadline which was December of '95, and of those 88 applications, 20 pilot schools were selected by the project team according to the approved criteria. These

pilot sites were subsequently approved by cabinet and a development of an interdisciplinary thematic multimedia-based Grade 5 teaching unit, which we called a prairie tour, for a pilot implementation.

Subsequently, there is the training of 24 pilot teachers, data collection for the purposes of evaluation. A formative evaluation report was produced and released in January '97. A total of 56 applications were received for phase 2, Grade 6, by the October '96 deadline. The project team developed an evaluation rubric based on the selection criteria, had a point scoring system developed based upon information provided on the application form.

The total points determined for each applicant were converted into percentage scores, and the top 20 schools then were selected based on those percentage scores with three exceptions: those being Mel Johnson School, Killarney Collegiate and Ecole Sainte-Agathe. Those schools were chosen in order to have representation from the northern region, Parkland-Westman region and the DSFM respectively. The other regions were represented within the top 20 schools. It is an extremely fair selection process, as the member can see.

The selection criteria related to English, French, aboriginal, multicultural student representation and gender equity were satisfied within the top 20 selections as well. The 20 sites were approved. Two additional sites, West Lynn Heights School and Virden Junior High School, were added, and all 22 sites developed an interdisciplinary thematic multimedia-based Grade 6 teaching unit innovations called Inventions, Innovations and Discoveries for pilot implementation, which, of course, included training of 32 pilot teachers—so again another initiative. I do not know if the member wants me to go on.

In conclusion, I guess I could say that I could go on and on and on and on some more and never make the member happy when I do that. But I would indicate briefly that the department provides leadership and support to the following committees: Council on Learning Technologies, Computer Education Co-ordinators of Manitoba, School Net Advisory Board, Computers for Schools and Libraries. We are also providing direct support to schools in the preparation of

information technology in their own preparation of the information technology component of their school improvement plans.

As well, in partnership with nine school divisions, the department is currently piloting a professional development model which focuses on the defusion of information technology innovations within schools. The department is continuing to respond on a divisional basis to requests for professional development related to the integration of technology into curriculum, and we will be having additional regional workshops in the fall of '98 on the subjects—and this is the title of one, Technology is a Foundation Skill Area: A Journey Toward Information Technology Literacy. That is a document and that has been released already. We are going to be having workshops on it.

We will also be providing ongoing support for the integration of technology as a foundation skill area. We have a kindergarten to Senior 4 website which has been presented to various audiences including the SPD home page contacts, program development branch office leadership team, Manitoba Association of Principals, Interorganizational Curriculum Advisory Committee and various science teacher groups. As I say, I could go on and on and on.

One quick last thought, and this really is going to be the last one for this round. We had a wonderful display of the technology opportunities in the classrooms at the rural forum last week. It was outstanding, incredible. It had people open-mouthed with amazement, and I had the privilege of being there a week ago today to see the displays, to see what students were doing and to hear the comments from the many thousands of people who attended the rural forum, and it was a really gratifying experience. A lot of people deserve a lot of credit for what was displayed there, and very exciting.

MERLIN has also put on workshops regarding the Internet for school divisions and for individual schools and has provided information regarding acceptable use policies.

MERLIN has provided information at consortium meetings and provided assistance on the pros and cons of various products, such as Novell's Border Manager and Microsoft Proxy Server, Whiteguard Firewall Smarts

Builder, et cetera. Dan Kerr and the MERLIN group is really beginning to make a difference in Manitoba with their skills.

Ms. Friesen: The minister mentioned the support that is given to the Council on Learning Technologies. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to table the minutes of the Council on Learning Technologies of the past year.

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: The council does have an annual report, which I would be pleased to table for the member. I am not sure—I will check on the minutes of their meetings. We get into this problem, which I am sure the member appreciates because—well, I am certain she appreciates—and that is that advice to the minister—and we get into this in several areas of government where there are groups who provide advice to the minister. That advice, under the Freedom of Information legislation that the NDP drafted, is considered advice and therefore is often held as confidential for a variety of reasons. I will check out the minutes of this one. I do not know whether it falls under this category or not, but I would like to reserve the ability to decide on it.

You get technical experts on a committee such as this, or you get industry experts on other committees, or you get whatever the expertise is you are looking for on a particular committee. You ask these people if they would be willing to give up their time—they are laypeople—to sit on a committee to develop advice and ideas and thoughts for the minister or the government. They come together and they speak frankly and fully on the understanding that they are providing quiet, confidential advice to the minister. They are not generally in the public eye, and many of them do not wish to be in the public eye.

There are also issues of third-party information under Freedom of Information. For example, a committee member may say something at a meeting, not expecting it to be shared publicly, and are quite taken aback when they find that something they shared, they thought in a quiet advisory committee meeting, is suddenly public information. Then they are not as inclined to be as open because they feel they are in a fishbowl, and they

begin to become intimidated or inhibited, which is the opposite of what we are seeking. We wish them to be frank and open and fearless in putting forth views and positions.

