



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 1, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): I would like to table the Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the 1999-2000 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Departments of Energy and Mines and Northern and Native Affairs.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1999-2000 for the Department of Family Services.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 29—The Victims' Rights Amendment Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am wondering whether I may have leave to revert to the tabling of bills.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Justice have leave to revert to the introduction of bills? [agreed]

Mr. Toews: I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 29, The Victims' Rights Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes), 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 would table the message of the Lieutenant Governor as well.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon thirty-seven Grade 9 students from Calvin Christian School under the direction of Mrs. Angela Schaefer. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Also, nine Grade 7 students from Prairieview School under the direction of Ms. Carol Dyck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura).

We also have twenty-three Grade 5 students from Christ the King School under the direction of Mrs. Shirley Gendron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. Render).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Personal Care Homes Consultant—Funding Levels

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, since this government has been in power, we have clearly seen that the delivery of patient services in our health care system is in great difficulty. We are also seeing that many of the other tenets of the system put in place by this government are in equal difficulty, particularly the large planning sections and bureaucracies that were established in the movement to regional health. I would like to ask the Minister of Health how he can explain the fact that when the health authorities were established, one of the reasons that was given was because of more unified planning, operating and funding structure to integrate health care services, when we now see that the government is putting out a tender effective June 15 for a consultant to provide a comprehensive model for the funding of personal care homes for the province of Manitoba. Why are they privatizing this particular situation when we clearly have seen the fact that there are many bureaucrats in the system that have been added under this government?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson clearly misunderstands what is being done here. I go back to earlier questions from his colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who asked about the whole issue of personal care homes, that we indicated very clearly we are looking at the issue of standards in our personal care homes. In fact, we will be out very shortly doing consultations. I offered the member for Kildonan a full briefing on the whole issue of standards. We also indicated at the time we would look at the whole issue of funding for our personal care homes, both our proprietary, which are the private ones, and our nonproprietary, which are the public ones, which, by the way, are about five to one, public to private personal care homes, and what we are doing now is within the department reviewing the entire issue of appropriate funding levels for our personal care homes. The RFP that the member refers to in the newspaper is a request to get additional support to bring in more expertise

to do that review. Again, the members on the one hand call for it to be done. We agree that it should be done, and we are drawing on the best expertise, both within our department and externally, to come up with appropriate options for a funding model.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like to table a copy of the plan of the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority which outlines, I believe, there are five vice-presidents and three different research directors, and that is in the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority alone. I would like to ask the Minister of Health why now, several years after we needed this, why is he now privatizing this particular aspect? Why, with this huge bureaucracy he has built in Health, is he not getting that kind of study done by the bureaucrats in the regional health authorities and in the Department of Health?

Mr. Stefanson: This member is clearly confused, Madam Speaker. We are not privatizing anything. When you look at our personal care homes today in Manitoba, there are about 100 that are nonproprietary or public personal care homes. There are about 20 that are proprietary. It is a 5 to 1 ratio. What we are doing is we are looking at the future funding for our personal care homes in Manitoba, both our proprietary and our nonproprietary. We indicated in this House several weeks ago, we are doing that review. It has been called on by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) that we should be doing the review. We agree that the review should be done, and not only are we utilizing our internal expertise, we are drawing on outside expertise to do this. This is something that has not been done in Manitoba for 25 or 30 years, and we want to draw on the best expertise available internally and externally to be sure it is done right when the policy is changed.

Mr. Ashton: It is the people of Manitoba who are confused about how this government can build up a huge bureaucracy and then state there is not enough expertise to—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his supplementary question.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Health minister if he can explain the comments by Sue Hicks that there was not enough expertise in the government to do the job when this government under its regional health strategy has added huge new layers of bureaucracy. Why can they not do the job in Health? Why are they now bringing in outside consultants to do something they should have done in Health in 1995 when it was first requested?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we are doing both. We are utilizing internal expertise and external expertise. This is not something that is done every month or every year. In fact, as I have already indicated, it has not been done, I believe, in over 20 or 25 years in terms of a comprehensive review of the appropriate funding models for personal care homes in Manitoba. That is not to say there have not been annual increases in funding because there have. But we have been called upon by all kinds of parties to look at the funding model, and that is what we are doing. We are utilizing our internal people, and we are also putting out a request for proposals to draw on outside expertise to do this thorough analysis which requires an analysis of the costs of all of the issues related to what is an appropriate funding model for personal care homes in Manitoba to meet the needs today and in the years ahead.

Personal Care Homes Consultant—Funding Levels

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, in 1992, an inquest requested increased funding to personal care homes. In 1995, as a result of an exposé on television, the former, former minister conducted a study which concluded in 1995 as one of the 32 recommendations that the government increase funding levels to personal care homes. Now, in 1999, seven years after it was first requested, we see the government going out quickly on a tender to do a funding proposal to private consulting firms for new personal care homes.

In light of what the government tried to do by privatizing home care, how can we have any faith that this government is not attempting to privatize that function and go to a private model

of personal care homes since most of their friends, I suspect, will be involved in this tender process?

* (1340)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, we have increased funding for personal care homes in most of the budgets we have brought down. We increased it in this budget by \$15 million. I am assuming, once again, that is one of the reasons that the members opposite of the NDP voted for our 1999 budget because it includes \$15 million more for personal care homes. We have done that time and time again, continuing to provide more resources in keeping with the whole shift to community-based care whether it be our Home Care program which is up by some \$20 million, our personal care home program which is up by \$15 million. I am sure that is why they voted for this budget. They have not explained clearly why they have, but I am assuming that that is one of the reasons that they were wise enough to support this budget.

What we are doing here is reviewing how we fund personal care homes in the years ahead. We are using internal expertise, and we are drawing on external expertise to assist with the development of options for a funding model. In terms of what that funding model ultimately is, that will be a decision of our government, and it will be done on the basis of meeting the future needs of personal care homes in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Health explain why since 1992 the government has increased the fees paid by residents in personal care homes by 150 percent, and now seven years later, the government now says we need a study—going into an election—to determine a funding model? Can the minister explain that to me, please?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, what I will explain to the member, Madam Speaker, and I will show him very clearly as we are in Estimates the continued increases in funding for our personal care homes in Manitoba. Again, I believe we still have one of the most comprehensive personal care home programs in all of Canada, where a significant

percentage, 70 percent to 75 percent, is provided by the government of Manitoba for our personal care homes.

Again, he likes to talk on both sides of every issue. He calls on us to review the funding models. We review the funding models, and now he criticizes us. He questions whether or not we are putting in more money for personal care homes. He turns around and he votes for our budget. Well, again, we would like to see just a little bit of consistency from members opposite.

We put \$15 million more into personal care homes, \$300 million in this budget. We support this budget. I am glad to see they had the wisdom to do just that as well.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the minister explain why we set up 13 regional health authorities and two authorities in the city of Winnipeg at a cost of tens of millions of dollars to, quote, better co-ordinate and plan our health care system, why we have hired dozens of vice-presidents across the province, very high-priced consultants, and now the minister is telling us we have to spend more taxpayers' money for them to go to an outside consulting firm to tell us how to fund our personal care homes? Can the minister explain that?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, again, we support regionalization. I am not sure what members opposite do. We support regionalization for the very important reasons that regionalization can allow us to make the best use of our buildings in our health care system, can make the best use of our equipment in our health care system, and we can make the best use of our people in our health care system by putting programs where they meet the greatest need in all of our communities. So again, we are very supportive of regionalization, another issue where we are not sure where members opposite stand on that issue. But the simple message on this issue is we are reviewing the funding models. We are looking at options for future funding models to meet the needs of Manitobans in our personal care homes. We believe in doing it thoroughly, we believe in drawing on the best advice and the best expertise that we can possibly get when we do a review after 20 or 30 years, and therefore we are going to use internal

expertise and external expertise to give us the best options on a go-forward basis.

*(1345)

Urban Shared Services Corporation Investigation

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Health. The CEO of the Urban Shared Services has quit. The corporation is losing \$2.5 million, something we warned them about last year. The Auditor is investigating the corporation. It is in chaos because of the food delivery. The minister said yesterday, quote, the operation is already running smoothly.

Madam Speaker, if that corporation is running smoothly, how can we trust the government to run anything in health care? Can the minister not use this opportunity to stop this corporation, to bring it back to the House, to bring the financial statements to the House and ask for an investigation of this corporation and a freezing of the frozen food?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, again I remind the member opposite that the Urban Shared Services Corporation is an entity that was created by the nine hospitals in the city of Winnipeg, the CEOs of those nine hospitals that are concerned with the operations of the hospitals and the quality of care for the individuals in those facilities. They serve on the board along with, I believe, four other citizen representatives from Manitoba that serve on the board. Their objective throughout the entire process is to provide quality, nutritional food in the most cost-effective and efficient way possible. They have pointed out that by having one centralized system, it can reduce the requirements for future capital in all of our health care facilities in the city of Winnipeg, and it can also improve the efficiencies of providing that food. They readily acknowledge that in the first year of operation they have had some implementation costs, they have had some transition costs. It is taking longer for a couple of facilities to come on stream, but you are not putting a system in place just for one month or one week or one year. You are putting a system in place to meet the

needs of the Winnipeg hospitals for the next 20 or 30 years, and this system will provide quality, nutritional food in an effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Health explain why on April 15 of last year, when I asked the former minister and Joe Sheil, CEO, to revise the business plan because they were going to lose \$2.5 million, they refused to revise the business plan? They refused to table the financial plan; they refused to table the contractual plan. Why does the minister expect us to believe today his claims that they are going to make it all better when they could not do it last year, when they denied it last year and when the Auditor has already investigated it?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I expect him to believe that because they have seen the wisdom of their ways by voting for our 1999 budget. So if that is indicative of some of the thinking that is finally taking place over there, I hope they start to think that way when it comes to regionalization and other services in Manitoba.

I have explained very clearly for the member the whole objective, the whole benefit, the system that is in place for the Urban Shared Services Corporation. We certainly believe that over time it can definitely do what it is meant to do and provide quality, nutritional food in a cost-effective manner.

In terms of all of the surveys that have been done at the hospitals of late, they show continued improvement in terms of the ratings of the food by the patients. In fact, the surveys show that the ratings today show that the patients of the facilities give a higher rating to the food today than they did to the food prior to the changes.

Food Services Moratorium

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, can the minister not understand that the same comments he made today were made by the previous minister and the previous minister in the same claims? How can he justify a loss of \$2.5 million in the corporation, and will he not

use this opportunity of the resignation of the CEO, the chaos in the corporation, the investigation by the Auditor to put the frozen food plan on frozen and come back with a legitimate process as to how we can provide proper food to Manitobans so that they do not have to go through this fiasco? This is a fiasco.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, there is no fiasco other than in the mind of the member for Kildonan. Again, I just remind him of the system that is in place and the status of operations. We are in Estimates, and I look forward to discussing this at further length with the member for Kildonan.

Again, the objective of this system is to avoid future capital cost requirement, to do it effectively and efficiently to minimize the actual operating cost, to provide quality and nutritional food. This system can definitely do that, and I am sure that with the board that is in place, the nine CEOs from our hospitals, the four citizen members, they will take the appropriate steps to continue to make sure the corporation works efficiently going forward.

I have indicated I am prepared to return to the member with the issue of the contracts, and there will be a revised business plan from the Urban Shared Services Corporation very shortly, which I look forward to sharing with the member for Kildonan. I am sure he will take some interest in that.

* (1350)

Urban Shared Services Corporation Rethermalization Carts

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, yesterday in Question Period the Minister of Health said that because the operation is running smoothly, he does not foresee any operational problems in the near future. Well, the big rethermalization carts were designed to be taken to each ward of each hospital and plugged in there so that the food would be ready when needed, but it turns out the Health Sciences Centre wards do not have the power supply to allow the plug-ins and that the Health Sciences Centre officials have now acknowledged that the huge costs to rewire each

ward are simply prohibitive. So will the Minister of Health then confirm that the carts cannot be plugged in to the wards of Health Sciences Centre, therefore cannot be used the way they were intended, and that is a pretty major operational problem in anyone's books?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Both the HSC, Health Sciences Centre, and St. Boniface Hospital have indicated that they have some improvements to put in place to allow for the introduction of the Urban Shared Services Corporation. But again, the review and analysis that has been done to compare the Urban Shared Services Corporation to improvements that would be required at all of our health care facilities in Winnipeg shows a difference of about \$15 million less by doing it on a centralized basis as continuing to do it at each individual facility.

I will certainly look into some of the details, but based on the member for Crescentwood's past performance of being right maybe 10 percent of the time, I even question the accuracy of what he brings today.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm that the current plans are to rewire a major piece of the basement area of HSC for the carts, widen structural doors at huge costs, then hold the carts in the basement and rush them to the floors at meal times, exactly like the previous system? No improvement.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I think that we should wait till the whole new system is introduced at the Health Sciences Centre, which is expected to take place either later this year or early next year. But again, in terms of the overall plan for the Urban Shared Services Corporation, it was brought forward on the basis of one of the benefits being that we could forgo about \$15 million in capital costs by doing it in one central location. So again, the Urban Shared Services Corporation has acknowledged that the HSC and St. Boniface do require some adjustments, but that pales by comparison to major capital improvements that would have been required in terms of kitchen facilities and food preparation facilities in those hospitals. So, on the capital cost side, the investment, again the

information provided by Urban Shared Services Corporation shows a savings of about \$15 million.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister tell the House: now that we know that we are already \$5 million over the budget, given the food that is being paid for but not received by HSC and St. Boniface and given the \$2.5-million overrun, we have already spent at least five that we know of, of the 15 that you were saving, will he tell us what the expected costs of the renovations at Health Sciences Centre will be, the real total costs, and whether there has been any testing of the proposed revision to the plan, that is, shipping the carts up to the floor not able to be plugged in, or whether this is just another fly by the seat of the pants planning exercise by this government?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member is wrong with his preamble. He is comparing capital costs and operating costs. I know he has difficulty getting both of those issues straight in his mind. Again, in terms of a lot of the preamble he brings, we have seen his track record when it came to Deer Lodge hospital, having a pathetic amount of accuracy in terms of the quality of information he brought. I think we should wait and see the issues being addressed by Health Sciences Centre. They are in the process of doing that. They are in the process of finalizing their plans for the introduction of the service.

But again, the overall objective of the USSC, which is owned by the nine hospitals—what they seem to forget across the way is that these nine CEOs who manage these health care facilities that provide all of the services in the hospital from the patient care to the food to all of the services, they are extremely interested in doing that as efficiently and effectively as possible and to ensure that the food is of a quality and a nutritional value that is acceptable to all of the patients. They have a very strong interest in doing that, as do we, and they continue to improve in that area.

* (1355)

Municipal Act Amendments

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In the Deloraine area there has been considerable discussion around the fact that a number of individuals who are not resident in the municipality were able to vote in the municipal election as a result of owning undivided interests in tiny parcels of land within the municipality. My question to the Premier is: what changes to The Municipal Act will the Premier be proposing to end this particular practice?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I know that that matter is currently being reviewed by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), and so I will take that matter as notice on his behalf and have the answer brought back to the Legislature.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the Premier indicate, given the municipal legislation that we have before us, why is it not being dealt with with current legislation that is being proposed?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice and have the Minister of Rural Development bring a response.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, then will the Premier in fact be introducing amendments to The Municipal Act sometime in this session to address that issue?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I said that the matter was being reviewed. That does not imply that a decision has been made with respect to amendments. So, again, I will have the matter responded to by the Minister of Rural Development.

Flooding Farmers—Compensation

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, farmers in the southwest corner of Manitoba continue to wait for some direction from this government as to what kind of support they are going to be offering farmers who are suffering perhaps the most serious flooding they

have ever had in this region. I would like to ask the Premier when his government is going to be telling farmers of southwestern Manitoba whether they are going to be extending crop insurance, whether they are going to waive the penalty for late seeding. When are they going to give some answers to the people of southwestern Manitoba who are suffering very serious flooding?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, there has been a good deal of work and discussion on these issues done by various departments and ministers. We met just less than an hour ago with representatives of municipalities and KAP regional people in that area. We had an extensive discussion, including the chair of the Crop Insurance Corporation and representatives from the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture and MEMO. A variety of different initiatives are being explored.

The member may well know that in virtually every case there is a federal participation, from the DFA with respect to disaster financial assistance, with respect to the potential use of AIDA, with respect to crop insurance and with respect to all of these other matters including various different opportunities that were pursued either in other disasters in Canada or in the 1997 flood in the Red River.

The position that we have taken is that we will pursue the most generous applications of solutions that have been made in the past as our model so that if they were used either in this province or other places to the benefit of farmers and residents in an area facing similar disasters, that is what we would want to do. I would hope that we would have these matters all clarified to the extent that we can put out public notices with information on this within the next 24 to 48 hours.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the Premier for the answer. I want to ask him whether he agrees with the federal Minister of Agriculture who says you cannot announce programs for farmers because they might be irresponsible and be discouraged from seeding. Surely you must agree that farmers do not farm to farm crop insurance and are looking for support just in case they cannot seed, and need some answers now.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I do not agree with the comments of the federal minister, and we will be in contact again. I know that our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has been in contact with Mr. Vanclief on a number of occasions in recent times, and we will continue to pursue the matter with him. We do not agree with his position on the matter.

* (1400)

Maintaining Safe Communities Brochure Costs

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): The Minister of Justice here in the robbery and the street gang capital of Canada, we understand the minister has been circulating for a few months this fancy, glossy brochure called Maintaining Safe Communities, full of the minister's puffery. I commend the minister for the nice, glossy photos and the layout. What is this for, Madam Speaker? It is clearly not a guide or a manual for help or to improve safety. What is the cost to taxpayers?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): This was a brochure entitled Maintaining Safe Communities that was put out by my department, and I think my department speaks with pride, our civil servants, our public servants speak with pride about the efforts that they have made in terms of making this a safer place to live.

I want to commend them for the work that they have done. For example, in the area called Victims, it talks about the victims' programs that we offer, in fact indicates that there is a 1-800 number where people can phone to get some more information in respect of support and assistance to victims. So I am quite proud of what my department has done in respect of not only putting this pamphlet together but also the programs that they have been instrumental in developing.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister who will not tell taxpayers—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his question.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister justified this puff piece at any cost, but it describes recent improvements to deal with domestic violence such as new civil remedies for victims to deal with stalking, protection orders available province-wide at any time, prevention orders with compensation, suspension and seizure of driver's licence, all of which are untrue.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, this particular member has brought forward information, allegations that have subsequently been proven to be untrue, that there was very basic information that he could have checked. For example, he brought information here indicating that Manitoba's Maintenance Enforcement Program was somehow substandard. In fact, it has the highest rate of collections of any province on a percentage basis. So the types of comments that he has made about the programs I think are simply incorrect.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): A point of order, Madam Speaker. Beauchesne's Citation 417 is very clear, that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate. Once again this minister is not only not answering the question but is engaging in the kind of personalization, the kinds of efforts we see all too often of diverting from the question. A very serious question was asked about this puff piece and the information that is in it. I would appreciate if you would ask the minister to answer that question under our rules.

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

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, as I understand Beauchesne, the question has to be succinctly put. It has to be one question, and there should be no preamble. The member has clearly erred in putting that question. So the question that was put to me, or should I say the plural of the questions that were put to me, demanded an answer as concisely as I could give, and when you give multiple questions with a multiple

preamble, I was answering it as succinctly as possible.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I indeed will take the matter under advisement to check with Hansard.

Anti-Stalking Legislation Proclamation

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

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Will the minister perhaps admit that he has just been too busy to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member for St. Johns please pose a supplementary question without any preamble.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the minister, Madam Speaker, been—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am having difficulty hearing the honourable member for St. Johns who was recognized to pose a question.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, has the minister been too busy to put into force The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act which would actually give Manitobans those rights and protections that I listed, because he has been too busy prioritizing his time getting out documents, puff pieces like this? The legislation was passed one year ago this month.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am quite proud of the piece of legislation that my department drafted and which this House passed. As the members are well aware, there are very complex regulations that have to be put in place as a result of that legislation. The legislation is the first in Canada.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, as I indicated, the regulations under that particular legislation are very complex. I have had meetings on a regular basis with my department to ensure that those regulations are being moved along on a very timely basis. But I feel that I have an obligation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. A very serious question was asked, and the minister has been interrupted twice in completing his response. I would ask for the co-operation of all members in permitting the minister to complete his response.

Mr. Toews: I believe that I have an obligation to the people of Manitoba, to the victims of stalking to ensure that the legislation is workable and that it does in fact do the things that it is supposed to do. Our government has not taken a back seat in respect of this issue. It was my colleague the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) who brought forward very important proposals to the federal government which they adopted for the benefit of Manitobans.

Athena Educational Partners Partnership Agreement

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, two school divisions in Manitoba are reported as entering into contracts with the Youth News Network for the showing of commercial news in Manitoba schools. The minister has already stated in this House that his department does not intend to review the content of these programs, but I would like to ask the minister today whether he intends to open a discussion with the respective school divisions about the nature of the contracts that they have entered into.

* (1410)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, as we have discussed previously, school divisions will weigh the pros and cons of the proposals brought forward by the company involved and make decisions at the school division level, and I have

said that I believe that is an appropriate way to handle this particular issue because each community, each school division will have certain items of priority for themselves that they want to address, and that is an appropriate thing.

I have a copy of a sample of the presentation which, because of activities this morning related to developing further technological advancements in our school system related to an agreement reached between the MERLIN and the Corel Corporation for technology for our students, I did not have a chance this morning to review that YNN sample production. I will do that, and if any questions arise that I think are appropriate for me to address with any school divisions, I will do so. But the fact that school divisions are in some areas finding in favour of moving on this proposal, in other areas are moving in favour of not moving with this proposal, tells me the system is working, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister confirm whether or not such contracts in Manitoba contain the requirement for schools to report their daily attendance figures to the commercial company, and does the minister believe that such provisions are consistent with The Education Administration Act or The Public Schools Act?

Mr. McCrae: I think I could examine that issue and give the honourable member a response to that specific question, but no doubt she would realize that anyone entering into a contract—a contract is a situation where both parties agree to do certain things or decline to do certain things by mutual consent, and that is what I would see here. If the honourable member thinks that I can substitute my judgment for that of school superintendents, school trustees, parents and teachers in all the areas where these matters are being looked at, I quite frankly disagree with the approach that says every decision has to be made in this building, everything has to be done by the government, that Big Brother knows better than ordinary Manitobans, that Big Brother knows better than elected school trustees, that Big Brother knows better than everybody else how everyone should live their lives. Madam Speaker, I feel fairly strongly about that, as you might have noticed.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell the House whether or not such daily attendance figures may be passed from the news network to individual advertisers under provisions of any of the contracts signed in Manitoba? I understand he has not looked at them yet. I ask him to investigate that as well.

Mr. McCrae: I think that is something that would be appropriate for me to inform myself about as to the question being raised by the honourable member. She is raising it as a legitimate concern, and I think that it ought to be handled legitimately.

The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) suggests that maybe we should apply certain of the same principles respecting testing in Manitoba, and I just respond to him that I would not proceed like honourable members opposite who are quite content to relegate future generations of Manitobans to a life of dependence and mediocrity and despondency. No, I support measures that would promote for our children a life of independence, a life of excellence and a life of happiness.

Personal Care Homes Consultant—Funding Levels

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): The government's record on health care is marred by a number of fiascos, to use the word used by our Health critic. Who can forget Connie Curran, that outside consultant?