For that reason, normally, advice to ministers is not something that Freedom of Information allows to go out. Advice to ministers is considered to be third-party opinion that is kept confidential. I know the member understands because it was her party who drafted that legislation and drafted those rules which we proclaimed and put into action because we agree with some of the thrusts in it.

So I can certainly provide the report, which, in essence, really, is what I think the member would like to have, because it tells exactly what their final and formal conclusions were. But there are ongoing meetings where they brainstorm and do those types of things, and they may not wish to have made public. It may well be third-party information under FOI, and it may be considered advice to the minister and therefore not releasable.

So I will check it out, and if I can, I will submit them. If I feel it is better not to, I will let the member know. I am very conscious of ensuring that our committees, that our advisory to minister, filled with laypeople who have given of their time, are not stifled or inhibited in any way that public release might cause them to feel, but I will certainly bring in the report which has all the pertinent information the member would like.

* (1540)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister just tell me who the members of that committee are and what their positions are; that is, what their affiliations are? Council, sorry.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we are just trying to remember all of the people on it. It came under Finance and Administration and we are off that line now, but I know I made reference to it, and the member has asked this very legitimate question. We do not have the documentation here, but we think, from memory, we have got them all now.

The chairman is Bill Schaffer who is superintendent of Swan Valley, and we have from the department or

government-type people, we have the two deputy ministers, John Carlyle and Tom Carson. We have Beth Cruikshank. Dr. Cruikshank is secretary to the committee, and, of course, Dan Kerr also sits on it. He is the chief operating officer of MERLIN.

Then we have the following people. Now, John Janzen who is superintendent of Garden Valley sits on this but not in his capacity as superintendent of Garden Valley. He sits as the representative of a consortium which includes a number of school divisions and industry and the public and officials out in the world, and I do not have the name of the consortium, but by occupation he is superintendent of Garden Valley School Division.

Similarly, Gilbert Unger who is the superintendent of Hanover School Division sits as the representative of a consortium of people and organizations from his region. Griffith Hodge is a northern computer consultant from Mystery Lake, and Gerry Dougall is the superintendent of Whiteshell. Charles Tinman is the director of curriculum for St. Boniface School Division. Ali Askyu represents The Pas. He is superintendent of that area. Larry Bazinski is the assistant superintendent in Dauphin. Bob Bell is the superintendent in Antler River. Curtis Nordman represents the University of Winnipeg. Ken Webb represents Red River Community College. Sam Steindel is from the department, and we have someone from the University of Manitoba, as well, but I just cannot recall who that rep is at the moment, but I think that about covers it. I may have left one or two off, but that is the basic membership.

The regional consortia appoint their own representatives. The colleges and universities will select one to represent universities and one to represent colleges. So the college rep that is on there, although he is Ken Webb from Red River, represents more than just Red River. He represents also Assiniboine and Keewatin colleges.

Similarly, the University of Manitoba person represents—is it the University of Winnipeg—Curtis Nordman. We do have a person in the University of Manitoba also. [interjection] We did. That person is gone. We now have Curtis replacing him. So Curtis

then represents the universities. He is Dr. Curtis Nordman, University of Winnipeg.

Those are the people. I hope I have not left anybody off. I do not have the official list, and I am sorry I cannot remember the names of the consortiums. But we will, if the member wishes, table the information, so she gets it. We can get it fairly quickly, I think. That will give her a sense of it in the meantime.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about school safety, which is listed under Program Development, and particularly to ask about the issue that has arisen in the last two years of the roller towels in schools, and to ask the minister what the department's response has been, what recommendations, if any, they have sent to school divisions and what the results have been.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, as the member recalls that was the subject of—I am not sure if it was an inquest or someone did look into this in the official capacity. We, in the meantime, as soon as the accident occurred, asked all school divisions to either replace—just take down their cloth rollers until they heard back from us. Then after some time we had gathered enough data and had some preliminary inquiries made by Peter Markesteyn, I believe it was. Was it? At any rate, we indicated to divisions that any that had not taken down their rollers, because we had left it as a request, not a demand, to ensure that they had the safety shield, et cetera. We had done that in the first instance actually, but then we reinforced it a few months later, because we had not yet heard back from the investigation.

Ultimately, however, we did hear back from the investigators. Their recommendation to the field was to do what we had already done, and that was to caution schools with the cloth towel dispensers to ensure that it had the safety shield, and that the amount of cloth hanging down was wound in such a way that you could not fit through it, and it would be placed low enough for children that the feet would not leave the floor if entanglement did somehow manage to occur.

So we sent out those recommendations to the field to confirm that they were, in fact, the final recommendations presented to us and that we encouraged them to follow those recommendations if

they were using cloth dispensers as opposed to air or paper towels.

That date, I am not certain when it was, Mr. Chairperson, but it does not seem to me that it was all that long ago. The details of the request and our response, probably best discussed under 16.4.(b) in the Education Administration Services, because that is the area of the department which administers regulations in the acts and assists in analyzing or interpreting legal or judicial matters. But that is the circumstance there as I recall it that we did get recommendations which the field has been instructed to follow.