I would like to ask in regard to the tender for the contract if the minister can explain why the proposal is supposed to be in June 15 and the work is supposed to commence July 1, and I am just wondering if there is another Connie Curran waiting around in the wings to pick up this consulting contract and then engage in another fiasco for health care in this province.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Again, the member for Thompson now uses the word "fiasco," but yet this budget includes \$2.1 billion for health care, a \$194-million increase, a 10 percent increase which, oh, by the way, Madam Speaker, they voted for and they supported, 35.5 percent of our budget, the second-highest expenditure of any province in

all of Canada, consistently the third or fourth highest per capita spending in all of Canada when it comes to health care, one of the most comprehensive Home Care programs in all of Canada, one of the most comprehensive personal care home programs in all of Canada. I am assuming those are some of the reasons that they supported our budget and voted for our budget.

Here again, we are going out and drawing on the best expertise available to analyze our funding for personal care homes to meet the needs of our system not only today but in the weeks, months, years ahead.

Provincial Auditor Urban Shared Services Corporation

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): A supplementary. I am wondering if the minister will confirm that one of the reasons that nobody trusts this government in this province on health care—that is probably the main reason they have delayed the election—is because of the fiasco with frozen food. I am wondering if he will assure the House that Mr. Sheil will be called before the Auditor to account for the mess, the complete fiasco we have seen with frozen food, a system that this minister said only yesterday is running smoothly. Only the Minister of Health believes that.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Members opposite obviously trust this government because they voted for our budget just a couple of weeks ago, did it twice, and voted unanimously for our budget. So again, I take that as a vote of trust from people right in this Chamber, including all of those members opposite, and I have just outlined the many reasons why I am assuming that they had the wisdom to vote for our 1999 budget, the reason that I have outlined in terms of the \$2.1-billion health care funding that is being provided.

The member knows that the Provincial Auditor is starting a review of the Urban Shared Services Corporation. He indicated very clearly that when there are new initiatives, it is not uncommon for him to do a review. This is a new initiative, and he said he was going to undertake a review. I am told that he is starting that review process in June.

Omand's Creek Corridor Parking Lot Transfer

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Omand's Creek is a small creek that winds its way from north of the airport to the Assiniboine River. A significant initiative has been underway to develop a linear green corridor. We have an opportunity to enhance that corridor by having the government turn over a parking lot that was used by Manitoba Health.

My question to the Minister of Government Services: is the minister willing to transfer this property to the City of Winnipeg, in trust, to enhance and expand the urban green space known as the Omand's Creek corridor?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question because we have looked into the property that is presently listed at 599 Empress Street, I believe is the address and, as such, we have taken a look at that small parking lot that is stranded by the highway going through it. We have decided that if the City of Winnipeg is willing to accept the responsibility for that piece of property we will do everything we can to transfer that property to the City of Winnipeg for use in that linear green space.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Seniors Month

Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone): This afternoon I would like to pay special tribute to the older citizens of Manitoba. As we celebrate the International Year of Older Persons, we have too much to recognize and to thank our seniors for. June is also Seniors Month in Manitoba. Our forefathers came from many different countries. They brought with them a pioneer spirit, a strong desire to make a better home for their children and a deep commitment to their new homeland. They brought traditions and cultures that added much to the Manitoba mosaic. Our province is a richer place because of their contributions to our culture, history and moral values.

Today's seniors continue to be a vibrant, active segment of our society. Without their continued willingness to help others through their volunteerism, many services and organizations could not continue. During the month of June, there will be a number of celebrations honouring our seniors. For example, this morning I attended the Carman Seniors Day at the Carman community centre along with the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Reimer) and my colleague the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Also coming up is the Manitoba Society of Seniors 55 Plus Games which takes place June 15, 16 and 17 in Carman.

I hope that everyone in this House will take the time to attend events such as these and acknowledge the contributions of older Manitobans. We benefit from the wisdom and knowledge that years of experience have given them. Too often we forget how much we owe to our seniors. They have earned our respect and gratitude and should be recognized and honoured not just for the month of June but each and every day. A special thank you to our recycled teenagers.

* (1420)

Cervical Cancer Screening Program

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, last week my colleague the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) raised a very important issue in this House and again raised it in Question Period yesterday, and that is in regard to screening for cervical cancer, and more specifically a need for a registry. I want to put on the record my thanks to—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am having difficulty hearing the honourable member for Thompson. I wonder if those members having private conversations would do so quietly in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Mr. Ashton: I want to commend our critic for the Status of Women in raising this important issue and note that there appears to be some sign now from the government that we are going to see some action on this very important issue.

I have a personal stake in this, Madam Speaker, because I would like to put on the record on behalf of the Braun family in Wabowden, who lost a sister, a daughter and a mother to a circumstance in which a test was conducted, precancerous signs were identified, and due to the negligence of the physician and the hospital involved she was not informed of that and died tragically. That led to a lawsuit by the family, a recent settlement that I think clearly confirms what happened. What I want to put on the record is that no one else should ever have to go through that again.

I am disappointed it took the government this long, several years, to respond to it, and like so many other areas of health care, they seem to have waited until the dying days of their mandate. But if, later on this week, the efforts of families such as the Braun family, the efforts of our critic and our caucus, and indeed the many physicians and medical people throughout the province lead to the establishment of what we really need, a cervical screening program and a registry, it will be a very important day for Manitoba women. Thank you.

École St. Avila

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, my government remains committed to promoting environmental education and protection, and in particular conveying this message to our young people. Recently I presented École St. Avila with a cheque of \$10,800 from the province's Sustainable Development Innovations Fund. École St. Avila will use the funds to plant mature trees and perennials on the school property. School children will be involved in this project and will adopt a tree to care and to study.

The Sustainable Development Innovations Fund provides financial assistance for the development, implementation and promotion of innovative environmental projects delivered by community groups, industry and government. The fund encourages the creation of partnerships to make a contribution to improving our environment, economy, health and community well-being.

Madam Speaker, this grant represents a positive partnership between the government and an important community facility. Through sustainable development practices, we meet present-day needs while ensuring that our decisions will make it possible for future generations to meet their needs too. This funding will allow young children to learn about the merits of environmental responsibility while giving them a sense that they have contributed something worthwhile and lasting to the place they call home.

I wish to commend Madame Painchaud, the principal of St. Avila, the staff and students of St. Avila for the initiative they have shown in undertaking this project. Their efforts will help beautify our community while teaching students about the importance of protecting and enhancing the environment. Thank you.

Manitoba Envirothon '99

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on May 27, 28 and 29, the third annual Manitoba Envirothon was held at Canadian Forces Base at Shilo. Envirothon is a high school study program culminating in a competition where participating teams of high school students demonstrate their knowledge of forests, aquatics, soils, wildlife and environmental issues. This year's team was fire management. The environmental approach is learning, fostering teams and providing an opportunity for students from different jurisdictions to meet and exchange information and share environmental concerns.

This year, there were 11 schools that participated. The Arthur Meighen High School from Portage la Prairie; Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School, Brandon; Ed Schreyer School of Beausejour; Fort Richmond Collegiate in Winnipeg; Gimli High School; Maples Collegiate; W.C. Miller Collegiate from Altona; Pembina Valley Conservation District Environmental Youth Group; Powerview School from Powerview; Shaftesbury High School of Winnipeg; and the Swan Valley Regional Secondary School.

I am very pleased to announce that it was the Swan Valley Regional Secondary School

students who took first place in the competition. These students will be going on to the international competition, and they will be competing in California on July 27 and August 1, 1999, at an event hosted by the California Envirothon Committee at Humboldt State University at Arcata, California.

I want to extend my best wishes to Kari Goodman, Kristin McCrea, Crystal Barker, Gayle Russell, Vera Teleford and Chris Hunt who were the team members on this and also to the teachers Mr. Rick Wowchuk, Serge Richer and assistant Ryan Creighton who supported this team. I want to wish them all the very best luck in the next level of competition.

Essential Services Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I wanted to take this opportunity just to appeal to the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), who was given the partial blessing of this Chamber in passing the essential services legislation. Now all it requires is Royal Assent. I appeal to the Minister of Health not to bring in Royal Assent for that particular bill, at least until the mediation has been dealt with. I think that is a fair request, and I would appeal to the Minister of Health to give it due consideration. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I understand His Honour the Lieutenant Governor will be arriving very shortly to give Royal Assent to I believe Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act. In the meantime, while we are waiting for his arrival, I would like to make a few announcements.

I know we are still working out some details on committee, but I think it would be safe to announce today that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, June 8, 1999, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 to continue discussing the 1996, '97 and '98 and the 1999 five-year operating plans for the Workers Compensation Board, the annual reports of the Workers Compensation Board for

the years ended December 31, 1996, '97 and '98, and the December 31, 1996, '97 and 1998, reports of the Appeal Commission. I understand that the work of that committee was not completed and that it was seeking another day, so we will call that committee for that particular Tuesday.

I would also like to announce as well that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, June 15, 1999, at 10 a.m. to discuss the annual report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended February 28, 1999.

In discussions with the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton), we are trying to accommodate committees, critics, ministers, et cetera. Regrettably, we were not able to do that for this week, so we may be considering another committee for next week, but I have to have further discussions with my colleagues opposite to see if that is possible. So there may be a further announcement if we are able to accommodate all concerned for a possible committee meeting on Monday of next week, but again, it is a matter of trying to accommodate all of the parties, including critics, around that time.

Madam Speaker, it would be our intention today, after the arrival of the Lieutenant Governor, to proceed to Committee of Supply for Estimates. I would ask if you could canvass the House to see if there is unanimous consent to waive private members' hour today on the understanding, of course, that we would be using the Thursday morning sitting for Private Members' Business.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to waive private members' hour for today? [agreed]

Two announcements regarding standing committees. The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet Tuesday, June 8, 10 a.m., in Room 255 to continue to consider matters related to the Workers Compensation Board; and the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, June 15, 10

a.m., to consider matters related to the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

* (1430)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, understanding that there is a reception tonight sponsored by the High Commissioner of Great Britain and that certain members do want to attend that, what I think I would like to propose is, following the arrival of the Lieutenant Governor, when we move the motion of Supply, that we should leave it to each committee, each of the sections, to determine their own arrangements whether they would like to adjourn at five o'clock or they would continue sitting until six, because it does not affect all members.

So I think we could have an understanding in this House that we would leave it to each section, members in each Committee of Supply to work out the detail. I understand there is an interest in Education, for example, to wind it up at five o'clock because of members wanting to attend that function. So if there is that willingness I certainly have no objection as government House leader to that decision being made in each section of committee.

Madam Speaker: My understanding is that the House will technically adjourn at 6 p.m., but is there unanimous consent of the House to have individual decisions made in the three individual sections of Committee of Supply as to determining the time for adjournment today? [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, we are just awaiting the arrival of His Honour, so if the House could just be patient, I understand that he was entertaining the honorary consul of the Belgian King here this afternoon. Perhaps our colleague for Point Douglas or others may want to entertain us. I look to the member for Wolseley. If I could catch her attention, I know her interest to attend the reception of the British High Commissioner.

I would ask if we could also agree today that after 5 p.m. if any standing votes are required or any recorded votes are required that they would be put over to the next day.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House not to deal with any recorded votes this afternoon in Committee of Supply? [agreed]

* (1440)

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

His Honour Peter Liba, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the Throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly, at its present session, passed a bill, which, in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour, and to which bill I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Bill 27—The Essential Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services essentiels.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that this House now do resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Most Gracious Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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 Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 16.2. School Programs (d) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,164,200. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My apologies, first of all, for keeping the committee waiting. It was unintentional.

The minister had some material to table on curriculum and numbers of students in senior level information technology courses.

Mr. Chairperson: Before I acknowledge the minister's response, what is the will of the committee in terms of rising today?

Ms. Friesen: Well, as I am sure the Chairman knows, the government House leader indicated that each committee should determine what time it is rising today. All members of the Legislature have been invited to meet with the British High Commissioner, and I would certainly like to. So I would propose that we rise at 5 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee that this committee rise at 5 p.m.? [agreed]

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): I know that the honourable member for Wolseley was referred to by the government House leader when he put the matter to the House, and the House has agreed that the committees can decide. So, that being the case, I have certainly no problem with the honourable member attending. I am going to have the pleasure of meeting with the High Commissioner myself this week, so I would not want to deprive the honourable member of that opportunity.

Ms. Friesen: Just for clarification, is the minister clear on this committee rising at 5 or 5:30 p.m.?

An Honourable Member: Did you say 5 p.m.?

Ms. Friesen: 5 or 5:30 p.m.

An Honourable Member: It is on your head. You call it.

Ms. Friesen: 5:30 p.m.?

Mr. Chairperson: For 5:30 p.m.? Is it agreed that the committee will rise at 5:30 p.m.? [agreed]

The committee will rise at 5:30 p.m. today.

Mr. McCrae: Yesterday—actually, over a couple of days now, I think—we have talked about curricula-related technology education. I gave out a lot of information verbally. My department has kindly put it into a form that probably looks better than it would coming from me verbally, and I am going to table that.

The student numbers are something the honourable member has been asking about, and we have not yet compiled that, but we will provide those numbers just as soon as that is possible to do. In the meantime, I am tabling this Report on Department-developed Curricula Related to Technology Education. This is dated today's date, and the document says what it says. I will keep one for myself.

In addition, the honourable member was talking to me about the Assiniboine Community College and the southwest consortium. Assiniboine Community College and the southwest consortium have reached agreement on the cost and nature of the technical support that will be provided by ACC to the consortium during the 1999-2000 pilot delivery of the World Issues 40S Web-based course. Technical support will be charged back to the consortium at an hourly rate of \$19.60. The nature of the technical support that will be provided is limited to trouble-shooting and correcting OLE-based problems only. OLE is the application software that is used to create the on-line learning environment.

It is also important to note that MERLIN would not be able to provide this service because they do not have OLE, which is owned by ACC.

In addition, we talked about information technology, and this may respond to some things that were asked about surveys. Schools have been surveyed on their information technology

infrastructure in each of the following school years: 1986-87, 1987-88, 1991-92, 1994-95, 1996-97. That is available online at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/metks4/tech/techplan/survey/index.html>. Current status is as follows: MERLIN is currently completing a technology survey of all schools in the province to determine their Internet connectivity as well as to gather other information on their technical infrastructures. The agency has had a difficult time obtaining this information from schools, with only 38 percent responding within the time line of the survey. Action is currently underway to obtain data from those who have not yet completed the survey form, and I am going to table that survey form in a moment.

The future status is that MERLIN will undertake to conduct annual information technology infrastructure surveys with respect to Internet connectivity. MERLIN offers all schools in the province a free Internet account which includes e-mail as well as World Wide Web space. Every school has the ability to connect to the Internet by using this account. Connection and long distance charges are the responsibility of the school. If a school has no computer equipment or modems, these can be obtained at minimal cost from the Computers for Schools and Libraries program. The software necessary to connect to the Internet is available without charge. The definition of connected to the Internet is open for discussion. The federal government uses a criterion that is that schools have the ability to connect to the Internet via a modem to use e-mail services. Using this criterion, all schools in Manitoba have the ability to connect to the Internet.

* (1500)

In the survey completed in 1997, it was found that approximately two-thirds of schools reported accessing the Internet via a modem. Urban schools were most likely to do so, 72 percent of them. In contrast, northern schools were most likely to access the Internet using a local area network router; that is 52 percent. Preliminary results from the 1998-99 survey indicate that 95 percent of the schools have Internet access. However, as noted previously, the opportunity to connect to the Internet is possible using MERLIN Internet accounts and

equipment from Computers for Schools and Libraries.

With respect to the student to computer ratio, in May 1997, there were 22,668 computers in the 615 schools reporting. In contrast, the 1995 survey reported 16,780 computers in 478 Manitoba schools. If it were not for the time that would be required, I would just repeat that because that is a pretty significant activity out there. The preliminary information—

Ms. Friesen: The minister was indicating significant activity. I wondered on what basis, and since I heard him, maybe he does need to repeat it. In '95, there were only 478 schools reporting, and in '97 there were 615 schools, so, in fact, there is no way of comparing the figures.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member has very sharp, acute hearing skills. It is true, because you cannot always guarantee how many are actually going to report, but the fact is in '97, 615 schools reported. In 1995, 478 reported. I suppose we could go and have a review on the methodology and all the rest of it, but I am putting out some information that I think is significant on the face of it without commenting on the methodology or the accuracy of the survey or the reliability of the people asking the questions or anything else. I just thought it was fairly significant on its face. Now I suppose we could do a review more about this in order to ascertain—it has probably even grown by greater amounts than that revealed in the survey here. In any event, I take the point made by the honourable member, and I can see that she would be correct in the observation that she has made because there is nothing here to say—well, maybe the next paragraph will help, and I will go on with that.

The preliminary information from the 1998-99 survey, 38 percent of schools responding, represents 51.4 of the student population in the province. Well, I can agree, and I spoke to the gentleman from MERLIN earlier today who was expressing a little bit of concern that he cannot force people to respond to surveys, and that may very well highlight the observation made by the honourable member. The preliminary information from the 1998-99 survey with 38 percent of schools responding represents 51.4 percent of

the student population in the province. From the information provided, there are 12,215 computers in these schools. This translates to a student-to-computer ratio of eight to one within the reporting schools, and this information can be updated as schools provide additional information. So the honourable member's point is well taken, but I would still like to table the survey that is used to make this report.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, I had the privilege today of being involved in an announcement which bears on a lot of the discussions we have been having. We, through MERLIN, have negotiated a special rate for Corel software licensing, and there is going to be a substantial dollar saving in the education community, at the same time accessing technological assistance through software and whatever other services that are the subject of this agreement.

Manitoba's education community will save approximately 75 percent to 80 percent on their software licensing purchases through a special agreement announced today. The agreement will help to improve access to leading edge software packages that could be used in both the classroom and other settings to give our students an advantage in today's information age.

This Corel Licence Program Academic Agreement was reached between Corel and MERLIN, which is the Manitoba Education Research Learning Information Network. It offers a major discount to schools, post-secondary institutions, libraries and museums on Corel product licences. Licensing is essential in the acquisition of software. This is something that Colette Lepine representing Corel said today. She said that this software will give students an opportunity to learn about the kinds of technology that will help prepare them for success.

The agreement will support the plans of many schools to increase their licences as more computers are added to labs. I had the opportunity. This announcement was made today at the Winnipeg technical college. Mr. Len Harapiak was there. We appreciated the ability to use Winnipeg Technical College's premises for the purpose of making the announcement.

Products being offered under the licensing agreement include business applications and that would be the Corel WordPerfect Suite, and they had the equipment and the software there, complete with students working on them to show us how it would assist them. Also, Corel Graphics Applications called CorelDRAW and Corel Internet/Intranet Applications, Webmaster and Graphics Suite.

It was pointed out that MERLIN provides technology at reduced rates to the educational community through bulk purchasing, networking services, Internet audio and video conferencing. It went on to say that schools and other people in the education community can contact MERLIN to see how they can participate in the offer that is now being made because of this agreement.

Now this is what MERLIN does. This is what they are there for, to assist in bringing technology to our education system. That seems to be what is happening. I cannot put a dollar sign on this, because I do not know what 75 percent to 80 percent will mean on a licence arrangement in a given institution. But if everybody took advantage of this type of discount that is available through the auspices of agreements reached with the MERLIN, then you can imagine either the advances that can be made in technology in our schools or savings realized on deals like this that could make dollars available for other aspects, so I just thought I would add that today.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister table the contract that he signed or that MERLIN has signed with Corel?

Mr. McCrae: I do not know. We will ascertain if it is tableable, and if it is, we will do that. I have not tabled an agreement like this in the past, so if there are any issues related to proprietary matters or anything like that that I need to have brought to my attention, subject to that I am certainly always willing to table as much as I possibly can.

* (1510)

Ms. Friesen: I know we have a line coming up with MERLIN on it, and we can certainly refer these questions there. There are certainly lots of

advantages in these types of negotiated agreements, and sometimes they are so advantageous that schools will only then buy Corel. In some cases, this may not give the students the diversity of software that they need to work with to be prepared for a variety, so I am interested in two aspects of this. Does the minister believe that there are any exclusive elements in the contract; and secondly, does MERLIN intend or has MERLIN already negotiated contracts with other companies in a similar vein?

Mr. McCrae: I think there is nothing in this that compels anybody who needs something that is not offered through this particular company that compels them not to access that. There is another contract like this that I know about and MERLIN wants to negotiate more of these, so that more access can be had to all of the resources that are around, but it in no way compels anybody to exclusivity.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the minister referred to another contract that he knew of like this. Did he mean in another department or is he specifically under MERLIN?

Mr. McCrae: There was one other that I know of that was announced last year, and that is with Microsoft. I suppose if the same rules do not apply to that, I can try to obtain that.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, yes, the minister anticipated my question.

I wanted to refer to the material the minister tabled which related to technology and education, and I wanted to isolate out what I have been trying to ask questions on, and that is information technology. The minister has given me a sheet which relates to technology education which obviously is a much broader field. As I look at this list, I can see that there are many areas where computers would be used and where different aspects, beyond computers, of technology would be used. But I am interested specifically in the teaching of information technology.

It seems to me from this list—and what I am looking for is some confirmation or additions from the minister—that what we have that is essentially information technology initiated,

developed by the department is Advanced Word Processing 45S, Automated Office 40S, Computer Apps and Technology 20S, and then the two courses in keyboarding, Introductory Keyboarding and Advanced Keyboarding, and then Software Applications. Then there is the Word Processing 30S.

Would there be others which are clearly information technology curricula? For example, this report on department-developed curricula relating to technology education talks about technology may be regarded as a tool, a machine, a process system environment, and yes, all of that is true. But what I was asking about was information technology. So have I picked out the right ones, and can the minister tell me whether each of these curricula in the ones that I have listed is available to me through the departmental library?

Mr. McCrae: After due deliberation, I think the answer here has to be that we need to prepare a response on this that is a fairly detailed one for the honourable member. Some courses are about technology and others are about using technology, and technology is only one resource that is used in the teaching of certain things, for example, accounting principles or something like that. I think, if I am understanding the honourable member's question appropriately, it is going to require some work in order to put together a complete response to the question being asked here.

Having said that, the question is not simple since many, many courses now use technology, in some cases just a little bit and in some cases quite extensively. So I think that I will ask my staff to review the question as it was put and subject to any clarification the honourable member might place on it in order to be responsive to what it is that she is raising with us. I think I should talk about technology as a foundation skill. However, for our purposes today, the use of the word "technology" will be synonymous with that of the term "information technology." Information technology comprises computers, software, course ware, graphing calculators, microcomputer-based labs, CD-ROMs. The department has completed the development of a document entitled Technology as a Foundation Skill Area—A Journey Toward

Information Technology Literacy. The document was released in August of last year. The document establishes a contextual framework for information technology. It provides a vision for the use of information technology to enhance teaching and learning. It describes an information technology literate student; it describes the technology enhanced classroom; it discusses issues related to information technology integration and implementation. It provides an information technology literacy continuum, and the document will serve as a guide to curriculum development teams and to classroom teachers. The Technology as a Foundation Skill document is of value to school and divisional administrators when planning for technology implementation.

In Technology as a Foundation Skill, in that document the following projects are cited: Curriculum/Multimedia Integration Project, Interdisciplinary Middle Years Multimedia Project, Senior 1 Math Computer Guided Learning courseware and Senior 2 Applied Math as valid approaches to technology integration in Manitoba schools. These projects demonstrate the implementation of the information technology vision statement appearing in the document.