* (1550)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I am interested in also whether the department has a policy, policy guidelines for schools, similar kinds of instructions to schools on violence in schools; a safe-schools policy, it is sometimes referred to. Some provinces do this at a provincial level. The minister's response in the case of the washroom towels issue is an indication that the department does take the initiative at specific times and does respond on specific issues. I am wondering where the department is and what letters, guidelines, recommendations have been made to school divisions on the overall safe-school policies.

I am going from this—I recognize the minister said there is a section of the department which deals with administration, but this particular section of the department, 16.2.(d) does say: ensure school facilities are safe, comfortable and appropriate learning environments for delivery of current curricula. So that is the context in which I am asking, and what is the difference between what the minister did in the case of the towels and the inquest, and the overall provisions for a broader safe-schools policy?

Mrs. McIntosh: We all know that researchers and practitioners agree on the changing nature of school safety, school violence. In school violence, in particular, it seems that either bullying and intimidation are more commonplace or the reporting of it is more commonplace. It seems that more young women, more younger children appear to be involved in violent activities. We are more conscious of racial ethnic conflicts. Whether they are more prevalent or we are

more sensitive to them is hard to know, but we certainly are spending more time being aware of them and dealing with them. The intensity of violent acts and the use of weapons is of increasing concern.

A safe school attempts to counter these trends by building the foundation of a set of clear behavioural expectations and a process that deals with misbehaviour in a way that is fair, is equitable, is consistently enforced. The safe school also includes preventative strategies such as teaching prosocial and decision-making skills. As well, a safe school utilizes proactive programs such as peer mediation and self-esteem, and we see those in place, the peer mediation programs, in particular, with some degrees of success in many schools. A safe school clearly indicates what is not acceptable and nonnegotiable in the educational setting and communicates this to their students and to the parent community.

The tolerance of acts of violence, assaults, and use of weapons has no place in a safe-school environment. It is important to note that, more and more, racist and sexist taunting must be considered a part of violent behaviour. Jokes, there were some, I will not refer to them here, made yesterday that were absolutely appalling in terms of sexist comments about women and abuse of children.

No one has drawn specific attention to it, but I think if the members read Hansard, they might be interested in what some of their members have said regarding children and the abuse of children and consider what violence means and references to violence with children. It is not funny. [interjection] I will not reference it here. You can read Hansard. You should, because there are a lot of open mouths hanging.

But at any rate it is important to note that words can be considered part of violent behaviour, and there is extensive documentation that a strong stance against those forms of violence within a comprehensive preventative approach results in a reduction of violent incidents in the school setting. One such document is School Violence and the Zero Tolerance Alternative: Some Principles and Policy Prescriptions. That is written by Thomas Gabor. He is a Ph.D., and a copy of this report is available through the Solicitor General of Canada.

The department staff met with regional teams and key personnel from the school divisions in some areas to talk about violence prevention, and the broad needs and specific requests that were identified were in the areas of training, staff development, support for parent advisory groups and resource acquisitions. The department worked extensively with the regional teams, as well as divisional and school personnel, to deliver workshops and services that met those needs. A summary of the services that were offered is available. It covers all the activities related to violence prevention across the province. It is organized by region and division.

Some examples of the services that were offered to the school divisions and their parent communities were to identify the planning and supports necessary to create safe schools; to develop positive codes of conduct, school rules and discipline processes; to train teachers in the skills to set up peer mediation programs where students are taught the skills to help their fellow students to solve problems peacefully; to work with community parent groups to develop concrete ways of improving the climate and safety of the school and the community.

The focus that emerged from the consultations and meetings was that violence prevention is the shared responsibility of all aspects of the community. To this end, the department was represented on a number of intersectoral committees to address the problems of youth violence, and those committees were really felt to be most helpful.

There is a booklet called Science Safety, a K-to-S4 resource manual for teachers and schools and school divisions released about a year ago, which we released. It provides technical and practical support to science teachers and administrators regarding safe laboratory procedures and characteristics. The document also contains guidelines for construction and renovation of science facilities. Regional workshops were conducted in September and October this fall.

We have had, in terms of regional activities, 35 regional activities. We have had school-based sessions on crisis prevention, on combatting racism, on conflict management, on peer mediation, on crisis intervention training. These are school-based sessions. We have

had parent sessions on safe schools. We have had preservicing of teachers on street gang awareness, conflict resolution, youth violence, safe schools, classroom management—and not just one. Classroom management, we have had three; safe schools, we have had two; conflict resolution, we have had two; conflict management, we have had three sessions of each, so it is not just—I am giving one title, but there have been certainly more than one session of each of those titles.

For meetings and conferences, we have had workshops, activities in community violence, preventions officers, street gang co-ordinators, week without violence, mediation, program street gang protocol.

For other groups, we have worked with the Downtown BIZ. We have worked with the YMCA. We have worked with the Canadian Legal Education. We have worked with the Red Cross program. We have had divisional sessions for counsellor roles in safe schools, for safe school planning. We have had school-based sessions for effective discipline processes, for codes of conduct; again, for the others, four sessions in peer mediation and classroom management, conflict resolutions, safe school plans, et cetera. We have had parent sessions on decreasing violence in the community, parent sessions on street gang awareness. We have had meetings and consultations with other groups and a whole variety of sessions.

* (1600)

I can go on. I do not know how detailed one wants to get, but we do have other information to show how these were done in particular school divisions; for example, in St. Vital and River East and Seven Oaks and Transcona, in Lord Selkirk, Rhineland, Seine River, Morris-MacDonald, et cetera, the divisions that we went to to do some of these things.

You know, those ones that I have just read, those 35 activities were from the central region alone. The St. Vital School Division, it had eight, and Lord Selkirk had seven. I do not know how far into these you want me to get. In Frontier, for example, they not only had the ones I have mentioned, but they also had workshops based on positive school climate, on bullying, on effective behaviour, on behaviour support, violence prevention and follow-up workshops, effective

behaviour management, working with disruptive students and so on and so forth.

I think I will pause. I think you have been given a bit of an idea. I could go on and name some more, you know, students with difficult home backgrounds, positive learning environments, et cetera, et cetera, but all of this is to say, Mr. Chairman, that we are working broadly with schools, teachers and boards and many other groups in society to address the whole matter of school safety and prevention of violence, safety in material things, safety in attitudes, and safety in relationships and systems that are set up within which our children function.

I think that we have worked very hard. We have provided information and consultation on safe schools and codes of conduct, and in addition to all of the things I have named, we have participated on 10 provincial committees. We have worked with more than 160 sessions. We have even done sessions for band-operated schools, although they are not within our jurisdiction. We have done sessions for independent schools.

I will maybe stop there because I do not know how long the member wishes to stay on this section. I think I have given her the gist of the kinds of things we are doing and to give more would be interesting but not add more than I think she needs to hear to get the sense of where we are going.

Ms. Friesen: I wondered if the minister would have anything that could be tabled from that. It is something that I think all MLAs are confronted with from schools and parents in the division who have concerns, not always about their own schools but sometimes about the things that they hear from other schools, and I wondered what was available.

I was at a meeting in the Seine River Division where a member of the minister's staff made a very good presentation along with somebody from the Child and Youth Secretariat whose presentation I did not hear. But I wondered what was available. I thought the materials from that were very good and very helpful, and I wondered what else there would be that MLAs in general could share with their communities. I would not necessarily give the list here, but maybe the

minister could look at what would be available and that would help the general public.

I wanted to ask the minister about the transfer payments in this section of the budget or Estimates which go from zero to \$280,000, and I wondered what the reason for that was.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, could I ask for some clarification, please? The member has asked for some information, and we would be most pleased to provide it. I just want to make sure I am getting it right. Does the member wish to have me table the type of information I have just read, or does she wish to get some of the information that might be presented during one of the sessions? For example, I have read a list of the topics of sessions. We can do that, or if it is information from one of the sessions. I am not quite sure, I did not hear quite clearly.

Ms. Friesen: No, I think the list that was read out, you know, and will be covered in Hansard. That can be summarized. No, it was the materials that might have been presented in those sessions. Obviously it was a lot of sessions, so there will be different types of material. Some of it probably overlaps a selection, and I am thinking from the context of a parent who would phone in.

Mrs. McIntosh: We can do that. I just wanted to make sure, because we had not all heard it the same, we were going to bring back what was actually wanted, and we can certainly do that for the member. That may be good information, as she suggested, for all MLAs.

The grants and the transfer that the member has requested, that increase of \$280,000 was for the interdisciplinary middle years multimedia project.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I wanted to just delve into two areas: one being back to the Grade 10 math curriculum that is being piloted this year; and No.2, the Reading Recovery program which has been adopted by the province or endorsed and being used at early years, I believe Grade 1. So maybe we could start with the math.

I mentioned a couple of days ago that I am experiencing first-hand the Grade 10 precal curriculum

and finding it quite a challenge. I had an opportunity to meet a teacher in that program, another teacher at a school in Winnipeg I actually, and she was indicating that in her opinion, given the rigorousness and the clear differentiation of the three courses in math—there is precalculus, the applied, and then is it consumer math—given that they are clearly distinctive courses, in her opinion a student would not be able to transfer from the Grade 10 level into the Grade 11, into another math course.

For instance, you would not be able to go from precalculus, had a student passed, into applied mathematics, and she went on to say why, given that there is, I understand, the reliance or the experience of using a large number of mathematical tools and technology, which I think is very important, and it is understandable that if that basis is given at the Grade 10 level, then a student trying to enter in Grade 11 may have great difficulty picking that up.

So I would like clarification because the minister said that there would be this integration and a student would be able to move between the courses, and yet the people who are testing the courses are saying that it is not possible.

* (1610)

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have the Hansard from the other day with me, but I think if the member checks it, she will see I was pretty clear in saying that the province has left it such that if a student and the teacher and everybody feels the student can go and take one course, take them out of sequence, so to speak, that they can do that. The province will not say they cannot. The province will allow, but the school division will make the determination.

I believe I said, without being able to check Hansard right now, that it would probably be that most divisions would insist that one be a prerequisite for the other; for example, just as now, technically speaking you can take a 30G and go into a 40S. Most divisions would require one as a prerequisite, but they do not have to, and most students would have very great difficulty taking one course without the other having been taken before, and I believe I said that the other day, as well, that it would be a challenge for a student to do that but that the province would not prevent a student from doing that.