* (1520)

Eleven regional orientation sessions for 450 educators and administrators were held in the fall of 1998. The response to the TFS document, TFS being Technology as a Foundation Skill, has been very positive. As of May of 1997, technology has been integrated into Science 20S, Biology 30S, Chemistry 30S, Physics 30S and Applied Math 20S foundation for implementation documents. Further integration of technology is moving into the mathematics and English language arts core curriculum areas. Technology integrated curricula guide Manitoba teachers in how effectively to use information technology so that they can help their students achieve prescribed learning outcomes, differentiate instruction, implement authentic assessment and resource-based learning.

The goals for the integration of technology are to build a model for the integration of information technology with Manitoba

curriculum; to base valid curriculum integration of technology on sound field testing by trained pilot teachers; to provide linkages with curriculum that will enable information technology to form a meaningful part of resourced-based learning in Manitoba schools; to provide information technology integrated curriculum, accessible both in print and electronic formats and to identify technology learning resources that are required to meet these goals.

Schools are now able to add to their technology infrastructure as a result of the \$5 million that was announced in December of 1998. Schools are consistently reporting that there is a general lack of professional staff expertise to fully implement technology-integrated curricula. I can understand that being said; on the other hand, a lot has been done as well, so there are two sides to that coin. With respect to accomplishments and the future status, science technology integration, the information technology integrated Senior 3 Biology 30S, Senior 3 Chemistry 30S and Senior 3 Physics 30S curriculum documents are available for use by teachers. Information technology integration within K to S4 science will accompany alignment of Manitoba science curriculum with the Pan-Canadian framework.

With respect to interdisciplinary middle years multimedia integration, the Interdisciplinary Middle Years Multimedia Project is developing an instructional model for teaching interdisciplinary units with multimedia support. The multimedia resourced Grade 5 instructional unit, The Prairie Tour, will be completed in March of 1999. I guess that means it was completed in March of 1999. The multimedia resourced Grade 6 unit, Inventions, Innovations and Discoveries, has been piloted by 25 pilot sites and is currently being revised based on feedback from pilot teachers. It will be completed by December of 1999. Work on the Grade 7 pilot of this project has begun and will be completed during the 1999-2000 school year. Future work on this project at the Grade 8 and at Kindergarten to Grade 4 will proceed in 1999-2000

With respect to mathematics Computer Guided Learning, otherwise known as CGL, an

expression I know the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed) is very familiar with, this is a Western Canadian Protocol project which includes ITP Nelson as a partner. The department has funded the acquisition of a provincial site licence for the Senior 1, Senior 2 and mathematics CGL courseware for the 1998-99 school year. The department has funded the piloting of the Grade 7 and Grade 8 math CGL courseware during the 1998-99 school year.

Provincial licensing for CGL software for 1999-2000 will proceed for Grades 7 and 8 and Senior 1 and 2. With respect to mathematics technology integration, information technology has been integrated into the Senior 2 Applied Mathematics 20S foundation for implementation document. Information technology is being integrated into Senior 3 Applied Mathematics, 30S, funding support for technology acquisition has been provided through an additional \$5.4 million in funding support to schools.

Integration of information technology into K to 4 mathematics curriculum is underway through a new initiative, the Curriculum Information Technology Integration or CITI project. The CITI project will produce a resource for teachers that will guide them in the effective integration of information technology. The resource will be made available to teachers in a variety of formats including the World Wide Web, CD-ROM and print.

For English language arts technology integration, technology integration into English language arts curriculum has begun. Integration of information technology into K to 4 English language arts curriculum is underway through a new initiative, the Curriculum Information Technology Integration or CITI project. The CITI project will produce a resource for teachers that will guide them in the effective integration of information technology. The resource will be made available to teachers in a variety of formats including the World Wide Web, CD-ROM and print.

For social studies, social studies curriculum will require information technology integration that will be co-ordinated with the development of the western Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies outcomes. The CITI project

will produce a resource for teachers that will guide them in the effective integration of information technology. The resource will be made available to teachers in a variety of formats including the World Wide Web, CD-ROM and print.

So, Technology as a Foundation Skill, that document continues to provide the framework under which the integration of information technology into curricula by curriculum development teams occurs. The Technology as a Foundation Skill document will be the guiding document in the integration of information technology into curricula. I just put that on the record so that the honourable member will be aware of that information. We will be providing a list with two categories. Provincially made is designed to teach computers and technologies, and technology is a prime focus as a discipline as it were, for example, computer science, and secondly, locally made from the list tabled yesterday, we will be extracting courses whose titles suggest technology as a discipline, for example, advanced software applications, 41G, or personal applied technology, 11G. Bear in mind, Mr. Chairman, that I did say yesterday we do not review the school-initiated courses for content, so we will therefore make some assumptions from what the title suggests.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: I am not sure I understood correctly the minister in his last statement, that the department does not review the school-initiated projects for content. I understood that there was quite an extensive documentation that had to be provided to the department. What we discussed earlier was whether the minister was at liberty to release them, but surely the minister does review them or someone in his department reviews those school-initiated projects. I wonder, first of all, is that what the minister intended by that statement?

Secondly, I wanted to give the minister some sense of where I was coming from on this, or at least the staff in preparing the list. I was quite curious about the number of school-initiated projects in the computer area. I mean there are obviously a lot of school-initiated projects in any case, but within this area where I

had assumed—and the minister has provided the evidence on this—that there were department-developed curricula. I am curious as to why there is so much school-initiated curricula in that area. It is interesting the minister is going to table both of them. Yes, I am looking for some comparison between them as to what gaps are there or what needs school divisions are seeing in what is being provided by the department.

A third element is the issue of testing of information technology. The minister has said and New Directions identified information technology as a foundation skill. I wonder if the minister could tell me how the department tests that foundation skill.

Mr. McCrae: Our reviews of these courses include a review of the course outline. We want certain elements to be included, but I do not think that the department sets out exactly what. We want to know that there is an outcome, but I do not think the department wants to lead the school or the course in exactly what the outcome should be. We want to know that there is one. We want to know what kind of learning resources are involved in it and if there are assessment strategies. I do not know how detailed we want to be about what they should be.

We would like to get a statement of the aim of the course, the rationale, the philosophy, the statement of general student learning outcomes; for each general student learning outcome some kind of statement of the specific student learning outcomes that are required by the course, not by the department, but by the course; some kind of outline or list of course content expressed as topics or themes with allotted time in hours for each topic or theme; a statement of instructional approaches and strategies designed to achieve the general and specific student learning outcomes; the major learning resources and bibliographic information; and a statement of assessment and evaluation approaches and strategies designed to measure student achievement relative to the outcomes.

What I am trying, though, to underline, even with all of that, we, other than wanting through New Directions to ensure the reading and writing and numeracy skills of our students,

there needs to be, we need to let teachers do what they do best with some important direction on the important themes, but I still think that I do not want to micromanage what the teachers do. I think that there is a fair bit of suggestion about that.

We need some general things to happen. As a society, there is overwhelming support for that statement that we want to establish some standards in our system, but they are standards relating to some pretty basic core things that we should achieve and then allow school divisions, schools, and teachers to do their jobs in the way that they are well equipped to do.

We do not intend to test respecting foundation skills in this as an area of technology. We do not intend to do that. We test Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 in a few subjects, a few very important subjects, to determine the learning of numeracy and literacy and communication and thinking and problem solving. We do not test as a matter of provincial standards testing for human relationships like teamwork and respect for others, entrepreneurial spirit, self esteem, those sorts of things. Those are very important things, but I think we would be going a little far if we tested in all areas that I seem to be hearing suggested here. We do not test oral skills. We do not test technology skills. I am sure those things are happening at the local level and need to be happening there. Those are best done locally and it bears repeating: we believe there is a partnership in effect here respecting assessment, province and local, including the local classroom teacher. I am glad the honourable member raised this point, because partnerships are that. There is a role to be played by all of the partners. You have to find the balance that suggests that everybody in the partnership is a true partner—not only suggests it, but makes it a fact and a reality. I would just like to add that—[interjection] Oh, with respect to another one. I am going to finish on the last one now.

I feel very strongly about this. You just cannot run everything out of this building, and you should not. Even if you could, you should not do that because that is—I mean, I used the expression Big Brother in Question Period today to make the point. I try not to be quite as

rhetorical when I am talking in the committee, but it does not matter. It means the same thing. The fact is, either we are for tests or we are against tests. It seems like most people are for them, but that minority that are against them put out the wrong justification for the position they take. I am just going to touch on a few of those things.

* (1540)

They are out there saying that weeks are spent preparing for tests and that the six or seven days of testing are disruptive. This is the argument that we get from this coalition against testing. I noticed that nobody from the New Democratic Party asked me any questions today about that, and I wondered why. This is supposed to be test-free Tuesday according to the New Democrats and some of their friends, I assume. [interjection] Well, they make friends. Of course, everybody makes friends.

The length of standards tests activities is designed to be appropriate for the student grade level. The Grade 3 math test, for example, is separated into two parts. Each one is written in one 45-minute session scheduled over two consecutive days. The Grade 3 English language arts standards test is separated into four parts written over four consecutive days. There are people who are out there trying to make others believe—in fact, one woman said to me: do you not think 290 minutes is a long time to make a Grade 3 child sit there without even going to the bathroom? Now, you know, if that is the tactics people are going to use to make their case against establishing standards and having tests against those standards, I welcome them to continue along that line because there is absolutely no credibility here in that sort of approach. If you have a case to make, make it, but do not come forward with a bunch of myths to try to cast doubt about a system that was built by very committed Manitobans, many of whom are teaching professionals.

The Grade 3 one, as I told you, is separated into four parts written over four consecutive days. A significant portion of each of these sessions includes teacher-led student practice sessions. For example, teachers introduce themes, read passages aloud to students and provide students with correct answers before they undertake the test activity on their own.

Another myth. Children in split grades lose their teacher for significant periods of time. Again, that is not true. The Grade 3 math test represents two 40-minute sessions, and the English language arts is two 40-minute and two 65-minute sessions. For example, there are only 13 questions on the English language arts tests.

Here is another myth. Results are predictable by income. Well, here are the facts. There is a positive correlation between income in any measure of student achievement, including teacher-made tests. However, social status is not destiny. In fact, education is the greatest social equalizer that exists. There are many studies of school effectiveness that show teachers in schools do make a difference, and the deficits due to social class can be compensated for by good teaching on the part of the school. Well, my granddad got a Grade 2 education. It did not mean that he did not live a healthy life and that he did not work hard, and did not live a long time and have a happy life. On the other hand, that was then; this is now. You cannot really get very far with Grade 2. But two generations later that person's grandchildren have found themselves at very good levels of social and economic success, thanks to a quality education system.

Another myth. No additional money or staff has been given to help schools that have performed poorly on the tests. Manitoba government, in recognition of the importance of education, provided an increase of 2.6 percent to schools for 1999-2000, a \$19.7-million increase over last year's levels. This represents the third year of consecutive increases to education. Funding for education has increased over \$149 million since 1987, and education represents close to 20 percent of overall provincial expenditures, the main funding priority of government next to health care. An additional \$900,000 is being provided in support of professional development, and an additional \$2 million is being provided for students with emotional behavioural difficulties, as well as \$5 million for classroom costs.

The Manitoba government introduced the standards testing program in order to provide parents and students with reliable information

about student performance and achievement. The government expects schools to share results and other information with the parents of individual students. Student results provide schools and parents with valuable information to support the progress and achievement of students. Distorted information is being presented to parents related to standards tests, and parents deserve the facts.

That is a very troubling issue, when I am told by those who have been rehearsed, I guess, to deal with these questions, that no information is shared, so why are you doing all this testing and what is the benefit of it all? Well, information, where we have found it has not been shared, we have done something about it. We discourage anybody just receiving results and then not sharing them with the teacher or the students or the families. Why would you go through all that and then not follow through with what would assist the child in his or her education?

Another myth. The only information available through test results is a number. Not true. Following every standards test, schools receive a detailed breakdown of each student's performance. For example, in addition to providing schools with the overall student results on the Grade 3 mathematics standards test, schools receive a portrait of student achievement showing how students performed on each part of the test and their results by question type.

Teachers are provided with guides to standards tests to help them interpret results appropriately, and they should be discussing these results with parents. I am sure the majority of teaching professionals in Manitoba are doing that, but not even all teaching professionals are aware of what is available to them in terms of information. That is an area that I have asked my deputy minister to deal with, and he has been doing that. I also asked him to show me what the test looks like. He showed me that; I tabled that. I also asked him to show me what test results look like and how they can be interpreted, and he did that. I will tell you, there is an awful lot of information that a parent and a teacher can use as a result of any of these standards tests to assist the student in their education experience.

Here is another myth. The tests have no diagnostic value and occur too late in the school year. Well, excuse me, that is not true either. Testing at Grade 3 does not even make up a part of the student's grade but supports opportunities for prevention and early intervention. Test results help classroom teachers identify student strengths and weaknesses. Do people think that kids are finishing school at Grade 3 and just because the results are coming out in June that those results are no good to anybody? Give me a break. The children are returning to school in Grade 4, and they have Grade 5 and Grade 6 when they go through another assessment time.

So I just think that it is not fair to kids to make them go through six years of school before they get this type of assessment and all of the weaknesses that they might have are not properly identified until Grade 6. That does not add up. For anybody who wants to argue that early diagnosis and intervention are the right things to do because when people are young that is the right time to do it, then they turn around and say but we do not like the Grade 3 exam, I am having a little trouble. They do not like it based on these myths that I have been telling you about which are being floated by somebody out there who has—I do not know what they have in mind other than maybe mischief, because this is not correct information.

Of course, it has diagnostic value, and because it occurs at the end of Grade 3 does not make any difference because there is Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6 to prepare for. That is why work does need to be done in this area of making sure people are aware of what the results of that Grade 3 test are. Of course, I would be upset as a parent if I thought that my child had to go through a test, a province-run-and-financed test only so there would be nothing come of it. I mean, come on, let us make a little sense with some of our arguments because some of these sure do not make any sense at all.

*(1550)

Another myth. Studies show that testing of young children is neither reliable nor valid. Well, again, is the government of Manitoba the only one that ever suggested a test for a child at that age? I think that teachers probably get into

the habit of administering tests at a very early time. I cannot remember directly how many I had in Grades 1 or 2 or 3, but I am sure that tests occur other than simply tests mandated by the provincial authorities. So the myth is that studies show that testing of young children is neither valid nor reliable. Now, I would like to find out more about that research because the research that I know of, in fact, shows that testing, particularly at the early grades, provides a meaningful opportunity for intervention.

Now, if Grade 3 was as far as anybody ever went in school, you might have an argument on this part of it. But you have a lot of grades to go through after Grade 3. So I would like to see that research that suggests that testing is not reliable or valid and show it to every teacher in Manitoba who probably administers tests of his or her own and tell them that their tests are not valid that they have been doing all these years.

Testing allows strengths and problem areas to be identified and allows for real progress to be made to improve student learning. That is what this is all about, and I do not understand the New Democrats being against testing like this.

The other myth is that classroom teachers are encouraged to teach to the test. This has become a favourite group of buzzwords brought in by the New Democrats, that teachers are teaching to the test. Well, excuse me again, the tests are all about the curriculum, the curriculum which is what is required, the curriculum which is developed by teachers, Manitoba teachers in Manitoba, and Manitoba teachers are telling me it is an excellent curriculum, so why would you not test to that curriculum? They are saying they are teaching to the test. Well, teach the curriculum and the test will be fine. That is my understanding of how this works.

So classroom teachers are being provided with strengthened curriculum which supports student learning, good curriculum and good curriculum support documents, research documents. I have been shown all kinds of material the teachers have to look at. They have shown me this material in the context that they would have liked more time to be able to deal with all that curriculum and all that material. That is understandable, and we need to work with them

on that and be reasonable with them and not ask them to do the impossible. But teachers should be teaching to the curriculum, teaching to the test, teaching to the curriculum. What is the difference? If you are teaching to the curriculum, then the tests which are aligned with the curriculum will not be the problem that some of these myth makers are suggesting.

Here is another big myth: testing costs \$15 million annually. That is not true. The testing program represents a mere 1 percent of the overall Education budget, currently about half that amount, so it might approach \$15 million when it is fully implemented, but it has not come anywhere near that yet because it is not fully implemented. The Manitoba government believes this money is well spent as part of both the responsibility and an obligation to parents, schools, teachers, students and taxpayers to provide accurate, fair and reliable information about student progress. Without standards or testing there would be no reliable or consistent means of measuring student knowledge to ensure students are learning at the levels required by today's society. There is a lot of science, a lot of work, a lot of skill, a lot of knowledge and commitment and people involved in putting this whole New Directions business together, and by saying this is a waste of money is a real slap in the face to literally hundreds and thousands of dedicated professionals in this province who have put so much in on behalf of today's children. To have that said about them, well, you know, somebody should think about the teachers and the others that are involved in this once in a while and be a little more fair in their comments, especially when they are going around making up stories.

Without standards or testing, students could be passed through the system with problems or difficulties that could go undetected and unresolved and cost many more millions of dollars later on, and this is the point I was making. Not only that it costs a lot of money, it is just unkind to send a kid through six years before you make a determined effort to find out if the child has been learning anything that has been part of the curriculum. This deals with the Grade 3 issue, and I can understand people who do not want to put children, be unkind to kids and that sort of thing, but I maintain that it is

very unkind to let them go through 12 grades of school and whatever else they go through and find themselves unprepared to face real life at a time when their parents would not mind if they got out of the house and started living independently, and they are simply not able to because we forgot to remember to have standards in our education system and to make sure that we are meeting those standards. That is very unkind and certainly not forward looking at all.

Without standards or testing, students could be passed through the systems, as I said, with problems and difficulties undetected, and you know what that can cost later on in unemployment insurance and welfare, despondency, mental illness and all the things that can go with a bad education experience. So what is wrong with making education a positive experience by showing young children that being tested is part of life. We are all tested in one way or another in our life experiences, and so now I am told that this is really hard on kids.

Well, sometimes I think kids are taught that it is hard. Well, why do that? If you want a child to learn are you going to start by saying, now this is really going to be nasty, boys and girls? Is that really the way to go about it? I do not think so. There is a better way to do it and thousands of children are experiencing that better way to do it. Approximately 13,000—I am going by last year's number—are writing that Grade 3 exam this year. I know one experience in one of our schools in Manitoba where somebody got 16 parents all riled up about the Grade 3 exam, and they were all going to refuse to have their kids write the exam. A very responsible school division leader in that division, I can name him, I think, and he deserves a little bit of credit for the good work that he did, Rick Plaisier from the Fort la Bosse School Division made it his business to make sure the parents involved knew what the benefits of this program is all about. So it was 16; by the time Rick Plaisier was finished, of the 16, Mr. Chairperson, 13 wrote the test this morning, two of them were excused for legitimate reasons, one at the end of the day refused to do it.

I would say that is a shame for that one because that child will not have the benefit that

the other 13 are going to have, but it is a question of knowing the facts and, you know, when you want to do damage, I guess one of the best ways to do damage is to go about your business with not putting accurate facts before the public. But what is encouraging to me is that Manitobans are not to be fooled by people who have other interests at heart other than those of the children, the overwhelming astounding majority of Manitobans are totally 100 percent behind a good quality education for their kids. They know that children are able to handle testing scenarios that are designed by Manitoba teachers with the best interests of children at heart. It is incumbent upon government to make sure that students are provided with the proper tools for success as early as possible so they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential in life. Every step we take to deprive kids of that quality education that we are talking about is in a sense either taking money out of their pockets or depriving them of opportunities for happiness later on in their lives. I think we do quite a disservice when we engage in campaigns to get rid of standards testing, especially when you do it with a whole bunch of bogus information.

The Manitoba government's vision for education is very clear. Manitoba students in an environment of care and support and safety and rigour are going to be among the best educated in this country or perhaps anywhere in the world. A strong public education system strives to ensure that effective learning takes place in schools and that all students have the opportunity to achieve success.

In further reference to the points raised by the honourable member, the member asked if there are so many school-initiated courses dealing with technology, she asks whether there are gaps in what the province is providing schools. Well, no, the vast majority of the SICs read into the record yesterday are SICs developed locally for instruction within the senior year's technology education program. School divisions want programming within the senior year's technical education program to be based on local needs, current employment trends and opportunities, and they want this to occur with the high degree of flexibility that they require.

They want to be able to be responsive with the local curricula, particularly as it relates to technology, the very nature of which is dynamic and ever changing, frequently very quickly. They want this local curricula to be responsive to local opportunities for their students, so you cannot be dogmatic about these things. That is the one thing that should be very clear, especially for educators and people interested in education. Dogmatism and philosophy are simply things of the past.

We have to provide a relevant education for our children, so you need a balance of something that suggests good levels of standards, but within that scenario, the kind of flexibility that allows for local issues to be properly aired in our schools properly prepared for. We are just trying to find that balance all the time, and I guess the debate always surrounds philosophy. For example, the whole issue of the questions raised by the honourable member about the Athena proposal. Well, you know, there are some who are just going to say, this is not for us. We will get our kids to learn about the news of the world, the news in some other way because we do not want to be captive of any particular contract, arrangement. We do not want them to see Athena's news, and we do not want them to see their commercials.

I think the honourable member is probably, at this point at least, more conversant with the details of what is coming out in these contracts. She has asked me to look into some things that she has heard about, and I am going to be doing that. But is she suggesting to me that school superintendents and school business officials and teachers and parents are not able to wrestle with these issues as well and come up with the answers? I did make that commitment earlier today in Question Period to look at the details of the contractual arrangements as they were raised with me without looking at the contracts themselves, as the specific questions raised by the honourable member in Question Period today is something that I undertook to look into and to review, so I will do that.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I can sense the minister's keen disappointment in my not having asked particular questions in Question Period today, but the minister has taken his allotted 30 minutes

in response to a question about the testing of foundation skills. He has given, I think, a very coherent case based on a particular philosophy, although he wanted to suggest that philosophies were out the window, but it is a particular philosophy. What he has put together, I think, is the coherent case for the government's position, has a number of internal inconsistencies I would argue. I am sure we will have the opportunity to argue that at certain points over the next year. It is based upon some myths and some quite large assumptions on the part of the minister, but it certainly is, as a collection of statements, a very interesting one, and one that I am sure Manitoba parents will want to examine and to think about.

I am interested in the minister wanting to talk to parents about this, because previous ministers have not been interested in talking to parents about this. There has been a very strong tendency in this department to send civil servants to talk to parents, rather than the minister or other members of the Legislature to make the political argument. It is one I have raised a number of times with different ministers; it is not new. So I look forward, I mean, the minister has his arguments in line, I think, and I hope that he will be talking to parents about this.

There was one parent forum which did deal with tests, and it was one where the department chose to essentially lecture for I think most of the morning, all of the morning, in fact, trying to explain—I will put the best cast on it that I can—to parents what the department's and government's purpose was in testing. It was difficult, at that point, for parents to get their own views across. They had to make special requests to have forums, at that meeting, where their own views could be expressed.

So if the minister is interested in debating this, he clearly is, I hope that he will do it at the political level, that he will do it himself, and that he will not be sending civil servants to bear this message over and over again. For example—well, we will not go into examples. In fact, there are quite a few and I think were there on the record before. I think the long-term impact of this is to politicize the civil service in a way

which I do not think is right, and I hope the minister is essentially breaking new ground here.