Once they get into high school, it is perceived they would have enough judgment to know whether or not they have the prerequisite skills. In the elementary years or the lower years, we say absolutely that we will determine that you have to have prerequisites, but in the senior years we allow the opportunity for school divisions to make decisions that might allow students to challenge material, given their maturity, that may be out of sync, but that would be up to the school division.

We do not have any policy prohibiting student movement from math course to math course across the Senior 2 to Senior 4. The school divisions can establish as policies if they so desire, and some do. I am not sure how many—a portion. I do not know if it is a large portion or a small portion.

Also, if I could just interject, I have a list of the Manitoba Council of Learning Technology's members, and I have left off three names by mistake without meaning to: Benjy Levin from the University of Manitoba, Doug Louvstad from Keewatin Community College, and Ray LaFleche.

At any rate, maybe I could just put this list in. I will table this, Mr. Chairman, and I am sorry I do not have three copies, but these are the proper names and the organizations they represent with the names of the consortiums, and John Janzen, for example, is the representative from the South Central Consortium. Just for the record we have nine consortiums that are represented on the council, and I will also submit that for the member's information.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Mihychuk: I understand that the minister is saying there is nothing provincially to define whether a student goes through or not, but I am assuming that students are required to follow provincial curriculum and certain standards and expectations set by the province. So I think in reality it pretty much limits the students by what we expect from them in those courses, so I appreciate the minister's clarification and accept that.

The other area that was raised as a concern was something that was called the Grade 9 funnel, and in particular as it is going to impact students at the Grade

9 level in the subject of math. I think the concern, and probably the minister is aware, that in the curriculum in that area there is only one course, and so there is no differentiation of interest or ability provided at the Grade 9 level, and at Grade 10 there are actually three options.

So for many students the curriculum is challenging, extremely difficult, and we are seeing quite a few students repeating the Grade 9 math. Are there intentions by the province to provide more options in Grade 9? Are there going to be two math courses perhaps available for students so that they can be successful and move on through the curriculum in an area of interest and complete a full high school program and not face what they call the funnel?

* (1620)

Mrs. McIntosh: Historically, curriculum in all subject areas has been offered as what we call a core curriculum from kindergarten through to Senior 1 or Grade 9, and that is in order to establish a solid foundation in all subject areas. Even though Grade 9 classes now are located in with the 10, 11s and 12s, it is in those last three years that the specialization begins to occur. So you will find Grade 9 as the foundation year, so to speak, for high school. The Grade 9 mathematics course is general, generic, in that it covers a broad spectrum of mathematics, just covers it all in a generic way so that students can begin to understand where their interests in math might lie. From that, then, they will begin to siphon off into the various mathematical opportunities in Seniors 2, 3 and 4. It is felt that Grade 9 is still part of that kindergarten to Grade 9 period that comes before you begin to specialize. It is a foundation year. You are in the high school. You are able to see and observe the types of things that are available and from there you can choose.

But we still feel that is too early. We said the last two years of high school, really, are the two years in which you can really begin to specialize. In those last years you can load up on history, or you can load up on math or sciences. So there will be differing levels of ability, of course, in Grade 9. I do not know whether the member is an advocate of streaming or destreaming, but the key to addressing that, of course, lies in the differentiating instruction style of teaching.

It is what is done in elementary school; it is what high school teachers are beginning to do as well. It is the way to go about the task. We just feel that Senior 1 is too early to begin that kind of sophisticated streaming that takes place in high schools. The High School Review that came in when the member's party was in government said the same thing, said exactly what we are saying here about Grade 9.

I am sure the member will recall, because I think she may have been on the school board at the time that the Pawley government brought in that recommendation. We are doing just that, because it is not a political thing or a partisan thing. It is true or not true, and politics have nothing to do with it. We think the High School Review in that sense had some good recommendations.

In terms of comparison of past and present Senior 1 math curriculum, about 90 to 95 percent of the '97 curricular outcomes are similar both in intent and in content to the '95 document, Schools and Objectives.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

That means the educators have had the new, the so-called new Senior 1 math curriculum since September 1995. This, of course, the '95-96 was voluntary implementation, but teachers have been using the curriculum and should not be having difficulty with it. It is not a year in which we stream students for math, I guess, is the bottom line. We see it as a foundation year.

We, being Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Education and Training is silent on the issue of streaming or destreaming. We have policy in this area. Schools can group children in whatever way they see fit based upon divisional philosophy and its values and its beliefs.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the minister concerned that the provincial exams in Grade 9 may narrow the so-called Grade 9 funnel?

Mr. Chairperson: Are you ready?

Mrs. McIntosh: Pardon?

Mr. Chairperson: Did you answer?

Mrs. McIntosh: If she wants me to go ahead. I did not think she was finished her question though.

Ms. Mihychuk: Oh, yes, I am short.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, I am going to have to ask her then to repeat it because I thought she was just doing an introduction. I did not hear the question portion of it.

* (1630)

Ms. Mihychuk: My question was quite simple. The question is are you concerned that the provincial exams may narrow or make the funnel even more intense?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am not quite sure I understand the question because the Grade 9 test or the Grade 9 exam, once it is off pilot and on to full implementation, is not designed to stream students or get them ready for placement someplace. It is designed to determine what they know about the Grade 9 curriculum, and so it is not a streaming mechanism.

I am not sure if that is what she is meaning in her question, but I will just say simply, why would it change anything? The Grade 9 curriculum will be there. The students will learn the Grade 9 curriculum, and then at the end of the year they will be assessed on how well they have been able to absorb and apply that knowledge. Then the information on how well they have done will be provided to them in a student profile which their teachers will share with them, which will say you are really good at this and you are really good at that and you need extra help here and you do not know how to do this thing at all.

So they will get all this information. Then whatever math course they register in, the teacher the following year will be given that student profile, and whatever math course they register in, their math teacher will know from reading the student profile where that student's strengths and weaknesses lie and will use differentiated instruction to help fill in any gaps that might be there so the student can absorb the next year's information properly.

So I do not know what difference it makes in terms of a so-called funnel, why it would increase it or decrease it. I do not understand the question, I guess. If I still

had a Senior 1 student, I would not want a Senior 1 student entering Senior 2 without knowing whether or not that Senior 1 student had been able to achieve a certain level of understanding or without knowing that student's real abilities.

Ms. Mihychuk: I would like to ask a few questions on Reading Recovery. This is a program that was first modelled in the U.S.?

Mrs. McIntosh: It was first modelled in New Zealand.

Ms. Mihychuk: This is a program, I understand, that is extremely successful, and several schools, particularly in Winnipeg, have been using Reading Recovery. Is that correct?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is correct.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairperson, the early literacy funding announcement is somehow tied, I understand, to Reading Recovery, and Reading Recovery, the program, requires fairly intense professional development on a regular basis in local centres. Is that correct?

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, yes, the member is on the right track. They do not have to be in specialized centres necessarily. We have a train-the-trainer model for Reading Recovery, but it is very intensive. It is one on one. It does require a specialized training from an expert in Reading Recovery techniques. We have the Western Institute for Reading Recovery here in Manitoba now, the second placement for Canada. The first one is in Toronto, and it is very expensive, but it is worth it.

What we have said with our grant is that we will pay for that program, or one like it if divisions can show that they have something equivalent to it. I think there was one we found that was equivalent or close to it—or close to it but not quite.

So we are saying that we will fund Reading Recovery. We believe in it, and if there is another program that meets that same level of success, we will fund it too. So it is Reading Recovery or the equivalent, but there are not many equivalents to this program. It is very intensive.

I have been in Toronto and sat through the training sessions or portions, medium-sized portions of the training sessions, and watched the one-on-one. The results are absolutely amazing. They have taken children who were very much at risk and turned them into really good readers in no time flat, over and over and over again. But it is very intense, and it does cost a lot.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us—the professional development component, I understand that it is almost on a weekly basis or biweekly that teachers get together and take that type of intensive training. Is that correct?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it is every two weeks that they get together. They are trained in—maybe just back up. This started by a lady named Marie Clay in 1987—was it—or earlier, in New Zealand. She is a Ph.D., and she was on the National Reading Program, a national program in New Zealand, and developed this, and it just shot through the world. It is now fully implemented in six countries, came to Canada in 1988.

Mr. Chairman, we have two school divisions in Manitoba that began using it in 1994, and then we have teacher leaders in four school divisions that went and got the training. It is a train-the-trainer model. The Western Institute of Reading Recovery was established here in '96, and that institute now trains teachers and teacher leaders not just for Manitoba but for the western provinces. It is 18 sessions, two and a half hours each every two weeks.

The goal is to take the lowest achieving students in Grade 1—it is a short-term, early literacy intervention—and turn them into competent, independent readers and writers in approximately 20 weeks. So they use individualized instructional strategies. They are trained to analyze and adjust their instruction to an ever-accelerated learning process for the students.

I just have a few quotes here because they are interesting. One Reading Recovery teacher here in Manitoba, who was a former reading clinician, indicated that, when he was looking back on his training year, he regarded it and he has written this quote: I regarded it as a time of dying and rebirth, a letting go of some cherished beliefs and attitudes

concomitant with a discovery or rediscovery of other points of view. He pointed out five things that he learned as a Reading Recovery teacher, and he said they were these. The first lesson that he said he learned was: make no excuses for the learner or for yourself, like do not give them any excuse. No excuse for the learner, no excuse for the teacher.

Lesson two, expect learning and teach doggedly. Lesson three, watch your language. Lesson four, guard your lesson time as a valuable commodity, not a second of it should ever be wasted. Lesson five, do everything possible to connect reading and writing. He said when he was talking about what he felt was lesson two, which was to expect learning and teach doggedly, like, you have to have very high expectations for your students. You expect that they will perform, and you have to be dogged in your determination.

This is all the same gentleman. He said: a most surprising discovery during the year was the realization that in many respects I had come to learn to not expect learning from my students. There is a severe limitation with the assumption, the failure, to learn results from something in the child. The program, Reading Recovery, emphasizes good teaching, teaching that is determined and conveys to the student an absolutely strong belief that the student will be successful in this great adventure of learning to read.