It is clear that the minister cannot be everywhere at once. I accept that, but there are many MLAs on the government side who could take this message, a political message based upon a particular philosophy. There is a coherent statement of it now, and that could be taken to discuss with parents, and I encourage the minister to do that.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I listened carefully to the honourable member, and I think she is talking about something I am not familiar with. It may be that in the early days of education renewal, there were—when you are making pretty significant changes, which the ones we have been working on could well be characterized as, there is a big job of public communication called for, and I am sure that just having the human resources around to cover it—the minister alone cannot do it without a lot of help.

If you are talking about members like the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), for example, who has done and is doing an excellent job not only as a member of the Legislature but as a legislative assistant in the Department of Education and Training, who, when it is not possible for myself to physically be present because of scheduling issues, I cannot remember a time when I have asked him to help out and he has said no. That is the kind of person he is. He is committed to the education of our children, and maybe that is reflected in his career as a public person and in his career as a teaching professional, and I appreciate that. But with all the nice things I can say about the honourable member for Pembina, he is not the only one out there who is willing to be involved in a reasoned discussion and sharing of the facts.

I hope the honourable member did not mean to be taking pot shots at officials in the Department of Education and Training who do not approach things, as far as I am aware, from any kind of philosophical or ideological approach. We have a job to do. The department was given direction by the government of Manitoba that we have to have some level of consistent standards in our education system,

and we need, to go along with that, some relevant curricula for which standards should be set in the whole system of education renewal. I think that while people might very well have their own personal likes and dislikes, the department reflects the leadership provided by the government of the day, whichever government happens to be in power.

* (1610)

In this case, it was a very progressive government that sees a bright future if we make the right arrangements for it. I am not saying that the officials of the Department of Education and Training did anything more than what they were directed to do, and that is to attend, if this is what the honourable member is referring to, meetings to inform the public of what is going on. That may have happened simply because that needed to happen.

The honourable member knows very well—being the popular person that she is, she gets lots of invitations to things and simply cannot be everywhere. Sometimes she will ask someone else to attend on her behalf, and I have done the same thing. I have asked my deputy minister to cover for me on occasion, and if he could not do it, he might find someone else to cover for a particular function. I mean, if somebody invites the minister, it is too bad if the minister cannot make it, but if the minister asks someone else to go, I think that there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, the Deputy Minister of Education—I should not dwell on him so much because there are lots of people in the department, but these are important jobs, these are important functions that they carry out, and I know that there is nothing wrong with parents meeting with deputy ministers of Education or ministers or opposition members or teachers or principals or anybody else.

I understand that the Deputy Minister of Education has been involved extensively in forums and in discussing many things. I mean, this gentleman has a background in education which has for a number of years now been respected by the people of this province. He may, from time to time, have an opinion, everybody does, but I think that consistently he and his senior staff and everybody else that I

know of in the Department of Education have reflected what has been set out by the government of the day. That is what it is all about.

The deputy minister also meets with the parent council association and the trustees association. In fact, today I asked that my deputy minister find out more what is going on in the city of Winnipeg, Winnipeg No. 1. I read the papers where there has to be a misunderstanding here. The chairman of the board of the Winnipeg School Division is saying that testing is a parental choice. That is news to me. Being otherwise tied up with other commitments, I have asked my deputy minister to review that matter. Same as the issue in another division where the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was raising the other day, issues related to some alleged irregularities in one of our school divisions respecting the security issues around the whole issue of the testing. I have asked my deputy minister to inquire as to the latest status of that matter raised by the honourable member for Inkster because the member wants to know.

We have been trying to keep up on our undertakings with the honourable member for Wolseley. The member for Inkster wants to know where we are at with that. I needed sort of an update on that myself, just so that I can share that information with the honourable member for Inkster.

Somebody is alleged to have done something wrong in respect to an important part of the school system, a person who has a responsible position in the administration of province-wide testing scenario. I mean, everybody in the system needs to know that everybody else is following the rules of this. The honourable member for Inkster raised this matter. Well, it was the Deputy Minister of Education who was asked initially to look into the matter. That is an appropriate function.

Ministers have to be realistic enough to know that no matter who or where, people can make mistakes, do things wrong. I think ministers' jobs are to ensure that there is always a process in place to ensure that nobody can be the subject of a witch hunt or unfair treatment or

anything like that. I think those are appropriate roles for ministers to play. When it comes to explaining the policies, once the policies are very clear, it is not a political function to go out and to tell a parent council, for example, perhaps invited, perhaps sent in the place of a minister or a politician to be there to answer questions about the operation of a particular policy. That is not new.

I remember being in Reston, Manitoba, in 1985, I guess it was—no, 1987—the previous New Democratic government had wanted to shut down the Reston RCMP detachment, so there was going to be a meeting about that. The people in Reston were not happy with that proposal. How would you like to be living in Reston where your nearest detachment would be the detachment in Virden? I cannot remember exactly how many miles, but, having driven it enough times, I should. It is a long distance away.

In any event, Roland Penner was the Attorney General of the day. He and the Mounties had cooked up this plan they were going to shut down the Reston detachment. Obviously, the people of Reston were not going to put up with that without some discussion first of all. So they organized a meeting. About 600 people from the Reston area attended a meeting at the Reston Collegiate. That was the only hall big enough to accommodate such a meeting. Do you think Roland Penner went to that meeting?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. McCrae: No, he did not. He sent Tanner Elton, the Deputy Attorney General. Tanner Elton arrived at Reston for the meeting. He was late for the meeting. Do you know what he said to these 600 angry Restonites? He said: I am sorry I arrived late. I did not realize how long it took to get from the airport at Virden to the Reston Collegiate. Well, the meeting might as well have been over right there and then.

In any event, I talk about this story to respond directly to the point made by the honourable member about public servants attending and helping to explain policy or answering questions. There is not a thing wrong with that. I think I detected in the honourable

member's question there was some criticism of that. I simply think it is a little bit too easy to make that kind of criticism of people who are simply doing their best for the children of this province, whether they are paid as politicians or paid as officials. If somebody steps out of line in that situation, that is different.

A lot of us knew Tanner Elton. He turned out to be my deputy of Justice for some time as well. A very interesting person who played an interesting role in the Justice department. By the way, the Reston detachment was reopened shortly after the election of 1988. That was quite a story. I remember the honourable member for Arthur-Virden being there that night. He only had one question, and that was: how much is it going to cost to reopen that Reston detachment after the next election? That was really all that needed to happen, and the meeting ended shortly thereafter.

Face-to-face discussion, you know, every time something positive happens, some of the honourable member's colleagues and occasionally even she herself tend to find something negative about that. If it is about an expenditure of money in the Health department, for example, to inform the public about what is going on in the health system, this is somehow a bad thing. We cannot have the spin of the official opposition attached to it, so therefore it must be bad.

* (1620)

In the case we are talking about here, where I think the member is talking about perhaps the deputy minister, perhaps somebody else in the department meeting face-to-face with parents, that somehow that is wrong, because in my view there is an assumption there that, oh, maybe they are going to tell them the truth, an unvarnished sort of version, an unspun kind of version of what is going on, and even anything that does not have the spin that is preferred by, like, the honourable member, is going to be wrong. I do not really accept that. I think people are smart enough to listen to the honourable member's point of view and to listen to my point of view and make an informed decision. I think that is possible for people to do in the '90s in Manitoba.

I think that there is good work done by people in the department but also people throughout the education system, because nobody is suggesting that it is easy to renew an education system. No one is suggesting there was anything wrong with what had been done previously. This is a great error that is made by people, that somehow someone was being blamed for a system that was not measuring up, and therefore this is a way to get at somebody. That is a terrible distortion of the facts here.

I have made the point before that we have had an excellent education system with an awful lot of committed people involved in the education system, people who should enjoy the gratitude of the general population of this province, because we have succeeded so well as a partner in Confederation and as a player in the world economy. We have done very well, and we should be very grateful not only for our natural advantages but also for the wonderful human efforts that have been made to prepare Manitobans for competition in a global world.

That being said, those should be the very same people who would agree that making sure that we are going to be as relevant 10 years from now and 20 years from now as we have been for the last few years, those people should embrace the changes, too, and, in fact, in large measure they do. As I referred a little while ago to the myths surrounding standards testing, there are myths surrounding lots of aspects of the New Directions in education. I am sorry to say that not everybody has the highest and best interests of the children at heart. I really regret saying that, but not everybody does. Some people have their own vested interests placed higher on the level of priority than those of the children of today and of the future. For that, I am quite regretful. It tends sometimes to prolong the debate, the fact that people have interests other than the interests of the children, and it slows us down in our efforts to build.

If we could just be more positive; just think what we could have achieved if we did not have to fight all the time over every positive development that comes along. I am not saying that there is not room for some dissent and debate because there is, and we do not always get everything right, and I recognize that. But if

we got all the things wrong that we have been accused of getting wrong, my goodness, what a horrible place this would be if that were true. I know that Manitobans are not buying a lot of the things that are being attempted to be sold out there.

I, myself, have tried to be involved in a responsible way, and I tried to demonstrate very quickly on my appointment that I, too, do meet the parents and I continue to do this, teachers and trustees and superintendents. I am prepared and I always have been to go to public meetings to speak up, to answer questions, to explain and to discuss, and even when the going gets tough, the honourable member knows that I have been there. I have taken as good as anybody could dish out in this province in the last decade, and I am still here to do that because sometimes—I do not just love punishment; I am telling you that—there is something to be gained by standing up for what you believe in and being prepared to admit when you are off on the wrong tangent but also being prepared to stand up for when you know you are right. You just know you are right when there is so much public input into some of the decisions that have been made and some of the directions that have resulted from those decisions, when you know you have significant public input.

Before the New Democrats came out and supported the budget, they said that it was all wrong, that it was not sustainable. Well, we knew it was sustainable. Do you know why? Because we went to hundreds of people in Manitoba to talk about the budget. I attended the one in Brandon and there was a good discussion there, a good building of consensus on the various issues, issues like health, like education, highways, debt reduction, taxes. On all of those issues, there was a good consensus built.

So if you look at the process, then I think that you can get a hint about the quality of the product, and I say that because even with a good consensus-building process, you do not nail down all the minutiae, all the details. I think that New Directions has not been altered very much, at least, but I think adjustments have been made along the way to account for various matters that might have arisen that may have little to do with

the basic objective but lots to do with the implementation and the ability to get the job done. In my work, I used to like to say that we specialize in the difficult, the impossible just takes a little longer. I hope that is seen as a positive kind of statement. I think what we are trying to do is certainly not impossible, but it is certainly a significant move in a good direction towards the achievement of a very high quality education system.

How can I be confident when I say something like that? It is because it has so much professional input, so much input from people who are committed and who care so much about the kids and about their future. They care; therefore they give good advice. They do not do it out of self interest. They do not do it because they have some special interest who they are carrying the can for. They are doing it because they have one interest and one interest only, and that is a happy future for the kids of today and the children of the future.

So, you know, you want to take me on on these issues, good, I am prepared for that. I say that to the honourable member and I say that to other groups that seem somehow always to get aligned with members of her party. If you want to protect your special interests, go for it, but we are going to show you up every time, because it is going to be pretty clear pretty soon after the debate begins who really is looking out for the future of our kids and our kids' kids. The people who we have consulted along the way, the educators and the professionals and the parents, they really have not put their own interests on the table and then said: okay, do everything you need to do, but do not mess with my interests.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

They have cleared the table right off and put the future of the kids on the table and made a decision that this is how we are going to go about the development of New Directions and the implementation of it. Along the way, yes, I think it is clear that you are going to find implementation and administration issues that need some adjustment along the way, but I am happy to say after five years of implementation of New Directions that we still have a good

product here. We can polish it up here and there, but it is still, as a basic product, an excellent one and one that I can happily defend.

* (1630)

That is why I was bemoaning the fact that the honourable member did not ask me very many questions about the so-called test-free Tuesday today because, as it turns out, thousands and thousands of children went to school today and did what education renewal is all about. They participated and they are going to be better off for it because we are going to know more about those kids as a result of that. We are going to be able to address curriculum issues, teaching issues, professional development issues, and issues directly related to the kids that have to do with the profile of each and every individual child.

There is all kinds of information that will flow from that that can be used by the Grade 4 teacher, can be used by the parent, can be used by the principal or whoever needs to, can be used by the department, as it builds its data base on where we are going with these different curricula and how we are doing in terms of measuring up, what we can do to assist teachers to get that curriculum through to the kids, what areas of special needs there are that are not being met well enough and what we have learned from all of this.

The honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) knows very well the value of good quality data. This is a way to get that. That is probably why she did not ask me any questions about that today, because of the way it was all developed. Sure, there are things about it that can be improved and should be, have been and can be and will be. That is all going to happen, I have no doubt about that.

So I was disappointed that that question did not come up. Maybe some of the people that the honourable member sometimes represents around here are disappointed that she did not ask about that too. The only way you can kick it is to come up with all these myths that some of the special interests have come up with. Myths do not cut it with the Manitobans of the 1990s. They demand and they get the truth. Then

they make their judgment. Then they send their kid off to school for the test. That is what happens by the thousands.

The original blueprint, it was never said then, and it should not have been either, that everything would be implemented exactly as it was originally announced and that there would not be programmatic adjustments made. Nobody said that would not happen, and that should happen. To the extent that you just stubbornly go forward because it was written and so it was written and so shall it be done, that is really an arrogant way to do things, and that is not the way it has been done. We have demonstrated our plan. It is rooted in sound education and research, and it was reflective of what Manitoba needed and was capable of. We are capable of making adjustments and refinements and, yet, we are still going to have a system that is sound and strong and clearly very good for our kids.

I just say I regret today of all days, test-free Tuesday, not to get a question about the standards tests. It was perhaps revealing. Maybe it told us the same thing that we are being told about our budget, and that is that the New Democrats secretly support what is going on here. I know their constituents are phoning them and telling them, back off on some of your comments. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), for example, at the MAST debate with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and with Dr. Gerrard made the commitment on the fly. I do not know if this is official party policy previously arrived at, I am not sure, but it may well have just been sort of a seat-of-the-pants proclamation on the part of the Leader of the Opposition: we are going to get rid of the Grade 3 test. Well, there is absolutely no science behind what he said. He had no justification for saying that because, you know, he said that because his special interest friends working on the myths that I have been referring to today have demanded that of the Leader of the Opposition.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition and his friends are the captives of the union leadership of this province. We discussed yesterday the union leadership in the person of Mr. Ian MacIntyre, former president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, did not step down

to run for the NDP in River East. He is running for the NDP in River East, but he did not step down. He was defeated at an election. I met earlier today with the new president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society very briefly. I was pleased to do that. I have been warned the issues do not get easier just because they have got a new president. That has been made very clear.

The new president, Jan Speelman, wants us to get on with some of the items that we discussed at my initial meeting with the Teachers' Society. I made the point, well, if you can get the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) to wind up these Estimates, we will get scheduling meetings right away. I do not mean that as a hint, enjoying these Estimates as I do, but I did say that I would be very happy. I just cannot commit my time at this time because I do not know when I am going to be in Estimates review or when I might be available. I did say to President Speelman that I look forward to addressing the issues with the Manitoba Teachers' Society in terms of dates for meetings, which is something Mr. MacIntyre referred to when he introduced me at the convention last week. He made a passing reference to getting some dates for some meetings, and that is going to happen. But I think I will be more reliable for meetings, keeping my dates, if we get these Estimates passed.

I know they are going to pass because the NDP support our budget, so it is a matter of going through the process. I just close on that point that it would have been good if the issue, the matter of the standards testing, had come up and I did not have to raise it myself. On the other hand, I am happy to raise it at any time because I think we have a lot to celebrate in the fact that we have done a lot of good, and we are going to do a lot of good. Thank you.

* (1640)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Referring to 16.2. School Programs (d) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,164,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,679,600—pass.

16.2.(e) Program Implementation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,082,400.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask a couple of detailed questions about the proposed activities of this section during the year. One of them is the implementation of a strategy for the acquisition of courses for distance delivery. It is on page 59 of the Estimates book that I have. I wondered if the minister could tell us what that means, where these courses are being acquired from and what is meant by "implement a strategy for the acquisition of." Does this mean, for example, the payment of licence fees, the adoption of copyright and the distribution throughout an entire system? I am not quite sure what the extent is meant here.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member asks a big question again. The acquisition of courses for distance education delivery is not confined just to one item, but I will give her one by way of example, if I could. Then she might ask other questions.

We negotiated with the Province of Saskatchewan, for example, to acquire the rights to a course called Agriculture 20. There is no cost to us in that particular arrangement. We will likely trade a course with them. Likely, we will offer them one in language, and we will work that way. I say that by way of example. I know there is a lot more to be said about this.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me what other jurisdictions are being negotiated with over this or have been negotiated with? Perhaps he could give me a brief history of how long this particular program has been in effect. Perhaps he could also give me some idea of the anticipated results. Is this ongoing, by request, or is there a finite end in view? Is there a sense of a number of distance education courses to be acquired by the department and/or to be developed by the department that will then provide a common basis for some area of the curriculum?

Mr. McCrae: We do not have a number in mind. To the extent that we can, we want to develop our own courses. This is an evolving area of endeavour, and we want to develop, I guess, to the extent that we can, our own. We have no number in mind, but a good deal is still a good deal.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, could the minister tell me how many courses have been acquired?

Mr. McCrae: One, Mr. Chairman, the one I referred to. Then we also did adaptations. We customized it ourselves.

Ms. Friesen: How long has this aspect of the department been in place? I do not actually have last year's Estimates with me. I should have looked at it, but this implementation of a strategy for the acquisition of courses for distance delivery sounds like a longer-term project. You are actually developing a strategy. You are not acquiring them one by one, although that may, of course, end up being the strategy. So could the minister just give me the history of this aspect of departmental programs?

Mr. McCrae: The history, Mr. Chairman, is not all that long. Within the last year, we have seen a greater demand, and a technological component seems to attach to that demand. Our prime focus, I am advised, is our own local development, whether that be provincial or local. That does not mean that we would not look at what exists elsewhere each time that we have a requirement just to see what is the best that we can provide.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, can the minister tell me whether there is any strategy at the Council of Ministers level on distance delivery in high schools, and if there is, is Manitoba a part of that overall strategy?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, Manitoba certainly is part of discussions related to a strategy in this area. I think it is safe to say certainly in the time of this government, Manitoba has always been part of Pan-Canadian discussions. We never remove ourselves. The previous government I think was the same way. There is probably a history of Manitoba like that. We simply do not absent ourselves from important discussions. In fact, we often volunteer within the resources that we can to be a part of positive change, positive progress and development.

* (1650)

The Council of Ministers of Education of Canada does not have a set strategy in this

regard. There are discussions about it. It does not mean there is not a will, I do not think. I simply think that the council itself has not sufficiently researched or got us prepared to enter into anything more of a strategy than we already have. There is no Pan-Canadian strategy on technology, for example, but there have been lots of general discussions to this point.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, what I was interested in was whether the Council of Ministers of Education, which I think certainly got a growing staff, has been looking at the issue not so much of information technology or the actual delivery of these programs but the sharing of the courses themselves, the actual course content. Obviously the technological ability to deliver them locally is part of the context of that. Is it on the formal agenda of the Council of Ministers of Education for the next few years?

Mr. McCrae: I heard in the question the member making reference to the growing staff at the CMEC. I am going to check into that a little bit. I just returned from a meeting of CMEC ministers in Quebec City. I went there with the intention of following up what western Premiers had achieved a couple of weeks ago at Drumheller. I, as the member would understand, have only a short history of a relationship with the CMEC, come from the CCME, which is the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment, now from CCME to CMEC, of which the chair is B.C. We met in Quebec City to talk about some ongoing issues, but Manitoba, led by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province, in Drumheller a couple of weeks ago, was able to get on the western Premiers' agenda as a priority item the issue of post-secondary education and the funding under the CHST. The CMEC is involved in this now.

Following on the priority given by funding for post-secondary education by the western Premiers in Drumheller, I had an opportunity to go and lead, as it were, follow on the leadership of the Premier of this province by getting this matter put into a national or Pan-Canadian—which is the new word you use instead of national—context, the issue of post-secondary education. There is hope, because now the First Ministers are going to be meeting in August, and the point I am trying to make is that CMEC has

now become a resource on this project. Even though we did not have every minister there to form a sufficient quorum to give direction, it is pretty clear that that is exactly where CMEC is going to go.

So this growing staff the honourable member referred to may be put to work in terms of if it is growing, which I am not exactly ready to confirm. We need the resources of the CMEC, and the fact that the CMEC is a product of all of the jurisdictions we can get something going here. The premiers of western Canada have agreed they want more—everybody agrees we always want more money—but the point here is that we have to keep the pressure on. We were able this year as a group of Canadian provinces and territories to impress the federal government enough that we needed some more money for health care to restore some of the hundreds of millions they took out of health care through the CHST.

This is something we have all had to deal with on a daily basis and the results of it, and we deal with it in education too. The members raise questions with us about this and that and try to place all the blame for all the troubles on the provincial government. However, I am not as much on the finger pointing as some people, but on the other hand I cannot escape the reality that \$263 million is not there in our coffers as a result of the changes to the CHST. So without being any more abusive to the federal government than I absolutely have to be, the fact is there is \$263 million not on the table. I know they have debts and deficits and things like that, and following our example here in Manitoba they are trying to do something about that. I respect that, too. So it is in that framework that I make my comments. We can quibble sometimes, and do, about the way they place the priorities.

What we were trying to do was to get some attention paid by Ottawa to post-secondary education, and here is where CMEC is going to help us. They are going to help us make the point. Dick Dawson made the point as well—Dick Dawson of our Council on Post-Secondary Education—that if you look after the education of a nation, you are also looking after their health which is something I knew but I never got my

tongue around it in the same way that Mr. Dawson was able to do.

Education is one of the indicators of the health of a nation. We know that we, overall, have a pretty good level, compared with other countries of the world, of education in our population. We know that there are some pretty important pockets where that is absolutely not true. So we have challenges. We need to, within the ability of the federal government, address this. We know that some of the things that have been happening, the free trade and things like that, are really kicking in and making a big difference in our country and creating employment all over the place and jobs galore and revenues for governments.

I remember the debate about free trade, and I do not know if anybody has changed their position on that one yet. I sure have not, because I know where I stood then and where I stand now, and if it was not for free trade I would not be living in such a province, such a good province. We would have a lot more challenges than we would if there had not been changes in our trading relationships which have allowed us to diversify so much. There are other things besides just free trade, but that is very important. Free trade is producing greater revenues and those revenues need to be used in the best way possible for future development of our country. Investments are needed, and there is no better investment than a good education system. So that is the case, and CMEC is going to help us with that.

Just on the issue of the staff at CMEC, it may be true that new or different staff have been added. Overall, their staff complement has not grown. In fact, a current difficulty for all of us as members of CMEC is to manage our budget, our CMEC budget, to keep it in line with affordability. That means the ministers must give direction on priorities in order to husband our resources without needing to raise members' fees and without having to go cap in hand to Ottawa by way of a matter of interest. Mr. Chairperson, 93 percent of the CMEC budget resources stem from Ottawa; 7 percent is a provincial contribution. Manitoba's contribution is a little over \$61,000. That might sound like a lot of money and it is, but all that aside, CMEC,

while useful, does of necessity operate by consensus including on the Pan-Canadian agenda of CMEC.