* (1640)

I now see that in the complex dance of teacher-student interaction, attitudes and beliefs are the heart and the sinew. Teachers must become experts in how a particular child learns and adjust the teaching accordingly. The student should not have to adjust; the teacher must. Because it is simply not possible to predict how successful any one student will be in learning, particularly for an area as complex as reading, we must remain undaunted in our teaching efforts. In essence, we have no choice but to teach as if every single student will become a successful reader. It is only in this way that we will approximate that elusive goal of having each child work up to his potential. I just think that is such a beautiful thing he has written.

We now have 88 Reading Recovery teachers working in 102 schools in 16 divisions in Manitoba, and that is

in two years that that has happened. The student outcome data, collected in '96-97, indicates that most of the students successfully completed the program. In '95-96, about 70 percent of the students were successful. In 1996-97, over 75 were successful in completing the program that go through the 20 weeks. We felt that was an amazingly high success rate for short concentrated periods of time, so we really think we have found something good here.

Regarding access to the training, we are in the final stages of working out details with two rural and one northern division to establish some training sites. A couple of schools have learning labs built in them. Oak Bluff School has a Reading Recovery lab. It is a one-way glass. Because the teachers work one on one with the students privately, people wanting to analyze the student's progress can watch on the other side of a one-way mirror, so the student thinks there is a mirror on the wall. The student knows there are people behind the mirror. They never keep that from the student, but the student cannot see or hear them, so they do not seem to bother the student that much. But they are told there are people on the other side of that wall interested-in-your-progress sort of thing, but they are not there bothering them.

Sorry, I really did not mean to get off topic here, but it is a wonderful program. I would be delighted if the member is ever interested in coming to a Reading Recovery workshop or something. I would love to have her come along with her past experience in K-12.

Ms. Mihychuk: Yes, I would love to. I would love to take the minister up on it. I have heard marvellous things about the program. I guess my concern is accessibility, particularly in rural and northern areas. I am glad the minister mentioned that some efforts were being made. Divisions were particularly concerned about the cost for bringing teachers in to provide the training, and I am sure she is aware that some of Manitoba's most intense literacy challenges are in rural and northern Manitoba.

This is a program I hope will be available to those extremely high-need areas and urge the minister to look to provide that to those children. I think that it is a very progressive thing and pleased to see teachers being so adaptable, looking at the student's needs in terms of

learning style and modifying their own teaching to their needs I think is the way of the future and will make a student's performance much more successful which I think is what we want. So that type of flexibility needs to be there by the teacher and I think by the system, and we need to respond to those needs.

One of the areas that does concern me is the number of students who have missed this opportunity, that may be in Grade 3 or in Grade 4, and the minister knows that once a student is in Grade 3, and if they are having difficulty reading, it is almost a licence to fail. It is very, very tough. I would say to any parent, do whatever you can to have them good competent readers by the time they are in Grade 3, for sure by the time they enter Grade 4. But we unfortunately do have children that are there, that are in that horrible situation where they cannot read and they are in Grade 4. Divisions struggle because there are intense resources needed to provide those children with that opportunity, and many divisions just cannot find the resources to provide it. Has any provision or consideration been given by the province to look at the needs of those students who are now in crisis and at that point where we are going to determine whether they are going to be successful in the future or perhaps have a very negative educational experience?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member raises some excellent points and, in terms of reading recovery, I really hope that we can be able to expand this into all areas where we have high incidences of children at risk. One of the things we have been able to do more and more is to have better and earlier identification. Our goal is to really try to get into some good strong early interventions. I would love to see this expanding into those high-risk areas, and we will certainly be doing what we can within the confines of the money we are provided to do that.

She has identified a really good goal for which we should aim, and the other part of that is that we have been working through the Children and Youth Secretariat. I know it seems to be taking a long time, but we will soon start to see the results of trying to do things at the preschool level. We talked a year or two before about nursery schools being costly enhancements, which they are. They are definitely enhancements. They really assist in making a more

successful reader out of a student. They are much more ready for school if they have had that, and if they are at risk, it is a godsend. But it has a cost; from where should the money come? Through the Children and Youth Secretariat we are starting to identify where we think the money should come from without taking away from the money we need for other things in school.

But, having said that, if they do get to school and they have not had the benefit of some good preschool intervention, then Reading Recovery is essential, and we need to do more and spread it more and we are going to be trying to do that. If they miss that, the member's next question is a very legitimate, good question. What do you do with children who hit that eight-, nine-, 10-year-old age group and have not yet picked up their literacy or their computation? Because it is devastating, it really is, for the child. I am going to answer that, but I just say it is one of the reasons I really feel—I know there is a feeling, particularly with the Teachers' Society, that you should not be doing a serious examination at Grade 3. It is only diagnostic; it is not counted for marks. But I think that you have to do one at that level to make sure that, if somehow they have slipped through to that age and stage without somebody picking up, you do not send them on to the next level with no grounding because then they are really screwed, you know. [interjection] Well, they are really put at a severe disadvantage. Pardon the vernacular.