That agenda takes on two forms: first is the core, and this would be an item that all member provinces support, and hence would be centrally funded via the CMEC budget, an example, Student Achievement Indicators Program, the SAIP; but a second agenda is set by fewer than all the provinces but more than seven. That seems to coincide with our constitutional arrangements. This agenda is acknowledged as a CMEC agenda item but is funded by members of the consortia, for example, of that citizenship curriculum project.

* (1700)

In any event, on the issue of distance education, again, I can only say to the honourable member that, yes, it is on the formal agenda, but it has not got as specific as the honourable member and I would probably like to see happen. Simply, you have to sort of watch, you sort of have to allow issues to percolate, I guess. Some of them, their time does not come and nothing happens and they keep talking. It is not like the discussions are a waste of time or money because sometimes you get some wonderful results from international I was going to say, but, no, a Pan-Canadian discussion of all of the parties. Even the province of Quebec, which quite often finds itself outside the consensus whatever the matter happens to be, at certain times can be a good ally, too.

So where does distance education fit then? At this point it is a discussion item, just like sustainable development is a discussion item. A lot of discussion seems to happen at the officials level. You get to a ministers' meeting and it is on the agenda and not very much happens in the space of a day when there are several other pressing matters. That does not mean the item gets dropped. It does not mean a whole lot of things happen either, but you do not want to lose sight of some important items. No doubt distance education is going to be one of those types of items that will escalate in importance and the treatment given to it by the CMEC—and I think this will be good. This will bring us results ultimately implementing a strategy to acquire

courses from other jurisdictions and to customize these for Manitoba. That is related to our desire to be able to respond as quickly as possible to the needs and requests of our clients for a range of courses as well as collaborating with school divisions in Manitoba.

We want to collaborate with the Western Canadian Protocol where we are working collectively on a number of projects including the development of a five-year plan for developing and sharing distance courses based on the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework.

Negotiations, as I said, are currently underway with other western jurisdictions to explore joint development projects within the context of the Western Canadian Protocol memorandum of understanding for distance learning and technology. So I think there is a lot of work still to be done in this area in order to develop our education system to provide choices for people and also to provide efficient choices that allow for quality education and that the maximum of accessibility for people, I am no stranger to the reality of the differences in geography.

I am not that old that I do not remember wooden sidewalks and muddy streets and living in rural places where access to some of the things—it was 1957 before electricity was introduced to my granddad's house. That was a testament to the frugal ways of grandma who never would have electric lights as long as she was alive, and that did not happen. I remember going to grandpa's place. I like reading at night, but it got really, really hard to read before any light was produced at that household other than coal oil variety. It had to get really late because they could only run them for a short time because it cost money for this coal oil.

Similarly, if your physical requirements were such that they had to be pretty urgent requirements before you would make use of the facilities at granddad's place because up until grandma was gone, those facilities were a hundred feet away from the heated part of the house. So these were things that show that there is a time for things and there will be a time, I am sure, for further progress at the CMEC level in

the area of distance education. I guess I raise those tales from Westlock, Alberta, which was the homestead of my granddad. He was a charter citizen of that province having migrated from the west of Quebec in 1905 to put down his \$10 and take his quarter section of land and clear it by hand and raise a family of nine on it.

We have come from that in my experience to where we are today where we have got the Bill Gates and the distance education and all of the wonderful things that we are now doing in our schools. I hope somebody is writing a book about the development of the last 50 years in this country because it may be the most interesting part of Canada's history. I hope they can write fast because things are happening almost every day that require comment for anyone who wants a good understanding of what is going on.

Ms. Friesen: The minister mentioned the citizenship curriculum project of the CMEC. I wonder if he could give us a brief history of that and Manitoba's participation in that.

Mr. McCrae: I have been fortunate, as few Canadians have, to be a member of a provincial government, and I really mean that quite sincerely. I feel extremely honoured. I have been involved in lots of federal, provincial, territorial meetings and endeavours, and I know that my predecessor also has had pretty significant experience as well. Manitoba pushed, along with Alberta, very hard to get the citizenship history curriculum business on the agenda of the CMEC.

Now, what needs to be pointed out—and I know that the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) will bear this out for me; anybody who has ever been involved in this federal-provincial-territorial meetings will know how it works—that they have an agenda, which is important enough, but the most important things that happen at those meetings happen at lunch when the politicians alone gather for lunch and talk about the issues. This is no slight whatsoever to deputy ministers who attend these things and their staffs and that sort of thing. The fact is, it is in those in-camera meetings where I know from reports that the honourable Minister of Environment played a key role in making sure this citizenship history curriculum issue became

part of the CMEC agenda. Future Canadians will probably want to be thanking the honourable member for Assiniboia for playing that role in the 1990s.

* (1710)

The way this is working out, though, and it is not unsurprising or unpredictable; it is one of these consortium matters rather than one of those unanimous ones. Everybody is involved in this work now, led by Alberta and supported strenuously by Manitoba. The province of Quebec on this one has not joined in the effort. It was one of those cases where Quebec tends to want not to be part of the thing, and I think that is sometimes unfortunate, but I will leave that part.

I should add that Quebec is not the only one that opted out of that. B.C. did, too. B.C. is having a few problems, and we know that. I was happy at the most recent meeting where Mr. Paul Ramsey was—Paul Ramsey is the chair of the CMEC, the Minister of Education from B.C. I knew Paul from previous experience. We were both Health ministers at the same time, so we were able to share our misery then and kind of reminisce about our misery now because I think—well, maybe he is still having misery, but I am not. I was able to share with him and the others some of the things that are happening here in Manitoba about which I am quite proud. I do not know what reasons B.C. is not involved so much, except I understand that they have got up to their whatever-you-call-it in curriculum controversy in B.C. and having one heck of a time, but that being said—[interjection] I forgot about that. I was not going to mention that part. Some of us are politicians by virtue of an interesting journey, shall we say.

In any event, Manitoba, as I say, has pushed very hard, and I cannot take the credit for that. That has to go to my predecessor, and I am happy to share that point. The intent of this citizenship education project is to develop a framework of learning expectations for citizenship education that will reflect the spirit of what it means to be a Canadian.

Well, no wonder it is so hard to get everybody into the consortium. I have been into

those discussions enough to know that what it means to be a Canadian takes on a whole other flavour, depending where you happen to be or come from, or what your background is. So I can understand that. But it is still the right thing to address and to work on. I do not think we talk about our Canadian-ness enough. I do not think we celebrate who we are enough. I do not think we are noisy and brash about it as much as we should be, about being a Canadian. Other countries are, and we should be, too. After all, we have so much more to be proud of here in this country that if we do not make a little bit of noise about ourselves we cannot always count on our neighbours and friends in other countries to do that.

I think that reflects the spirit around the group that I have the honour of working with in the government of Manitoba. We feel pretty proud of this province and of this country. That has been reflected in a lot of things that we have been doing, with or without the support of all of our colleagues in the Legislature. We have still been consistently pressing forward proudly and with great expectations for a successful future, but the intent is to develop that framework of learning expectations for citizenship education that will reflect the spirit of what it means to be a Canadian and that will provide direction and guidance for its integration into all subject areas, grades, and school activities in each of the jurisdictions.

The citizenship framework will concentrate on the concept of citizenship education and not attempt to recreate a full social studies curriculum framework. Alberta acted in this as well as Manitoba. New Brunswick took on the role of the Francophone lead, if you like. I guess in all of these discussions you need somebody to chair the meetings. That is what that is about.

Manitoba certainly would not be taking any back seats in respect to any discussion on citizenship, Manitoba being really the microcosm of Canada in so many ways. We really reflect what Canada is, in our opinion, and nobody seems to want to disagree with us. We do indeed reflect the Canadian persona, if that is the right language to be using. We are proud of that. We have strong feelings about our own history here in Manitoba. We do not even agree

on it half the time, which is an interesting comment all by itself, but that is a healthy thing too as long as we do not get too animated about it.

The same goes for having just visited in la belle province and Quebec City. You do not have to be too smart to notice that there are things about the province of Quebec that you do not find anywhere else. I am trying to be careful about how I word everything here. That is the same thing about Manitoba. You will find things here that you will not find anywhere else. There is something unique about each and every province.

I remember the debate on the Constitution and I remember making the point so clearly to those who were upset about some kind of special favour or some kind of special arrangements for one jurisdiction or the other. The fact is, virtually every jurisdiction is here under some special arrangement and part of this partnership of Canada. I mean, how many people know that Prince Edward Island gets four senators? I mean, we get six here in Manitoba, and they get four. The Senate is there to reflect regional concerns and to deal with them. I would like to see a much stronger Senate. That is another issue. In any event, New Brunswick has special arrangements respecting the number of people they get in the House and in the Senate. Newfoundland, they have certain arrangements that had to be unique in 1949 when they joined Confederation. Quebec has its arrangements.

Manitoba, well, we have things here in Manitoba that are very unique in our Constitution relating to schools and relating to our courts and things like that. B.C. got a railroad. I mean, everybody got something as part of the deal. I cannot remember all the different things for the other ones I did not mention.

The fact is Canada and Canadians are a generous lot. Sometimes we do not realize it and forget about that when we are developing constitutions. In any event, this project is going to be a hard one for the CMEC and its members, because I will bet you everybody working on an officials group or on a committee, they are going to have to go running back to their government or their ministers every time there is a decision

point simply because of the nature of our country and the history of our constitutional and citizenship discussions. I can see that happening.

And a definition of citizenship? How about an agreement on where you are going to have a meeting. I can see this being a difficult thing, because even where you have your meetings could become very reflective of something else. People could read the wrong things into simple things like that. But the topic of the citizenship project is on the agenda of the assistant deputy minister's meeting called by the CMEC. That is happening tomorrow. We are going to see what comes out of that. Mr. Guy Roy and Mr. Gerald Farthing are going to be the assistant deputy ministers attending that meeting, but I will be surprised if they do not come back and say, you know, we could not get firm agreement on that, but everybody is close to an agreement, but we want to make sure it is okay with you.

That will be happening in 10 or 12 or 13 places across the country. This is not an easy one. I do not want to give the honourable member the idea that the CMEC project is going to have a final agreed-upon report next week or after a meeting in Toronto.

* (1720)

I know the honourable member knows a little bit about the history of this country, enough to know that what I have said, a lot of the things I have said are true about the nature of our arrangements, which is not a weakness but a strength, a strength that allows all these provinces and territories to live together in peace and harmony and do business together and build. I mean, look at how far this country has come in such a short time, 132 years or something like that now. That is not very long in the bigger scheme of things, as the honourable member knows, and what we have done, we have become one of the G-8 nations of the world after such a short period of time and with such a small population, comparatively speaking. We are nothing short of a wonder, a total wonderment as a nation.

We are that because we have strong regions. This is a really touchy issue, but this is still true. We have some very strong regions; we have

some very strong provinces. Even the provinces that might not be described as strong are part of a strong region, so therefore there is lots to be hopeful about. Even the ones that do not have the economic advantages that some of the others have, they have hope of economic advantage because of resource discoveries in recent years, and now with the information economy being the new kind of economy, look at the kinds of things that are happening in areas you did not expect before. We have a lot to crow about in this country, and I think we should be doing more of that instead of—you know, I listened to one of the members today in the House saying that we are the street gang capital of Canada.

What a great way to advertise your city at a time when we have all of these thousands and thousands of people converging on Winnipeg later this summer, just a month or two away, to celebrate all the wonders of sport and games and living together and all of these things, and to be putting that out as an advertisement, I mean, I am really not impressed. And I am not even a Winnipegger. I live here a lot of the time, and I have lived in the city of Winnipeg; I have been a Winnipegger, but I am angry at people who speak that way.

If we have problems, is it not something we should work on instead of bragging about having them for our own political gain. I mean, I think the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) should have a word with the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for talking like that. This is his city; this is her city, too. If this were my city on a full-time basis, I would be even angrier. I am angry enough as it is about it because it is my second city, Brandon being my first. I like Winnipeg and there are a lot of things to be said about Winnipeg, but calling it names like that sure does not help our image. It just burns me so much when I hear stuff like that about any city that I am close with, any province, any area, any group of people, or my country.

I do not mean to cover up and hide from real problems we have. Of course, we need to look at that, but resorting to three-second clip buzzwords like that—I do not even like repeating it—is pretty disgusting frankly, and I hope the honourable member for Wolseley will gently

speak to her colleague and use the skills—the member for Wolseley has some good skills, and she should use those skills in a constructive way. She does not have to give me or the government any credit for anything; I do not care about that. But why go and take such a kick out of the capital city, a beautiful city, like that, especially at a time when we have all these visitors coming? It came out so fast I could hardly believe my ears that he actually used that language, but I sure hope that he maybe would apologize for that at the very next opportunity.

Anyway, we can take heart. The development of the Pan-Canadian Science Framework started out with the same kind of start; that is, a firm resolve to achieve something valuable, a good process on how to achieve it, but a less bright picture of what actually would be the final product. In the end the product was good. It was useful and it was credible.

So hope springs eternal in the human breast, is what my mom used to tell me. I am hopeful for all of these things that we are talking about. Some of them are further along than other ones, some of them disappointingly not as far along as we would like them to be, but you can only do those things that are actually possible. But, as I said, sometimes impossible just takes a little longer because we specialize in the difficult on a regular basis.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me whether there is any time frame for the citizenship curriculum project, and could he give me a sense of what the context is in the Manitoba curriculum for the framework of learning expectations of what it means to be a Canadian? What are the citizenship expectations in the Manitoba curriculum, or how are they defined across the curriculum?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I wish it were that simple. I do know from my experience in dealing with constitutional issues—this would be related to a constitutional issue in terms of building agreement around a Pan-Canadian curriculum—I think we have seen this deadline business tried before. When it came to Meech Lake, a deadline did not seem to work very much. In terms of finding agreement on things using deadlines, you do not always get much

quality. If you were to tell two warring factions tomorrow, like a union and an employer, that you have until tomorrow at noon to have an agreement, it just does not work out very well. That is why you need to use reasonable people.

The best I can say on it is, I think, that anybody who suggests putting deadlines on these things—I do not think that is what the member is doing—but anybody who does that is not very wise in the ways of working with 10 provinces and three territories. That does not work that way. I mean, you can try, and you can agree for best efforts, and all of those sorts of things, but nobody can lay one down in the first place unless it is agreed upon. I do not think you would be very successful trying to lay down a deadline.

My view of the history of this country, the history of this province, the history of my own city of Brandon may very well be different from somebody else's view. You might be able to find two very reputable research documents to back up each of those two stories, and yet—so what do you do? You keep working and hoping that day will arrive when sweet reason and light fills the room and you start making progress again. There always seem to be those kinds of points in a big project, points along the way that kind of open the door for other progress to be made.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Order, please. As it was previously agreed upon, the hour being 5:30, committee rise.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Good afternoon. 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 for the Status of Women. We are on page 142 of the Main Estimates book. It had previously been agreed that questioning would be conducted in a global manner with all of the items to be passed once questioning had been completed. So we will now proceed with the questioning.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Mr. Chair, just in

relation to my opening statement yesterday, I obviously misspoke myself in one sentence. I would just like to put a correction on the record. The page number in the Hansard of yesterday is 1992. It is in the first column, the second paragraph, and it is the second sentence. The sentence should read: Manitoba Health will see a 10.1 percent increase in spending for the 1999-2000 fiscal year for a total budget increase, is the corrected word, of \$194 million. I had omitted the word "increase" budget, and I would just like to correct that today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I thank the minister for her corrections.

When we entered yesterday, I was asking the minister some questions that arose from her introductory remarks. We were discussing the Power Smart program, and she had told me about the programs across the province and about the numbers of women enrolled in those programs. One of the questions I had asked her that she did not have time to answer was whether any women had graduated from the program. If the answer is yes, I am wondering if the department is monitoring whether these women are able to obtain employment through this program and what the numbers might be.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the program is Power Up, and I only mention that because Power Smart was the Hydro program that I know the member would also be familiar with. Power Up is the program for women. The program is in its third of five weeks, so there have not yet been any graduates. But when there are graduates, we do intend to track those graduates.

* (1450)

Ms. McGifford: Is the intention that this program will prepare women for employment, or is this providing women with an additional skill, which perhaps, along with another set of skills, may allow those women to obtain employment? My experience with computers is that the course—and I cannot remember the length of time, but I think it is 15 hours—that 15 hours probably is not enough computer training to prepare a person to obtain a position in operating a computer.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the program has a workbook which allows women to also do tutorial work for themselves and to practise for themselves the skills, as well. At the end of the five-week, 15-hour program, the formal part of the program, the expected results are that women should be able to use the Internet, should be able to do e-mail, and should be able to do word processing. There is also a segment in the program where women can also learn to write a resume. So it certainly enhances their opportunities for employability at the completion of the project.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder how women who do not have computers in their own homes can really use this program, because there would not be the opportunity for practising unless, of course, the program accommodates those women by providing an opportunity for that sort of homework.

Mrs. Vodrey: It does anticipate that women will need the opportunity to practise, and it does not anticipate that they will all have computers in their own homes. So there are 150 practice sites throughout the province. We also have Taking Charge!, which is co-operating with this project. By the end of this year, by the end of 1999 going into 2000, there will be 50 more practice sites as well.

Ms. McGifford: Is there any opportunity for women living in remote, northern communities to participate in this program?

Mrs. Vodrey: We currently have four pilot projects running in Winnipeg. We have pilots scheduled for June in the rural areas of Swan River, Thompson, Rosssburn, Selkirk, and Ashern. We are finalizing plans for Brandon, Gimli, Arborg, Flin Flon, and Dauphin, and also one in St. James. It takes a core group of 12 women to express an interest. Where those 12 women will express an interest, if they would be in another area, then we certainly could look at providing the training to those women in those areas. With the workbooks it allows them some other availability to practise also.

Ms. McGifford: I appreciate the breadth of the program's offering. However, I was thinking more of reserves in the North. I am not sure that

the women in these communities would necessarily know about this program unless there was some outreach or some effort to make them aware. Sometimes, as I am sure the minister knows and I am sure her staff know, outreach is the only way to go, especially with women and especially with women in remote communities. I wonder if anything has been done or if there are any plans to do something along that line.

Mrs. Vodrey: I appreciate the comments the member has made. We do want this program to be successful for women, wherever they live across the province. So I am informed that of the 150 practice sites throughout the province, some of these are in fact on reserves. We also have another 116 communities where there has been an interest expressed. We are looking at, in the fall, an outreach program. At the moment, as I said yesterday in my opening remarks, even without the outreach program, we already have such a response to deal with, we have 1,185 women on the list at the moment. In looking at some orderly progression we certainly want to be inclusive and have some availability. We will look at increasing that availability in the fall.

Ms. McGifford: What is the design of the outreach program?

Mrs. Vodrey: The outreach in the fall will consist of some radio spots, and also the 50-plus community newspapers that are around the province will also carry information about the program. I should also mention that there will be courses in French, which are beginning in the fall.

Ms. McGifford: So I suppose this is something that we as MLAs could help facilitate through our newsletters or mailings and let communities know that this is happening.

I think I will move on and ask a couple of questions about the Training for Tomorrow program. I know that the minister tabled a video yesterday, but I am assuming that, in order for me to get a video, the minister would have had to table two because I did not get a video. I would like to have one.

Mrs. Vodrey: Absolutely, you were intended to have that opportunity. Sorry, I should have

understood the process better after all these years. However, absolutely, we will make one available to you. It is very good.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we go on, it was decided in the Assembly that each committee, be it in the Assembly, in Room 254 or Room 255, would have the opportunity to decide when they would finish, if they would choose to quit at five o'clock or go on till six o'clock. How and when would you like to do this? It is up to the committee. Would you like to decide now?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, I just would like to put on the record that I am certainly prepared to go till six o'clock if that is suitable to my critic this afternoon.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I am certainly prepared to go till six. I am assuming that the reason for this is because of the visit of the British High Commissioner.

Mr. Chairperson: That is right.

Ms. McGifford: That visit, the reception begins at 5:30 p.m., but I believe it continues till 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Then it is the will the committee to go on till six o'clock. Agreed? [agreed]

Ms. McGifford: I was sure that the minister did intend me to have the opportunity to view the video, and I do not need my personal copy. I can certainly return it, but I would like to view it.

I do have a question about the Training for Tomorrow programs because I understand that the scholarships involved with the Training for Tomorrow are confined to community colleges and they do not apply to university students. Is that correct? If it is correct, I wonder why that decision was made.

Mrs. Vodrey: The decision was made when this was announced several years ago. At that time, there were really not programs able to assist students who were in community colleges. There were, in fact, a number of scholarship programs which were available to people

studying at the university, and this was an effort to enhance the choices for students who might choose community colleges.

Women do tend to be underrepresented in the high-technology community college training, and I understand in the early '90s that they represented only about 3 percent. So, from the document Framework for Economic Growth and also the Roblin report, it was pointed out that this high-skills training is available at our community colleges. It is a strength of our community colleges, and it is one of the keys to long-term employment and economic growth. So these scholarships were then focused on our community colleges quite specifically at the announcement.

* (1500)

Ms. McGifford: The minister said in the early '90s, approximately 3 percent of students enrolled in these highly complex technological programs were women. I wonder if it has changed, if the minister has that statistic, and if it has, whether she sees the Training for Tomorrow scholarships as being important in that change.

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not have a number, but I understand that there has been an increase. I am not sure that I can directly say that the reason for the increase is, in fact, the Training for Tomorrow scholarships, although the uptake for the Training for Tomorrow scholarships has been very good.

But one of the efforts that the Women's Directorate, the advisory council for women, have been making through Education and Training, through our own community work, is, again, to help young women focus on their educational choices which will lead them to economic choices which hopefully will add to their own economic security. The more that we are able to highlight these kinds of high demand in the labour force market kinds of programs that young women then may choose with the added incentive of the Training for Tomorrow scholarship, then I think it certainly adds to what the choices are for women.

Ms. McGifford: I think the minister in her introductory remarks made reference to the

regional health authorities, and I wonder if the minister could tell me how many women are sitting on regional health authority boards, what the percentage would be, and also whether there are any women who chair these boards.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand and I am informed that the percentage of women on the regional health boards is 34 percent, that it is an increase, a continuing increase from approximately 30 percent at one point. I am also informed that one woman was the chair of a regional health authority but that she has since resigned, and I do not have any information about her reasoning for that.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to ask the minister if she or her department have been involved in seeking women for these regional health authority boards. Is it part of their work?

Mrs. Vodrey: My colleague from Portage la Prairie gives me even further updated information. Thank you very much, colleague, for that.

The information that I have just received is that in Central Region it is Eileen Kroeker, who is the chair, and Dianne Moon is the vice-chair of the Central Region. That is two women in the leadership responsibilities of that particular health authority.

I also know that the directorate has been working with the health care reform working group, as has the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. They have and council has helped facilitate the nomination process by assisting the women in the health care reform working group identify and put forward nominations on behalf of qualified women. As a result, one of the working group members, Mary Scott, was named to the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder what the qualities and work experience or other kinds of professional experience or perhaps volunteer experience members of the advisory council and the directorate look for when they put forth a woman's name.

Mrs. Vodrey: I should clarify and I beg your pardon. I guess it is a bit of a difficulty in trying

to make sure I get all the information out. What I am told by both the advisory council and the directorate is to make clear in my answer that rather than specifically bringing names forward they have worked to put the word out to actually make sure that women are, through public education and information, aware of the function of the RHA board. With the more information women have, they then may say: this applies to me, I am interested. I would like to be a part of that.

The function has been one in both cases of putting information out, working with the committee through public education.

Ms. McGifford: Yesterday the minister spoke about, I cannot remember whether it was the directorate or the advisory council, but spoke about one of these two as having developed a tool for gender analysis. I wonder if it is possible to have a copy of this tool. I am assuming it is a set of criteria that would be tested when decisions are made.

Mrs. Vodrey: This criteria was also one which was really seen as a highlight or a priority for ministers across the country, federal, provincial, and territorial. We will be piloting our tool in June. Once we have done the piloting and the workbook has been presented, then we will be happy to share it with the member for Osborne.

Ms. McGifford: When the minister says piloting the workbook—I think that is what the minister said—could she explain in a little bit more detail what that would involve?

Mrs. Vodrey: I have had the opportunity to look at what will be presented in June. I can tell the member descriptively that it is a very hands-on, intensive training opportunity. It is an opportunity aimed at those who are in the area of policy development or who are program managers. It is designed to highlight any differential experience that men or women may have then in the development of policy. It is intended to serve them then both equally. It is not intended to disadvantage either one. It is intended to highlight if in fact, because they have different experiences, to highlight the different experiences so that they can then both be served equally.

Ms. McGifford: I am curious as to whether this tool will apply to legislation, in other words, whether legislation will be tested or the process of gender analysis applied to legislation. It would seem to me, as well, that different legislation impacts the lives of men and women in different ways and that unfortunately, in some instances, we pass legislation that has not been good for women and has not considered the unequal impact on women.

* (1510)

Mrs. Vodrey: I know that there has been legislation passed when the member's party was in government which clearly caused a problem for women. I do not want to make it a difficult discussion, but one of the areas was in the area of Workers Compensation and what widows were, in fact, entitled to. Our government has made an announcement yesterday as a way to rectify that in the future. We recognize that there has at times by even efforts made to be sensitive, there has not always been legislation which has impacted both men and women equally or equally fairly. This tool certainly could be used in the development of legislation to examine, recognizing the different experiences of men and women, to at least look at the impact of men and women and to see how it affects each one.

Mr. David Faurshou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. McGifford: But is the plan to use this tool to analyze legislation?

Mrs. Vodrey: There is not a legislative criterion that says this must be used. However, it is a tool which has been circulated or will be circulated, I understand, to deputy ministers for use in the development of policy which then may include the development of legislation. I think that the important issue here is that there has now been a tool developed and it is able to be used and then obviously decisions will have to be made.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I think it is important that the tool has been developed, but I think it is even more important that it will be used. So my question really is: is it the policy of the

minister's government to examine its legislation in terms of gender analysis?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, this is in its pilot phase. We will have to look at the experience of using the tool. I am sure if it does turn out to be a useful tool in the development of policy and legislation then it will be used on a regular basis. But we want to see at the moment now in a practical application how this will work.

Ms. McGifford: Yesterday in her remarks the minister pointed out that in June 1998 Manitoba passed The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation and Consequential Amendments Act and referred to it as the strongest civil remedies in Canada, et cetera. I do remember the act. I remember voting for the act, and I remember being at the committee, but, as the minister learned in the House today, this has not been proclaimed. I really just want to point out that the act has not been proclaimed, so it is an example of an instance where something has been developed but it is not very useful until it is in fact being used. So that was part of my concern with regard to the gender analysis. I do not know if the minister wants to respond.

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, I think in the piece of legislation that the member notes, it has been the leading piece of legislation in this area in Canada. What she would perhaps not know is that in the development of legislation there is a process of the development of regulations to actually make that piece of legislation operable in all cases where it is required. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) replied in the Legislature during question period today that it is the development of the details for application that are being done. Occasionally it does take approximately a year from proclamation to in fact develop the details that are required to make the legislation operational. Listening to his answer today, that is obviously his intention.

I would say in that particular area, our government has led the way across this country in the area of stalking. It was the former minister, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), who is currently the Minister of Education, who actually got the federal government to recognize stalking as a heading in

the Criminal Code. In the past, that behaviour was not recognized as a criminal act. I am very pleased that our government, during my term as Justice minister, was able to focus the stalking issue on the victim and have changes made to the Criminal Code which actually required certain events to happen, such as notification of the victim and certain matters relating to stalking. So we began to focus that on the victim as well. Then we have developed in the legislation that the member references our own provincial legislation, which offers civil remedies.

As the member knows, in trying to get the remedy through the Criminal Code, there is a certain level of proof required, there is certain evidence; it requires a full criminal procedure. This legislation, which was, in my mind, a hallmark for victims and dealing particularly with this issue, we have now a civil remedy, but that civil remedy must be operational in the easiest, most accessible way. I am pleased that our colleague the Minister of Justice is working hard to make that actually occur.

Ms. McGifford: Those are the questions that I had growing from the minister's remarks. Just to turn to some other questions now. I am interested in the meetings of the advisory council for the past year. I am wondering where the advisory council met. I am also interested in whether there was public participation at those meetings and some of the ideas and some of the themes that emerged during those meetings.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Vodrey: The advisory council is required to meet six times during the year. The council met in a regular council meeting September 12, '98; February 23, 1999; March 6 and 7, 1999; March 26 and 27, 1999; and council had an outreach meeting, this is backing up a little bit, April 25, 1998.

* (1520)

That outreach meeting was held in Beausejour. I am informed that with that meeting in Beausejour, the council has now completed outreach meetings to all parts of the province. Outreach meetings do invite the

public to come and to make representation on issues within their geographical and community area so that the advisory council can then take their information and look at what additional priorities they may wish to set then or what comments they may wish to make to government.

Ms. McGifford: When the minister says that the council has now had meetings in all different geographical areas or had outreach meetings in these areas, I wonder if I could have a little bit more detail as to what that means specifically.

Mrs. Vodrey: I have lots and lots of information. It seems that that exact list I am going to have to put together and provide to the member. Rather than take any further time, I will follow up with that.

Ms. McGifford: I think last year we spoke about a meeting that took place at Souris, or maybe it was the year before, time seems to run together, but I believe at that time, there was kind of a synopsis of the issues that were presented at the meeting in Souris.

I wonder if the minister could tell me the basic issues that arose at the Beausejour meeting because I understand there was public participation, so I am assuming that there was a presentation and the women who presented outlined for the advisory council the issues that were of concern to them.

Mrs. Vodrey: The presenters to council in the Beausejour meeting included two presenters speaking about the family violence committee; a presenter focusing on violence issues; another presenter speaking from the Canadian Mental Health Association; another presenter on Education and Training opportunities; a presenter from the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba; and a presenter on community and youth correctional services.

Ms. McGifford: I understand that there are approximately 14 members in the advisory council. I wonder if I could have an updated list. It may be the same as the list in the 1997-98 annual report, which is the most recent list I have.

I also wanted to ask the minister about the duration of the appointment of the Chair. Is there a time on it or is this a fixed position? I am not sure how it works.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, we will provide to the member a list of the members on the advisory council. There have been some changes. Some women have moved on to other interests, so we have added women to the committee representing other interests. Actually, I have to tell you I am very impressed with the committee. I have been from the beginning. We have added some very exceptional women who have added additional dimensions to the committee most recently.

In terms of the Chair of the council, the term is a three-year term. That term is due to expire in October of 1999, and I would be very interested in having that member's term renewed.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could give me some information about the last meeting of the provincial and federal ministers for the Status of Women. I am interested in the major issues that arose and were discussed at that meeting.

Mrs. Vodrey: While we are getting those details, I can perhaps offer some highlights of that meeting. The meeting focused on, No. 1, the issue of violence against women and our commitment to reduce violence. Ultimately, the goal would be a violence-free society. Particular concern was expressed in the area of family violence or violence which occurs within intimate relationships.

The ministerial meeting focused a great deal of its time on developing the declaration. We had had working groups working on that declaration, finally bringing us to what we were able to see, ultimately amend and then approve at that meeting.

We had full participation of the Province of Quebec. We were dealing in three languages. We were dealing in English, French, and also Inuktitut, and our colleague from the new territory of Nunavut had hosted us in that meeting and made it clear that the language issues, as did our colleague from Quebec, had to

be considered carefully in terms of the shades of difference, and so the wording had to be such that direct translation was reasonable and that we were not in any way offending any community or saying something that we did not want to say, so we worked significantly long.

There was also a commitment on that day that this declaration would be read by ministers across the country at the time when each province recognized the Montreal massacre, and that there would be an effort to then make a statement, a powerful statement, which was the same all across the country, and it is a significant feat when ministers of all political stripes and all governments of all levels of experience are able to actually develop a document with complete agreement.

We also then have worked on, began working on and have worked on since a more comprehensive document beyond the declaration which will look at some of the best practices across the country. That document is not yet released and is in the stages of being finalized, and ministers will then be looking at an appropriate time to release that document which should provide reference points from projects all across the country.

The issue of women's economic security was also dealt with, the issue particularly of training. Accessibility to training was dealt with. Also, support to entrepreneurs was discussed, and the development of our entrepreneurial guide then followed that. The issue of CPP reform was also raised, and we asked the federal minister for the status of the Track II Reforms for CPP, and we also wanted for, our next meeting, a comprehensive piece of information on the effects of taxation on women. That was part of the issue that we dealt with in economic security, but it was seen as a separate issue. Then we also dealt with the issues of women's health.

* (1530)

Ms. McGifford: The minister said that for the next meeting, one of the issues that is on the table is taxation. I do not know whether the minister meant income tax and its impacts on women, or whether she was referring to stay-at-

home moms. I am curious as to what is intended here.

Also, I am interested in when the next meeting will take place.

Mrs. Vodrey: We asked for information to cover wide-ranging types of information of the effect of Canada's income tax system on women. We also wanted to include in that information, to be given to ministers, unpaid work, and that has actually been a part of our discussion for at least the past three years, and so we have asked for further information to be considered at that time.

The next meeting of ministers responsible for the Status of Women will take place July 8, 1999, and it will be in Prince Edward Island.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could define unpaid work for me, because I am wondering if that includes volunteer work and caring for one's parents, or if it is confined to women staying at home with their children. My thought is, we contribute in so many ways to the economy which are not necessarily acknowledged. I am quite interested in the definition.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, those issues were recognized in the discussion and also in the direction that ministers gave for further follow-up: women who may be at home with children, women who may be at home with other types of dependants, or women who are doing unpaid work with other types of dependants, often parents or it might be a spouse, and also the effect of volunteer work and unpaid work, which is volunteer work.

Ms. McGifford: So the definition appears to be quite broad. I also wanted to ask the minister if the issue of child care arose, because I think it was in the 1993 election that the federal government promised a national child care program. There has been no movement at all in that program that I am aware of. I am wondering if the issue came up.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, not to my knowledge and memory. The issue of the federal government and their national child care program was not discussed.

Ms. McGifford: Yesterday, Mr. Chair, I was reading the publication of the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women. I do not know if the minister has had the opportunity to read it or whether her staff have. I am sure, as the minister knows, it is a publication that comes out from time to time. I think that the minister does know that the funding for the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women is now project funding rather than stable, ongoing funding, and that no sooner had this organization received its funding—I believe it finally got its funding in November—it appeared that no sooner had the organization got its funding, done its work, then the organization is forced to close down and lay off staff once again because this funding has run out and because it is project funding.

Really the changes in funding by the federal government to women's programs have pretty well crippled an advocacy group like the Manitoba Action Committee and, I could add, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women here too. I think that the importance of an advocacy group to the status of women, an advocacy group that really has nothing to do with government is extremely important. I think the minister has written in the past on behalf of groups like MACSW. I wonder, first of all, if that is accurate; secondly, if the minister plans to take any action; and, thirdly, was this an issue at the meeting of ministers.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I am reminded that some jurisdictions did raise this with the federal minister and the federal minister again replied, as the member rightly says, that it is now project funding, that that project funding is almost at the same level as before. I believe last year we did provide you with the federal government criteria for that project funding. If you do not have it, we can send you another one.

In addition to that, the advisory council also was informed of this issue. They took it forward to their provincial counterparts at their annual meeting in June 1998, and they did forward a letter to Hedy Fry. Individual councils sent a letter to the Honourable Hedy Fry, the Secretary of State, and Dr. Fry then did reply to council of her approval of a contribution agreement with the national action committee and gave the

amount, \$281,000. These funds are reported to support the first phase of a major research program on the influence of globalization on the government's economic policy choices, and the resulting implications for the status of women.

Dr. Fry clarified to the advisory council at that time that at no time was funding withdrawn from the national action committee, but, instead, as the member rightly says, now it is through proposals and it is project funding. Dr. Fry also replied to our advisory council of her awareness of the importance of women's program resources to hundreds of women, and she acknowledged the campaign which was going on at that time.

Ms. McGifford: To move from the national to the local for a minute, monies may not have been withdrawn from NAC at any time, but they have been withdrawn from the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women from time to time, and I think even as we sit here that MACSW has been forced to close its doors.

In fact, if I might quote from this newsletter, on page 2: Due to the funding situation, it is with a sad heart that I tell you that as of May 1999, all the staff at MACSW have been laid off for the second year running. As last year, our volunteers will staff the offices. However, this year we have an added stress that we have not had in previous years. This year MACSW has no money left to use as a cushion against hard times. Hard times have come around again and our purse is empty.

Now, I do not mean to suggest that it is the minister's responsibility, because it certainly has not been the provincial responsibility to fund this. It was a national initiative, and now it appears the federal government wants to pull the plug, as the federal government has done on other programs. But I am wondering what action or if there is any other action we as a provincial government can do to advocate for a different arrangement, even if it were a two-year arrangement for project funding because, and the minister knows this, when an organization has to close its doors in May, hoping to reopen perhaps in September, it is impossible to do any planning, to get on with its work in a planned, consistent, and well-thought-out manner.

* (1540)

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, I think, first of all, it was important that our advisory council reflected the concerns of the community and did write a letter and did receive a response, so, certainly, that is one piece of action from our province.

But for the funding that the federal government has determined, this appears to be a decision which they have made and does not appear to be subject to any changes. To my knowledge, again, it is project funding. The project funding does involve an administrative component. They recognize that there has to be some kind of an infrastructure to run any kind of a project, and they have made the decision not to provide core funding. It was clear to us at the meeting, the last meeting of ministers. It appears to be clear through the letter of reply that the advisory council also received.

Ms. McGifford: I am interpreting the minister to say, then, from her point of view, it appears the decision is written in stone, and nobody is going to change his or her mind.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, Mr. Chair, that is my impression. The federal government has determined now how they will be doing this funding and what the terms are. I think that groups now have to know that that is the way the funding is administered and then to make every effort to deal with the project funding that is now available.

Ms. McGifford: I just want to comment again that I think it is a loss for women in Manitoba. This year is the International Year of Older Persons. I am sure the minister and her staff are aware of the really staggering rates of poverty among seniors, particularly senior women. I cannot remember what the rate is. I used to have the statistics, but it seems to be eluding me today. I have two questions. First of all, I wonder if the minister's department is planning to do anything to acknowledge the Year of Older Persons, if any festivities or what have been planned. Also, I am interested in any work the minister's department or her government might be doing to alleviate poverty among seniors, senior women in this case.

Mrs. Vodrey: The directorate is working with the Seniors Directorate for the health of older women. Then in our fall newsletter there will also be an article which focuses on a senior woman. In terms of the poverty issue, our main focus has been the CPP and the pension reforms, which really would have an impact on older women in particular. From the advisory council, the advisory council held a wellness workshop for seniors on October 29, 1998. I spoke about it in my opening remarks. It was sponsored by council, and they partnered with Age and Opportunity and Manitoba Council on Aging, the army, navy and air force veterans. There were about 120 people in attendance. They plan to host another wellness workshop for seniors in the upcoming year. The advisory council also tells me that they enjoy a strong working relationship with the Seniors Directorate. One of the staff of the Seniors Directorate, Motria Koltek is currently briefing the advisory council on some of the issues relating to seniors and the International Year of Older Persons.

Also, there was a lunch-and-learn session, May 12, 1998. It was on safety issues for seniors. It was held at the Lorette seniors centre. The purpose was to address safety issues experienced by seniors in rural communities. There was a representative of Age and Opportunity, Older Victim Services, was a guest speaker, and council was represented at that particular event also. I am also informed by council that some topics for future presentations where council would be involved are examining the pharmaceutical use of older Manitobans; seniors and gambling. I believe those are the two additional ones focused on seniors for this year.

Ms. McGifford: The minister spoke about a briefing which I believe was done by a member of the Seniors Directorate, and I believe this person spoke with the council. I wonder if the minister could comment on what those issues were. I think she said there was a briefing on issues which were of importance to women and to seniors.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed that she briefed council on the up-and-coming events for the International Year of Older Persons.

Ms. McGifford: The minister also said that council was working on the health issues of older women, and I wonder if I could have some details on this work.

Mrs. Vodrey: This was actually the directorate who would be working on the issue of health with older Manitobans, and it is in co-operation with the Seniors Directorate. I am informed that it is in co-operation with Seniors Directorates across this country who are wanting to engage Status of Women ministries across this country to actually examine on a national basis the health of senior women.

So the project, I am told, is in its formative stages. It is being developed, and they are looking to report to ministers responsible at the meeting not this July, but next July.

Ms. McGifford: So the representatives from the various directorates meet at times in various locations in the country and are pursuing this project.

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer is yes. If I could add just one more comment from the advisory council in terms of their work with seniors, council did a Lunch and Learn on osteoporosis as well.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I remember that event.

So I am assuming the issues that might arise regarding older women and their health would include issues like osteoporosis, menopausal issues, and, I suppose, health and well-being. Depression, I think, is probably something that quite affects some elderly people.

Mrs. Vodrey: The focus is on postmenopausal women, postmenopausal issues in that we have our own initiatives dealing with health in mid-life.

* (1550)

Ms. McGifford: Well, speaking of health issues, I spent some time earlier speaking with the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) on women's health issues, and one of the issues that I discussed with him was breast screening. I knew that the breast screening unit across the street

from Misericordia did not see women after they turned 70. It sees women, I believe, from 50 to 69. I understand there are some good clinical reasons for that, and I understand that a woman living in Winnipeg can seek alternate services if she needs to have a mammogram.

I understand, as well, at least I think this is the case, that if a woman is symptomatic, that that breast screening unit will see her, but that might not be quite correct.

What upset me was learning from the minister that the breast screening mobile unit that went out of town and went to some relatively remote areas, although I do understand there are areas without roads and obviously the mobile screening unit cannot access an area if it does not have a road—I was disturbed to find out that in these fairly remote communities that, when a woman turns 69, she cannot be tested or examined or screened—I suppose that is the correct word—by this mobile screening unit. The Health minister's response, when I brought this up, was that, well, this woman could seek an alternate service, but in many cases alternative service simply is not available.

The minister talked about seeing a physician and getting a referral and all this sort of thing, but in many of our remote communities there are not any physicians, let alone alternative places for women to have this screening. If a woman needs to have this screening or chooses to have this screening, and if we believe in accessibility, a person should have the right to choose to have this screening, then a woman may have to travel to another community at some expense and have the service there.

I am not expert, as you can tell, on breast screening, but it would seem to me that one of the considerable costs is actually getting that screening unit up north, and the per-incident cost of simply having two or three extra women tested who happen to be over 69 would be kind of minimal. I am bringing this issue to the attention of the minister in the hope that she will bring it to the attention or speak about it with the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), because I think it is a problem. I think there is a gap in service, and I think that it needs to be addressed.

Mrs. Vodrey: Maybe I will work backwards on the member's comments. First of all, I am informed from the directorate, who has had some information about this, that the test does not seem to be as reliable for senior women. It is not that it is an arbitrary number of women who are in fact only able to be tested; it is, in fact, the reliability of the test and whether or not women then would have a sense of getting perhaps a clean bill of health or a false negative. My understanding, then, is that the decision has been made more on the reliability of the test, and again, it is reliability for senior women.

The member, by bringing up our enhanced Breast Screening Program, I think, really does raise an important initiative which was brought forward by this government, an expanded initiative brought forward by this government, and there has been a recognition that for women who do live in Manitoba there is the screening program. They are able to attend women, 50 to 69, with or without a physician's referral, and for women younger, they do require a physician's referral. Usually it is a symptomatic or a risk factor and there are alternatives.

I also am very pleased that this government has recognized the importance of that mobile screening unit and to enhance across the province the Breast Screening Program. I do believe it is a move by this government that will save the lives of women.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to point out that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) was quite instrumental as well in promoting the mobile breast screening unit, because she was upset that her community of Swan River and other areas that she serves had not really had this service, so I know that she promoted it quite tirelessly. Here she is, so she could actually speak for herself.

I still do want to bring the matter, and I underline, bring that matter to the attention of the minister because, yes, breast screening may be less effective for women who are over 70, but it is still something that is used. It is still something that the women who are over 70 cannot have in these remote communities unless there are the kinds of alternatives that they do not always have the opportunity to seek out, so I

do think it is a gap in service. I want to make that point.

Related to the breast screening—not related to the breast screening, I am reminded by the breast screening of the need for a cervical cancer registry, and I have asked the Minister of Health about this twice in the House recently. We debated a private member's resolution about a week ago on the matter of a central cervical cancer screening registry, and that resolution was not really supported. The minister has, I think, said that he is going to soon announce a program, but I do want to point out that the ministers, various ministers, have been announcing cervical cancer screening registries since 1994 in all kinds of places, in throne speeches, in budgets, on the doorstep perhaps. I would not know about that.

I am wondering if either the directorate or the Women's Advisory Council has participated in developing this program, and whether the minister has some information that she would like to share.

Mrs. Vodrey: The Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) answered in the Legislature, I believe it was yesterday during Question Period, that he will have an announcement quite soon on this, so I would not want to, in any way, pre-empt the Minister of Health's announcement. I can tell you that I certainly am well informed about the program, about the proposal, but it, again, is the Minister of Health's announcement that he will make. He is on the record as saying that it will be very, very soon.

* (1600)

Ms. McGifford: Well, I hope it will be more than an announcement. As I have said, we have had several of those already and no programs, so I think this will be the third Minister of Health. I hope, contrary to what the Minister of Justice is suggesting, it is not merely teasing, but in fact it will be an actual program at the end of the day.

I also wanted to ask the minister and, by way of the minister, her staff, whether they have dealt at all with women who are interested in opening alternate addiction treatment facilities.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I may have to ask the member to clarify. The directorate has been working on the FAS strategy with the Child and Youth Secretariat. Again, the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) is the lead minister on that, and the directorate has participated.

Ms. McGifford: It may or may not relate to what I am talking about. I understand that there are many women in our community who feel that the kinds of services that are available for women with addictions are not really working for women. I had a meeting with a group of women who were concerned about the centre at St. Norbert and felt that it really was not serving the interests of women. In fact, there was one woman there for treatment for addictions at the same—it is a mixed facility, as I am sure the minister knows, and because it is a mixed facility, it can be quite intimidating and threatening for women.