* (1650)

So we are trying to do a number of things. Our new English language arts curriculum is designed to tackle the literacy needs of students, whatever their grade. So, even if they are in Grade 2, the curriculum, we hope, will pick up the flaws they might—if they have not picked up something in Grade 1. One key is to ensure that our teachers have the kinds of knowledge and skills and strategies to deal with the literacy requirements of students at each stage. So, if I am teaching Grades 3 or 4, I should be able to note that a skill that is normally picked up in Grade 2 or 3 is missing, and we can do that through—well, some teachers just do that; some just know how to do it and they do it really well, and everybody lines up to get their kids in those teachers' classes, those wonderful teachers so that people say: I hope my child gets Mrs. Jones or whatever. Others

could do it quite easily if they just had some professional development or if they had some stronger indication of that in the Faculty of Education.

So, Mr. Chairman, the approach we have is to assist teachers of older children with better and more strategic language arts curricula and assisting with resource documents, at the same time bring on board the early prevention to stop and reduce the number of students with poor LA skills moving on to the next grades. But there are transferable skills and strategies emanating from early intervention, Reading Recovery, et cetera. Those types of techniques can also be used from beyond just Grade 1.

The staff has handed me such an intervention or such a strategy from Brandon School Division, and I would like to give Brandon some praise for this because, while much has been said about Brandon's math problems, not as much, unfortunately, has been said about the good job they are doing in LA. I have said it, but the reporters do not seem to want to pick it up. This school division, Brandon, as a result of introducing Reading Recovery—Reading Recovery has impacted their entire system. They have introduced assessment methods, and they have kept running records. The teachers have been taking a running record of a child's reading and analyzing it and using it to plan the child's program. They have got an observation survey. They have been training teachers to use a battery of tests to observe the child's reading and writing behaviours and that is used to plan the program.

They have teaching for reading strategies. The awareness of the strategy is used to process and comprehend text and the teaching methods to promote use of the strategies. They have guided reading. This is a small-group classroom instruction method that emphasizes development of reading strategies and a gradual increase in reading levels for all students. They have a couple of people, Dale Severyn and Donna Forsyth, who have both led sessions on guided reading, as have several of the Reading Recovery teachers. They have Reading Recovery in Brandon, as is pretty obvious.

This is a major focus of the early years committee, and several professional development sessions are being held again this year. This program meets the

need of all the classroom children to have instruction with material that is slightly above their independent level, therefore advancing their skill in reading new and more difficult material. Many classroom teachers have identified that this is an issue in terms of the child who gains basic reading skills but does not continue to be challenged to move to harder material.

They have early literacy teams there, and in the early years, and in some cases middle years, staff have developed study groups and made literacy development their professional focus, and the Reading Recovery teachers have been an integral part of those teams. The discussion and focus on literacy and shared professional development have contributed to the strength of the teams.

A common language has developed through shared use of assessments such as the reading record and analyzing of strategies used by the child. In many cases, the Reading Recovery teacher may provide some of the information to the study groups initially, and then from that point the in-depth discussion and sharing among the teachers becomes the strength of the team. It is something that has happened for many, many years, and that is that when classroom teachers share with each other effective literacy strategies, there is powerful potential.

I will just list the other topics. They have brought in parents as partners. They have a middle years tutorial study group, literacy resources and book levelling and consultation. I would just like to give them credit for what they are doing and say that when school divisions can transfer the skills the way Brandon has from Reading Recovery strategies into their regular classroom strategies, things really go well, and, certainly, their record of bringing students up to good levels of literacy is known and respected by the parents and by the department.

This little thing, Reading Recovery in the Brandon School Division No. 40, from which I have just quoted, was submitted by the Westman Reading Recovery teachers, but it shows the spillover into those other grades that the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) was asking about—what happens if they get through

Grade 1 without Reading Recovery and they slip into Grade 2 or Grade 3 without picking up essential skills? They can still be done through a variety of things such as I have named, but if Reading Recovery is in the school, I am absolutely convinced it does have that ripple effect through the system.

There is nothing magical about Reading Recovery. It is just a teaching technique, but it is one that seems to work, and along with the differentiated instruction, it seems to work, and I think I did table this. [interjection] Did the Clerk get this thing that I was tabling? I am tabling it, Mr. Chairman, with apologies. I just have the one copy and I give back to the staff the Reading Recovery of the Brandon School Division.

Ms. Mihychuk: I just want to quickly wrap up this subject and ask the minister what division and what program has been funded that was similar to Reading Recovery?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am just getting that information for the member, but just in response to one of her questions, it is not nearly enough, but in terms of the North, in terms of band-operated schools, we have got Reading Recovery in Peguis Central School and Sioux Valley School. Although they are band operated, that program is there.

I have a list of the school divisions where we have it and it is not in the North the way I would like to see it. We have got Brandon, Turtle Mountain, the band schools, St. James-Assiniboia, Winnipeg, Interlake, Morris-MacDonald, Pembina Valley, Mountain, Seine River, Assiniboine South.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour now being five o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour now being five o'clock, as previously agreed, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday, 1:30 p.m. Thank you, and have a good weekend.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 1998

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