At the same time, I believe, it is the only facility that allows women to take their children with them. Some women simply cannot seek treatment unless they are able to take their children. I think there might even be some evidence that treatment is more effective for women if they undergo the treatment and their children are with them, but that I am not certain of. So this may be related to the FAS work because quite clearly if the number of addicted women is reduced, then the number of children born with FAS will be reduced.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed from the directorate that they have information from Family Services that Family Services has funded 12 beds, I believe, in a second-stage housing where women can, in fact, attend with their children, but it is most likely a question that should be asked to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Ms. McGifford: Perhaps I could just ask the minister about this second-stage housing. Which organization is sponsoring it?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am hesitant to suggest a name. We think we know the group, but it is probably best for the member to in fact ask the question of

the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Ms. McGifford: One of the other concerns I have, and I did not actually have time to speak to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) about it, is smoking, particularly the growing numbers of young women who are smoking. I think there is some evidence that death among women from lung cancer—I am talking about premature death here—is almost rivalling premature death from breast cancer, and I believe there is some evidence that women may be more susceptible to lung cancer than men.

I am sure the minister is concerned about it. I am sure everybody in government, and many out of government, are concerned about it.

I am wondering if the Women's Directorate or the advisory council has any statistics on Manitoba girls and their smoking habits or numbers. I am also wondering if there are any plans to take an initiative on smoking cessation, or if it has happened.

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member that the directorate is doing research in this area of smoking cessation and young women. They are sharing this information with Health and they are, I understand, now working with Health on their project.

The department informs me that the statistics are approximately 28 percent of young women are smoking, which is really high and leads to some real long-term health difficulties. We do have programs such as On the Move, as well, where we are trying to involve young women in physical activity. By involving them in physical activity in a positive way, there has been shown to be a reduction in the smoking of young women, a reduction in teenage pregnancies.

The advisory council informs me that, as the member probably knows, the Women's Health Clinic has programs on smoking cessation and the advisory council then advertises those programs for them.

Ms. McGifford: I do know about the Women's Health Clinic program because I was on the

advisory board when that program was created. The minister said 28 percent of young Manitoba women are smoking. I am wondering about the age, how we define young. I think I am young.

Mrs. Vodrey: The age range is teenagers 12 years old and up. I just wanted to check with the director and the statistics are Manitoba statistics which mirror the national statistics.

Ms. McGifford: So our teenage girls neither smoke more nor less than the average percentage of teenage girls in Canada.

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct.

Ms. McGifford: The minister spoke about a project. I wonder if it is possible to have any details about that project.

Mrs. Vodrey: The Department of Health would like to work on a smoking cessation strategy. There have been smoking cessation strategies which have worked with adults and have also worked with boys but have not been successful with girls. What the directorate is doing is they are doing some research working with Health to come up with the right strategy that would assist in smoking cessation programs for young women.

Ms. McGifford: Would this program be delivered in schools, or am I jumping the gun? Is it not advanced enough to consider those kinds of issues as of yet?

Mrs. Vodrey: It is a little bit premature in terms of how the program would be delivered, what part would be public education and so on. I think the important part is the issue has been raised, is being worked on, and has been recognized and needed to meet a targeted approach for girls.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to ask a question, a couple of questions actually based on information in the annual 1997-1998 report for the Status of Women. I had a lot more questions, but I know that we are running out of time.

On page 9 there is mention of economic gender equality indicators and their development and publication. I have not seen them. I wonder if I might have a copy of this material.

Mrs. Vodrey: We actually thought we had sent copies over. In the event that we did not, we are happy to make those copies available.

* (1610)

Ms. McGifford: No, I know we had discussed it. I do not believe I got them, but I would definitely like to see them.

The other question I wanted to ask from the annual general report was some information on university statistics which is toward the end of the publication, and it is not paginated. Anyway, we have some statistics. Have people found the table? Yes. First of all, university degrees granted in Canada, male and female. Then we have some statistics on university education in Manitoba, some statistics from Brandon University, and some statistics from engineering at the University of Manitoba.

When I spoke with the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), one of the health issues that I brought up then and I have not brought up here but I am going to bring up, at least indirectly now, one of the concerns I had were the numbers of women enrolled in medicine. The minister suggested to me that the numbers of women enrolled in medicine are beginning to fall, and I believe that to be true of engineering as well, that there was a little bit of a bump, and now that it has begun to reverse itself. I cannot speak of law. I know that a lot of women who graduate in fact leave the profession—

An Honourable Member: I do not blame them.

Ms. McGifford: —and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) does not blame them, but I am interested in the medical stats here. I wonder if there is any information on those statistics.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the directorate has last year's statistics in medicine which, I understand, are slightly less than half the class. I do not know that we have any statistics from this academic year, though we can try and find those.

Ms. McGifford: The reason I bring it up is that I have been made aware lately, and the member might remember, I believe I asked a question in the House one day, that women appear to be

finding it quite difficult to access female physicians. I am sure the women at this table, and probably the men, can appreciate that women often prefer, not always—for some women it is not an issue, but for some women it is an issue, to see female physicians. I believe in April there were, and I do not want to mention a number because I cannot quite remember it, but I know it was less than 40 physicians in Winnipeg, G.P.s, accepting new patients, and none of them were women. So it seems to me that we need to do something to change this. I am not expecting the minister to suddenly pluck out the solution right now and present it, but I wanted to put that on the record. I do not know if the minister wishes to respond.

Mrs. Vodrey: I do remember the question in Question Period asked of the Minister of Health. I believe his answer, because the question framed, were there more or less physicians, was that there was in fact an increase in the number of physicians. That was obviously one of the efforts of this government was to make sure that in fact our physician population was climbing.

The member asks a very specific question regarding women, and women entering medical school, the attrition rate within medical school, and the decision of some women, some men to practise part time following graduation. I do not know that we have any further information on that, but I do remember the question and the important part of the answer from the Minister of Health was, in fact, the increase in numbers of physicians who were available. We will endeavour to get the statistics of the number of women in medical school for the member.

Ms. McGifford: Well, certainly an important part of the answer was that there is an increase in the numbers of women practising medicine in our province, but an important part of the question is that there still are not enough because there are many women who are seeking services from female physicians and are not able to obtain female physicians.

That was the point that I wanted to make. I did not want to point fingers at the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) or indeed the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) or any minister. I just think it is something that all of us in government

need to be cognizant of the importance of encouraging women to practise medicine, to enter medicine and other professions.

I had a conversation recently with one of my former colleagues who is also a former Margaret Laurence Chair in Women's Studies. She was telling me that at the University of Manitoba, and this is 1999, there are still seven men for every one female instructor. Now, this is not including librarians. If you include librarians, the stat changes considerably. These are tenured positions. I do not think that this is anything for either of us to feel very pleased with.

Again, I do not think it is a government responsibility. The University of Manitoba is a self-governing body and is responsible for its employment. But I think as individuals who are concerned with the promotion of women's issues and the status of women, it is something that we should know.

Mrs. Vodrey: I appreciate the information brought forward. I understandably was anecdotal through a discussion with an individual there. I think that certainly for our government and my department, as I said clearly in my opening remarks, we want to make sure that women have and recognize all of the opportunities that are there for them, the opportunities to make academic choices which then lead them forward to professions of the best economic security. If those academic choices lead them into some of the more nontraditional professions, we would like to encourage that, too. Some of the more nontraditional professions are found, as I said, at the community colleges. Some may be found in professions such as medicine and law.

I can tell you anecdotally my law class of women—I started in 1988—was 51 percent women. So we were the year that broke the threshold and we were a very significant portion. I think that the underlying message for young women is that they have to be helped to recognize that all of these opportunities apply to them. That is the basis of a number of the programs which we are carrying out through the directorate speaking to young women, through the advisory council speaking to young woman. The point is one recognized and I think an important one.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to tell the minister that the evidence I provided was not anecdotal. It is in fact based on hard research. The person that I spoke with has just published a book on the topic. So it is not anecdotal.

Anyway, I wanted to ask a question from the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review under the subappropriation 22-1A. I do not have very many questions left. Under the Other Expenditures items I notice that the other operating monies have increased quite significantly. I wonder if the minister could explain the increase to me.

* (1620)

Mrs. Vodrey: The increase in spending is an amount of dollars to offset the government-wide program of desktop management and to make sure that the advisory council is included in that initiative.

Ms. McGifford: So the increase then, the money was spent on computers?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, in keeping with, as we discussed I believe it was last year even, the government-wide initiative, this includes the advisory council in that initiative.

Ms. McGifford: I believe last year we discussed it, but the costs were not reflected in the budget last year.

I also wanted to ask a question about the advisory council's library. I wonder if there is a budget line for the library.

Mrs. Vodrey: There is not a specific budget line. It is included in the operating line.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me how much money is reserved then for updating the library and maintaining the library.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed that council has allocated \$1,500 in its '99-2000 budget for new library resources such as journal subscriptions, texts and videos. Included in this also, I am told is access to the Internet for people who come in.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder about the difficulties of maintaining the library, if there is a particular person who has that responsibility and if there is an updating index or how materials are kept track of.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that it is professionally catalogued with help from Culture.

Ms. McGifford: So a librarian from Culture comes and assists with this library.

Mrs. Vodrey: It is a librarian from Culture, and the material is sent over to Culture, catalogued and returned.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask a couple of questions on subappropriation 22-1B. I notice in comparing the objective, the Activity Identification, the Expected Results to last year's, that there is quite a difference, and I wonder if this is a result of rethinking or new directions in policy. I think, for example, the specific initiatives were not listed in the same way last year.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that this reflects our business plans within the new government format.

Ms. McGifford: So the Women's Directorate have devised a business plan that took as its guide a government format for business planning?

Mrs. Vodrey: Across government all departments are doing business plans now in a common format, and that common format there is also focused now on outcomes.

Ms. McGifford: I read that the objective of the directorate is as follows: the directorate furthers the achievement of equality for women and men by—and then there are some specific ways in which this work is done. I was kind of surprised, although I am not necessarily in disagreement, to see men mentioned here under the Women's Directorate, and I wonder why.

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said in my opening remarks that the directorate's effort is to make the world a more equitable place for women, but not

necessarily at the expense of men. So it is somewhat of an inclusive goal as well, focused on Manitobans.

Ms. McGifford: I would hope that the directorate does not want to make it a more equitable place at the expense of men at all. I am sure that is what the minister hopes. I still am surprised to find the objective of the Women's Directorate includes men, but so be it.

Mrs. Vodrey: We spoke about unpaid work earlier. We spoke about unpaid work in relation to child care and care of elderly parents. It would be wonderful if it was a more equitable situation where men may in fact take a little bit more of the opportunity to participate in that area as well. So though we want to be equitable in our opportunities, it is all kinds of opportunities. That is simply one example in which we would be very interested in having a system where it was more equitable for men to participate in those kinds of activities as well.

Ms. McGifford: Of course there are those who would argue that every other department looks after men so maybe this one could just be concerned with women. But leaving that aside, looking at the expenses for the Women's Directorate, under Other Expenditures, there are some quite considerable differences, and I wondered if the minister could explain to me the increases in Transportation, Communication and Other Operating, although I probably understand Other Operating at this point.

Mrs. Vodrey: The transportation increase is including the outreach program for Power Up, the communication includes the training materials for Power Up, and the other operating expenditures include initiatives which include the major conference, which will be occurring in July in Manitoba, the international conference for women.

In terms of looking at that expenditure as a whole, I just would like to highlight some of the initiatives. I guess the format is not exactly the same, but just to give the member an example of some of the initiatives. We have spoken about Power Up. There is a grant to the Prairieaction Foundation. There is money in our budget for the development of four initiatives including

Credit Circles, Women in Business initiative Phase 2, the Opening Doors, which I spoke about in my opening remarks, the apprenticeship initiative, Trade Up to Your Future, and the website for further development on the directorate's website. Again, there are dollars within the budget for On the Edge of Tomorrow, which is the major conference, the international women's conference. Then there are, as the member would know, negotiated salary increases.

* (1630)

Ms. McGifford: The July conference, On the Edge of Tomorrow.

Mrs. Vodrey: That is right.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could speak briefly about the conference.

Mrs. Vodrey: This conference is one in which the Province of Manitoba is participating as a partner. It is being steered by a community group, co-chaired by two women, Barbara Huck and Marg O'Toole. They have formed a very comprehensive committee which has been working for almost three years on this particular initiative. The other partners are the federal government, and the City of Winnipeg is also a partner for in-kind support. The committee has a fundraising arm as well which is looking for corporate support, support from the community in general.

The conference will be a day long conference. It has attracted women of international reputation. We are hoping to attract close to 2,000 women to attend this conference. Although I have seen it advertised on WTN, which is one of our corporate sponsors and a wonderful corporate sponsor, I am not sure that the applications for the conference are yet sent out. Okay, I understand they will be sent out Friday.

Ms. McGifford: The minister said that the conference had attracted women with international reputations. I wonder if she would tell me who some of these women are.

Mrs. Vodrey: There are really a lot of very famous names that I am trying to process and as

soon as the information is out I am happy to give it to the member, but Victoria Jason, who kayaked to the Arctic Circle; Margaret Catley-Carlson, the head of the world Population Council in New York; Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada; Jane Hawtin from WTN, who again as our major corporate sponsor I understand are doing their broadcast from this women's conference on that day. We are really happy also to have Ann Medina, who has again agreed to participate in the conference. There is really a wonderful line-up of women who are very accomplished and who have really been on the edge of tomorrow and opened doors for other women. Susan Auch is coming; Shannon Miller, the coach of the Canadian women's hockey team.

Ms. McGifford: Is there a tie-in with the Pan Am Games and sport?

Mrs. Vodrey: Not an official tie-in because the Pan Am Games are in fact separate but they have endorsed our event. They are advertising it. I gather that there are some very strict rules in sport around Pan Am Games, but this was a wonderful opportunity to highlight women and the role of women in our particular culture to basically an international audience. We are aware that there are people internationally who will be attending to the Pan Am Games, and we look forward to their participation in this event. However, we also want Manitoba women to have the opportunity to actually experience some of these women who are really groundbreakers.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the department of the Status of Women is doing anything to—I should not say anything, I am sure there is something that is happening in conjunction with the Pan Am Games. I wonder if the minister would comment, please.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the directorate is not doing anything specifically as a directorate in relation to the Pan Am Games, but as I said, the Pan Am Games have endorsed this event, this women's conference, and Carole Anne Letheren from the Canadian Olympic committee has also endorsed this event. I understand she hopes to attend as well.

So, as the member knows, the directorate is relatively small in number in terms of a

government department and really mighty in terms of its influence. It has really undertaken the major responsibility to basically provide the assistance in registration and more than that in actually doing a great deal of the work in terms of the planning of this whole conference. They have really been a backbone to the volunteer committee. So the directorate has been extremely busy, and as I said, this has been an event which is approximately three years in the planning. We look forward to an incredibly successful highlight for women at that time.

Ms. McGifford: I am assuming that the scholarships mentioned under the Grants line are the Training for Tomorrow scholarships, but I wonder what the project support, the \$54,000 is. What project is being supported there?

Mrs. Vodrey: On project support, \$4,000 is grants; \$50,000 is scholarships and then under Scholarships, it is a \$50,000 grant to the Prairieaction foundation.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister tell me then if the Training for Tomorrow money comes from here?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is under Project Support. Sorry, we think it is the reverse, \$50,000 for scholarships for Training for Tomorrow under Project Support; \$50,000 for the Prairie Action Foundation; \$4,000 in grants.

Ms. McGifford: And the \$4,000 in grants goes to?

Mrs. Vodrey: It goes to a variety of community-based initiatives which basically come forward during the year. LEAF is one, Farm Women's Conference, Women of Distinction, and events that involve women in our community throughout the year.

Ms. McGifford: So this \$4,000 in project support would be available to help subsidize the events that these various organizations might be holding?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct.

* (1640)

Mr. Chairperson: 22.1. Status of Women (a) Manitoba Women's Advisory Council (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$175,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$119,400—pass.

22.1.(b) Women's Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$501,300; (2) Other Expenditures \$276,200—pass (3) Grants \$104,000—pass.

Resolution 22.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,176,700 for Status of Women for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could request about a seven-minute recess so that we can—sorry, I will let you finish.

Mr. Chairperson: 22.2 Amortization of Capital Assets \$25,600—pass.

Resolution 22.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,600 for the Status of Women, Amortization of Capital Assets for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

This completes the Estimates of the Status of Women. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. 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]

The committee recessed at 4:41 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:51 p.m.

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of

Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. Does the honourable Minister of Culture have an opening statement?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have some opening remarks which I am very pleased to provide. This will probably be my last Estimates opportunity as I am retiring, so I want to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of my department and the initiatives that we have been working on in the past year.

It is my privilege to submit the 1999-2000 Estimates for Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to this committee for review. Our diverse areas of responsibility such as arts funding, participating in immigration management, overseeing film classification, support for the cultural community, assisting in the preservation and development of heritage resources and promoting recreation and wellness opportunities, add significantly to Manitoba's progress, prosperity and quality of life on many levels.

Our broad mandate involves the many branches of my department in developing and implementing strategies, policies and legislation on behalf of Manitobans. As an example, I point out the recent examination of the issue of video game classification. For some time, we have been concerned about the growing availability of violent, realistic and interactive video games. Of special concern is the impact they may have on those who play them, particularly young Manitobans. We believe parents need information about the content of these games, so they can make informed decisions about the entertainment to which their children are exposed.

There is an industry rating system for video games that is widely available throughout North America, and it appears to be very effective in outlining the content of games. Developed by the Entertainment Software Rating Board or ESRB, this rating system provides information about the content and age appropriateness of games on all platforms including personal computers, video game cartridge consoles and Internet game sites.

The Manitoba Film Classification Board has launched a public information campaign to raise parental awareness of the ESRB system and how it can help them determine what is suitable for their children. This campaign has the support of major video game retailers, and the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils now recently introduced an amendment to The Amusements Act as a proactive measure to anticipate problems that may arise in the future. This bill will allow for future government ratings of video games, if necessary, and it will allow for the classification of all new forms of video entertainment such as digital video disks or DVDs.

Culture, Heritage and Citizenship also plays a significant role in enhancing and sustaining the quality of life in Manitoba communities through the Community Places Program. This initiative supports facility renewal and development initiatives of community organizations. This coming year, my department is continuing this highly successful community improvement program. Through project planning and grant assistance, Community Places co-operates with community groups on about 200 facility projects intended to provide long-term recreational, cultural and social enhancements at the local level. With a total estimated value of \$10 million, these projects also create immediate local economic benefits with 700 construction jobs and local supply and service purchases.

I would now like to discuss the activities of the department's Programs Division. Through our Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs Division, we are proud to support the province's vibrant arts and cultural communities. The achievements of individual Manitobans and cultural organizations over the years has earned our province a global reputation for excellence in many disciplines. This diverse field also contributes significantly to Manitoba's strong economy at the local, regional and provincial levels.

In support of our cultural sector and in recognition of its economic importance, we are about to announce a number of new initiatives which will increase this sector's ability to thrive in the millennium marketplace.

Before I make these announcements, I would like to take the opportunity to share with my colleague and the Legislature some cultural highlights of the past year. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet presented a new full-length commissioned work called *Dracula*, which performed to sold-out houses in Manitoba and the rest of Canada. Martha Brooks's novel, *Bone Dance*, has been awarded the Canadian Library Association's Young Adult Canadian Book Award. Linda Holeman, also a Manitoba writer, received an honourable mention for her novel, *Promise Song*. In 1998, Ms. Kady MacDonald Denton, a children's book writer and illustrator from Brandon, won the prestigious Governor General's Literary Award under the Children's Literature-Illustration category for her work on *A Child's Treasury of Nursery Rhymes*. Bruce McManus's play, *Selkirk Avenue*, was nominated for a Governor General's Literary Award for Drama.

Professor Fred Ahenakew was named to the Order of Canada. Professor Ahenakew is a research scholar in the area of Cree literacy and language teaching and the co-editor and translator of three books published by the University of Manitoba Press.

This past season the Manitoba Theatre Centre celebrated its 40th anniversary. Founded in 1958, MTC was Canada's first regional theatre, and it continues to set the standard by which other regional theatres are measured. On April 13, 1999, at Toronto's Hummingbird Centre, the world premiere of the new opera, *The Golden Ass*, with music by Winnipeg composer, Randolph Peters, took place. This new work produced by the Canadian Opera Company featured story and lyrics by the late Robertson Davies. Later this year, *Le Cercle Molière*, Canada's oldest continually operating theatre company, will begin its 75th anniversary celebrations. This historic season will be widely promoted as a year of artistic renewal for the Francophone theatre and culture in Manitoba.

These notable events reflect the rich artistic and cultural life in Manitoba. My department works in partnership with many leading community institutions to ensure the continuation of this vibrant legacy into the 21st Century.

Manitoba's arts community continues to demonstrate its tremendous social, cultural and economic value to the citizens of our province. In recognition of its important role in our communities, my department will continue to sustain its operating funding for Manitoba's major arts and cultural institutions. The department continues to make Manitoba's major arts organizations increasingly accessible to Manitobans as well. This year, for example, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra received special assistance from the department to undertake a highly successful tour of northern Manitoba. This tour was the first of its kind in over 20 years, brought workshops and performances to Flin Flon, Thompson, Gillam, and Churchill. These concerts represent only a few of the hundreds of performances by provincial artists made possible by my department in rural Manitoba every year.

To sustain and develop Manitoba's renowned artistic excellence, my department is pleased to have joined other levels of government and the private sector to support community efforts to develop an arts stabilization strategy for Manitoba. Stabilization strategies adopted by other communities in North America have proven very successful. Discussions with the corporate sector are underway to ensure that the unique needs of arts organizations in Manitoba are addressed. I have written to my colleague the Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, expressing Manitoba's interest in working with her department as part of a national arts stabilization strategy.

In 1999-2000, my department will continue to assist the arts' and cultural industries' growing contribution to the economic well-being of our province. Through its support for the new Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation, my department assists the promotion, production, marketing and growth of film, television and sound recording industries in Manitoba. In 1998-99, Manitoba Film and Sound's \$1.7 million in direct film investment, coupled with a projected \$3.5 million in claims under the Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit, generated production activity of more than \$50 million.

* (1700)

Recent enhancements to the tax credit ensure that Manitobans will continue to have access to film training opportunities provided by the most qualified training staff and mentors. As a result of increased production in the province, the industry's infrastructure continues to grow accordingly.

William F. White, a large supplier of film industry equipment, has established a Manitoba office. The Prairie Production Centre, a major 67,000-square-foot, \$7.7-million sound studio production complex, is slated for completion this fall.

Industry growth has also prompted the National Screen Institute to officially open a development facility in Manitoba. Its programs will bring young talent from across Canada to Winnipeg for industry workshops and training.

My department is also working to ensure that the Francophone segment of Manitoba's film and video industry is well positioned for growth. This past year, La Société des communications du Manitoba, Inc. received financial assistance for its French Language Film and Video Industry Development project. It will provide industry training and development opportunities.

Manitoba's literary arts sector is another positive contributor to our cultural industries. Book publishing, for example, is firmly established as a \$3-million industry and growing. My department's Book Publishers' Support Programs will continue to assist this growth industry and help Manitoba book publishers expand marketing, improve operations and develop new product lines.

Manitoba's visual arts industry is equally well supported by the department. New marketing initiatives through funding partnerships with the department already show increased sales by Manitoba's private art galleries. In addition, the Winnipeg Art Gallery is exhibiting work by Robert Houle, a prominent Manitoba-born artist, in numerous installations at the gallery, the Pool of the Black Star, the Via Rail train station, and The Forks. I invite my

colleagues and the public to view the exhibit being held in the Pool of the Black Star.

The Winnipeg Art Gallery is also hosting the blockbuster exhibit *Art in the Age of Van Gogh* from now until July 11, 1999. The gallery anticipates 13,000 Manitobans will attend this major exhibition, again reflecting our deep appreciation for such artistic achievements.

In 1999-2000, I am pleased to announce a special grant to the Manitoba Arts Council of \$875,000. This extra support will allow the council to continue its ongoing work while recognizing the special needs of the arts community identified through community consultations.

Since 1988, Culture, Heritage and Citizenship has placed a high priority on maintaining and developing the capital infrastructure for Manitoba's cultural and heritage communities. I am pleased to report that in 1999-2000 we will have completed the comprehensive cladding repairs to the Manitoba Centennial Centre, the Manitoba Museum, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It will also be the final year of a \$2.4-million capital renewal program at the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium. Last year, my department committed \$2 million over five years toward the renewal of the Manitoba Theatre Centre's Main Stage and Warehouse theatres.

I will move on now to our Historic Resources branch. The identification and preservation of Manitoba's vast historic resources is an important focus within my department. Manitoba communities recognize the exciting potential of these assets as a resource of sustainable tourism development and economic growth.

My department has been an active partner with the Exchange District Business Improvement Zone, Canadian Heritage, and the City of Winnipeg in promoting the Exchange District. Since 1985, my department has provided over \$436,000 through the designated heritage building grant program to assist in the restoration of 14 buildings in the district. This year, my department will be providing a \$1-million capital grant to the Mennonite College

Federation to undertake extensive renovations on the historic Manitoba School for the Deaf. The facility will be redeveloped in the coming years to provide a cultural centre, housing, and education facilities for the students of Concord College, Menno Simons College and the Canadian Mennonite Bible College. All heritage aspects of this facility will be preserved.

My staff is also working closely with the City of Winnipeg and Parks Canada to develop a new heritage park at the mouth of the Seine River in north St. Boniface. This is the site of the Lagimodiere-Gaboury homestead, a pioneer francophone family recognized as being of national historic significance.

Manitoba's rural heritage resources are another area considered by my department to have tremendous potential. This fact is illustrated by the recent designation of the row of five grain elevators in Inglis, the best collection of historic grain elevators remaining in Canada as a provincial heritage site under The Heritage Resources Act. The Inglis Area Heritage Committee took the lead role in this ambitious \$2 million project. My department assisted with \$162,000 in funding and technical guidance.

As well, the special Theme Museums initiative announced in March of 1998 assists selected museums which showcase unique collections and show potential as significantly enhanced heritage attractions. Three museums are now part of this group, the Dugald Costume Museum, the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum and the New Iceland Heritage Museum.

The Dugald Costume Museum holds the largest collection of costumes, textiles, and accessories in Canada and, I am proud to note, is one of only six costume museums in North America.

Another outstanding and unique facility is Brandon's Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum. It is Canada's only museum dedicated solely to preserving the history and artifacts of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan of 1939 through '45 which supplied the British and Dominion air forces with trained pilots. I am very pleased to announce a special capital grant

of \$500,000 to the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum for extensive renovations to the wartime hangar which will house this museum.

The New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli fosters the heritage and culture of the Icelandic people and provides a repository for the many objects that tell the story of their settlement in Manitoba. I am pleased to report a \$1-million commitment to the Betel Heritage Foundation for the construction of the New Iceland Heritage Museum and Icelandic Cultural Centre at the Betel Waterfront Centre in Gimli.

My department continues to work cooperatively with major resource industries to ensure that the province's archeological heritage is discovered, protected, and shared with all Manitobans. One such successful undertaking is our joint effort with Manitoba Hydro along the route of the Churchill River Diversion in northern Manitoba. This spring, departmental archeologists will bring the fourth field season of the present five-year agreement to monitor the effects of flooding on archeological sites and to rescue threatened burial sites.

Next, I would like to discuss the activities of our Public Library Services. The province is committed to the concept of universal access to library services. To meet this objective, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship has initiated several projects to improve the accessibility and range of services offered in rural and northern public libraries and to explore the feasibility of a province-wide library network. The ongoing Manitoba Public Libraries Information Network, or MAPLIN, allows regional and municipal public libraries to connect with the Manitoba Union Catalogue and the Public Library Services circulation system. Forty-eight of the 52 regional libraries are now automated and use the MAPLIN network to access the Public Library Services' central data base. These developments have moved rural and northern public libraries into the global information age and allow Manitobans to have access to a wide range of library and network information.

* (1710)

Culture, Heritage and Citizenship is taking a lead role in another initiative to develop an

integrated library service delivery system using telecommunications and computer technology. Building on the success of MAPLIN, this system will link and co-ordinate all libraries in Manitoba so that resources are shared throughout the province in effect creating a province-wide Manitoba library.

The department has also been working with Industry Canada to encourage communities to provide public access often in public libraries to the Internet through the Community Access Project, or CAP. This project has been expanded to provide funding to support Internet connections in all public libraries in all Manitoba.

The department has been co-operating with the Gates Foundation toward the installation of additional public Internet computers within public libraries serving lower income areas. The goal is to promote free, universal access to this increasingly important information resource.

Another active area for the department this year has been recreation and wellness promotion. My department is committed to supporting Manitobans in developing more healthy and active lifestyles. The benefits to the individual and to our society are significant. Physical activity is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways of improving the health of Manitobans. Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for fitness, recreation and sport met recently in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, to discuss many items of joint concern. Our collective goal of reducing the number of inactive Canadians by 10 percent over a five-year period ending in 2003 was reinforced as being vitally important.

My department has embraced a strategy to promote healthy, active lifestyles for Manitobans. We have established new and expanded initiatives promoting the benefits of physical activity such as SummerActive '98. This was a month-long celebration of physical activity encouraging Manitobans and their communities to stage activities and events to promote recreation and physical activity. To sustain the SummerActive momentum from last year, we launched a WinterActive '99 to encourage individuals and families to get

involved in winter activity, incorporating a balance of indoor and outdoor fun.

This year, as part of SummerActive, we have distributed a SummerActive guide as an insert in the Winnipeg Free Press. We have also distributed 10,000 copies of Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy, Active Living throughout Manitoba.

As well, on Wednesday, May 26, my department, along with key partners in recreation and physical activity delivery system, hosted a Taste of Activity, a public event on the grounds of the Legislative Building. Over 2,000 people, many of them elementary school-aged children, participated in over 30 activities and exhibits designed to encourage healthy, active lifestyles.

A new initiative designed to encourage physical activity in senior citizens is now in the final planning stages. The summit on healthy, active living in older adults represents a focal point for the International Year of Older Persons in Manitoba and provides a point of reference from which policies, programs and services can be developed.

Communities in Manitoba have a rich history of volunteer participation. Volunteers are the foundation on which local recreation opportunities have been built. As a result of consultation with the recreation delivery system, I was proud to announce a new volunteer recognition certificate program. It consists of two certificates available for use by communities to recognize volunteer service and exemplary volunteers.

The dawning of the 21st Century creates a tremendous opportunity for Manitobans to celebrate our unique achievements to honour the pioneers, past and present, who have made this province such a rich and dynamic place to live. I am proud to note that Culture, Heritage and Citizenship has been designated as the lead department on Manitoba's official millennium commemoration activities. To assist Manitobans in marking this auspicious moment in our history and to stimulate the creation of millennium partnerships, a special four-part Manitoba Millennium Program has been established and will be administered by my department.

In keeping with our mandate to work with Manitobans to enhance the quality of life in our communities, the new program will provide \$10 million over the next two and a half years to stimulate millennium-oriented partnerships with community groups, local and federal governments and nonprofit and private sector organizations. The four components of the Manitoba Millennium Program are the municipal partnership program, the innovation Manitoba program, the celebrations component and signature projects. Each of the four components assists different levels of activities and projects while providing the greatest possible community participation. Overall, program funding will assist communities with special one-time-only projects to commemorate the turn of the millennium and capture the spirit of it for future generations of Manitobans. My department is very proud of this initiative because it gives every Manitoban an opportunity to contribute to and to be a part of a never-to-be-repeated experience.

As Manitoba crosses the threshold of the 21st Century, these projects will mark our generation's contributions to the proud legacy we are leaving for future generations.

I would like to talk now about the work of the department's Information Resources Division. Over the past year, the Information Resources Division, or IRD, has helped increase electronic access to government information through the expanded content on the government of Manitoba website, which now includes 20,000 pages. The site is currently providing information to approximately 850,000 Web browsers monthly and 6.5 million browsers annually. During the coming year, IRD will continue to add material to the site so that important program information can be made immediately available to the public.

The Statutory Publications branch has recently made the Statutes of Manitoba available on a paid subscription basis through the government of Manitoba website. Electronic subscriptions will be made available to all new and current subscribers who wish to use the new service. A free public Internet service is also being developed that will be updated once annually. This new free Web service will be available to the public this summer.

Our Provincial Services Division has also had an active year. Most notable is the official opening in April 1999 of two new storage vaults in the Manitoba Archives Building. These state-of-the-art facilities house and protect the internationally significant collection of the Hudson's Bay Company archives. It is estimated the project resulted in nearly \$5 million in gross benefits to Manitoba's economy.

The Legislative Library is one of the province's oldest libraries. Its collection reflects the interests and aspirations of Manitobans over more than a hundred years. Following a major retrofit and the installation of a high-quality climate control system, the library's rare book room now safely protects priceless treasures and ensures their future availability. This collection includes books belonging to early Red River settlers, high-quality art books showing the works of such artists as Walter J. Phillips and books by and about Manitobans. The library continues to enhance its services through technology. Last year, a co-operative venture with other libraries in the province made it possible to be part of a joint subscription to Ebscohost. This is a major international database offering access via the Internet to three million articles in many different subject areas. Later this year, the library will be able to extend access to this database to all Manitoba government staff with Internet access. Access will also be available in the Legislative Reading Room here in the building. This is an excellent and cost-effective way to expand the range and depth of information available to support the work of government and the Legislature.

The Chartier report on French language services significantly emphasized the importance of translation in supporting French language education. In collaboration with the Department of Education and Training, we are adding four new translator positions to the Translation Services branch. This will significantly improve government's provision of French language services to the Francophone community of Manitoba and respond to critical requirements regarding the translation of curricula.

* (1720)

In 1997, my department introduced The Freedom of Information and Protection of

Privacy Act, or FIPPA, to address the concerns of Manitobans about the privacy and protection of personal information held by government or other public bodies. This legislation provided a balance between the right of individuals to have their privacy respected and the right to access information held by government and other public bodies. While this act came into force for the government of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg in 1998, it also allows a phased-in implementation for local public bodies. This gradual introduction permits the preparation of information, the delivery of training and the development of internal procedures required under the legislation. This coming year, we will proceed with the proclamation of FIPPA for local public bodies not currently included in or covered by the legislation to further protect the privacy of Manitobans.

Next, I would like to discuss the work of Citizenship and Multiculturalism Division. Recognizing the importance of immigration to the future of Manitoba, my department has undertaken a variety of initiatives to increase our involvement in the promotion, recruitment and settlement of skilled immigrants destined to our province. Working in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the business sector and ethnocultural communities, we are raising Manitoba's profile abroad and providing valuable assistance to new immigrants settling in our communities.

The division recently reorganized to handle increased responsibilities for immigration recruitment and settlement affected in part by the signing of two addenda to the 1996 Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement: one on the realignment of settlement services and the other on provincial nominees. With these new agreements, Manitoba received federal funding and staff and reassigned division staff to enhance our service delivery. Manitoba values the importance of immigration to the economy of the province and strongly supports the reunification of families and the protection and settlement of refugees and displaced persons. As an example, Manitoba supports the resettlement of Kosovar refugees into the community, as it supports refugees from other world areas.

Recently, I wrote to the federal immigration minister to express Manitoba's willingness to

assist in Canada's humanitarian efforts. We are currently working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, settlement service providers and private sponsors to increase efficiencies and minimize resettlement difficulties for Kosovar refugees. Our province is committed to assist with the resettlement of 350 of the 5,000 Kosovar emergency evacuees and to accept family reunification and special needs cases destined to Manitoba which number about 80 people to date. These efforts are in addition to the 540 government-assisted refugees that will come to Manitoba throughout the year.

The Immigration Promotion and Recruitment branch has a proactive campaign to promote and recruit skilled immigrants to the province. I am pleased to announce that my department will be expending an additional \$170,000 to augment our efforts in the global recruitment of skilled workers to Manitoba. This builds on the department's ongoing international recruitment initiatives.

In partnership with the federal government, private sector and community groups, we have developed a more active and dynamic recruitment strategy supporting Manitoba's labour market needs and contributing to economic growth.

In June 1998, the provincial nominee agreement, an addendum to the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement, was signed providing an increased role for the province in recruiting skilled immigrants. Under the terms of the agreement, Manitoba can nominate 200 principal applicants and their accompanying families annually. Since the implementation of this program in September 1998, 314 individuals have been nominated for immigration to Manitoba. When we include family members of the nominees, we will welcome a thousand new residents.

With the Settlement Services Agreement, the Citizenship Settlement and Labour market services branch has an increased role in the settlement and integration of immigrants. This agreement gives us the flexibility to ensure services are responsive to provincial needs and allows us to tailor programs to help retain newcomers in the province. The agreement has

provided Manitoba with funding in the amount of \$3.75 million per year and the equivalent of six full-time employees.

On April 1, my department launched the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program, a new settlement and language-training funding and support program. This is a streamlined funding program facilitating the economic and social integration of immigrants. Settlement service providers no longer have to apply for funding to two levels of government and can be assured that support will meet Manitoba's settlement needs.

Under the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program, \$3.4 million will be allocated to adult English as a second language services, and \$1.1 million will be allocated to immigrant settlement services.

The province also assists qualified professionals, technically trained immigrants, or recently naturalized Canadians in gaining recognition for education and work experience obtained outside of Canada. In 1998-99, under the Credentials Recognition Program, 28 clients received wage assistance, and 37 received assessment assistance to gain Canadian work experience. Clients under this program represent a wide range of economic sectors such as engineering, computer programming and accounting.

We introduced the Academic Credentials Report, giving skilled immigrants information on international education credentials obtained from institutions abroad. The report helps immigrants obtain formal recognition of their accomplishment and assists in career planning and job search. It also assists employers and licensing bodies by educating them about foreign credentials.

The Adult Language Training branch coordinates English-as-a-second-language training for adults. Activities include language assessment, instruction and delivery, volunteer programs, and curriculum development. We fund Winnipeg School Division No. 1's day, evening, weekend and summer school adult English classes for up to 1,400 students. We also fund other school divisions delivering adult language and training classes.

Financial support is also provided to Red River Community College for advanced English for academic and occupational accreditation and to employment projects for women to assist with job search and placement. In addition, coordination and funding support is provided to community-based language training programs for nonconfident women with child care responsibilities and for seniors. This assistance supports 495 Manitobans.

Workplace language training was provided to 231 students in 35 worksites through regular program funding plus additional dollars received from employers. In the past year, we have also launched and distributed orientation, settlement and language training materials and a Welcome to Manitoba video.

The Multiculturalism Secretariat is responsible for ongoing consultations, communications and relations with ethnocultural community organizations, individuals, federal/provincial/territorial and municipal departments and agencies. The past year we participated in 120 community consultations and events and organized provincial activities and staff training opportunities for International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The secretariat provides practical assistance to citizens in their efforts to access government departments and services. It also plans citizenship courts in the Legislative Building to welcome new Manitobans.

As I have demonstrated throughout this narrative, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship plays a crucial role in the lives of Manitobans, from preserving our heritage and improving the quality of life to helping Manitobans pursue dynamic opportunities in many areas. My department is proud of its ability to work in partnership at many levels to produce positive results. I hope my illustrations have underscored the important contributions of my department.

My department will continue to build on the partnerships between government and Manitobans making our province a stronger and more progressive place to live, work and raise families today, not only today but in the 21st Century. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Osborne, have an opening statement?

* (1730)

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): No, Mr. Chair, I do not have an opening statement, but perhaps I could take this opportunity to suggest to the minister the way I would like to proceed, and with her grace, maybe we can do that.

Mr. Chairperson: You can go ahead.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to begin with a very few questions that grew from the minister's report, and then I have a few quite general questions. Then perhaps we could go line by line. I notice there are quite a number of the minister's staff here. I cannot imagine getting beyond the Manitoba Film Classification Board. I do not know whether that would affect who the minister might like to have with her.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic for those short comments. Under the Manitoba practice, the debate of the minister's salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of that item and now proceed with consideration of the next line.

Before we do that, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce her staff present. Would the minister also like to acknowledge the comments of the member for Osborne?

Mrs. Vodrey: I thank the member for helping us and giving us an idea of who may be required, particularly at this hour, and so I am appreciative of that. I understand the desire, then, to speak in a general way about the report that I gave, and then if there are questions that involve detail, they can be covered in the line by line, some general questions and then the desire to go on to the Film Classification Board.

So I am very happy to introduce the staff who have now joined me: Roxy Freedman, who is the deputy minister of Culture, Heritage and

Citizenship; Lou-Anne Buhr, who is the assistant deputy minister, Programs Division; and Dave Paton, who is the executive director, Administration and Finance.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister. We will now proceed to line 14.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$463,100.

Ms. McGifford: Pardon me, Mr. Chair, but I thought we had agreed to some more general questions and to return then to the line by line.

Mr. Chairperson: That is fine.

Ms. McGifford: One of the things that I neglected to mention a few minutes ago was that my colleague from Point Douglas is the critic who attends to Citizenship and Multiculturalism. So the idea that we had was that I would cover the areas that were applicable to me, and then he would come in and do Citizenship and Multiculturalism, if that is all right with the minister, and I see the minister nodding.

Then I wanted to ask a couple of general questions. Could the minister tell me if there is an annual report related to The Amusements Act?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, there is not an annual report. It is contained within our annual report of my department.

Ms. McGifford: There is an annual report of the Manitoba Film Classification Board?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, there is.

Ms. McGifford: Is that a separate report, or is it contained within the department's annual report?

Mrs. Vodrey: Though it appears as a separate report, it is contained within our annual report within my department.

Ms. McGifford: Then I wanted to ask the minister a couple of questions about the special warrant's request monies granted to Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. I notice that there was an amount of slightly in excess of \$2 million. I can return to the question if it is more

appropriately asked somewhere else, but I wonder if the minister might like to comment or tell me why it was not included in the regular budget.

Mrs. Vodrey: We are not quite clear on what the member means in terms of the special warrant, which simply, before the budget was tabled, allowed for certain monies then to be detailed, but those dollars are reflected within the budget.

Ms. McGifford: I was referring to the Orders-in-Council of March 3, 1999, signed by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Mrs. Vodrey: I think the member is referring then to some dollars which were required to deal with projects or initiatives which came up mid-year for which there was an important opportunity for Manitoba.

One of the major issues, though, which is contained in that \$2 million, was dollars for the Citizenship Division to deal with some of the devolution and the changes to the requirements in Citizenship. Some of the other dollars dealt with the development of an Internet unit. As I said in my opening remarks, there was significant increase of activity, and we had to look at a way of dealing with that increase of activity. Thirdly, there was budget identified for the NSI or the National Screen Institute.

Ms. McGifford: I see that \$350,000 is labelled Grants to Cultural Organizations.

Mrs. Vodrey: We believe that that is some dollars which were there to cover the deficit reduction programs which were put in place last year.

Ms. McGifford: Perhaps the minister could check and bring back that information tomorrow clearer?

Mrs. Vodrey: I have been joined by some additional staff: Ann Ryan, who is the manager of Agency Relations; and Terry Welsh, who is the director of the Arts Branch, who confirmed that that was for the deficit reduction plans for the major arts organizations last year.

Ms. McGifford: So perhaps we can discuss it later when we get to that budget line. When the minister was making her introductory remarks, she spoke about new initiatives, and I believe she said that she would be making announcements with regard to new initiatives.

Mrs. Vodrey: I did within the speech. I did announce \$875,000 for the Arts Council. I announced any new initiatives which are being undertaken within each division. So as I went through division by division, dollars which were then attached to any new initiatives were all outlined in the speech.

* (1740)

Ms. McGifford: I will have to read that speech very carefully. The minister also spoke about the arts stabilization strategy. I wonder if the minister could explain to me exactly what it is and how it works. She spoke about it but there were not any details.

Mrs. Vodrey: This has been a project that to my knowledge we have been working on for several years. It is a stabilization initiative to assist the arts community. The private sector is taking the lead. We have been a participant with the private sector, with groups such as the Bronfman stabilization fund, the federal government and others within the arts community to develop an ongoing source of funds which would provide stabilization for the arts community. We have been very interested, and I have written a letter to Sheila Capps, as well, on this issue.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I remember that part of your speech. It was very memorable; it was just late in the day. So would the purpose or one of the purposes of the arts stabilization fund be to assist organizations, for example, like the symphony, which now appears to be in financial straits, or would it be to prevent that sort of situation from developing?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, yes, it would actually be both. It would be an effort to assist in growth and strategic planning for organizations to avoid situations which may require a deficit reduction program. But also where a crisis arises in certain organizations, the stabilization fund would also be there and available to assist.

Ms. McGifford: Are all the major arts groups in Winnipeg part of this? Are all of them part of it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, all of them have been involved in the planning.

Ms. McGifford: I think I remember discussing this stabilization strategy with the Manitoba coalition of arts groups.

Mrs. Vodrey: Could it be the Manitoba Cultural Coalition the member is thinking of?

Ms. McGifford: And that coalition then has participated?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, they have.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I think I remember in my discussions that there were some drawbacks to this stabilization strategy, but I could be misremembering. Are there any problems that the minister is aware of?

Mrs. Vodrey: This has been a process for some time. I am not sure whether some of the issues the member may have been recalling may have been part of the growing process. We do have to make sure that everyone is onside. We would like it to be a made-in-Manitoba stabilization program, but we do need the support also of the private sector in the stabilization. So we have to work with all of those people who are at the table to develop the common vision of how the stabilization program would work.

Just a little more information on the stabilization, it would also examine things such as governance, financial management of organizations, the cultural vitality, the renewal of organizations which is obviously very important in forward-looking planning, and governance, board governance in particular.

Ms. McGifford: I just have some very quick questions before we turn to the line by line then. I am wondering if the minister has participated in national meetings of ministers of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship or the equivalents in other jurisdictions, and, if so, I wonder what the major issues discussed at those meetings are.

Mrs. Vodrey: The meetings have been really quite infrequently held in relation to other ministerial meetings where we have the opportunity to come together. The last meeting was held in, I believe it was, October 1997. I was unable to attend that meeting. I was away from work for a short time, but my department did attend on behalf of the people of Manitoba so we were represented at the table by the deputy minister and staff. I am informed the key issues at that meeting were heritage tourism, the information highway, and partnerships. Since that time, there have been probably two or three meetings scheduled, all of which have been cancelled, and so there has not, to my knowledge, another meeting of Culture ministers currently in the near forecast.

Ms. McGifford: Is it the minister's federal colleague who generally calls these meetings, and does that mean that the federal colleague has not called one at this time?

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand in Culture, it alternates between a federal minister calling the meeting and a provincial minister who may be hosting it calling a meeting. At the moment it is at the call of the federal minister who is attempting to set a meeting. No meeting has been set, and two meetings have been cancelled.

Ms. McGifford: In her introductory remarks, the minister made mention of The Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act which is being proclaimed on a phased-in basis, and I wonder when we might expect the first annual report.

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not have an exact date, but I am informed it should be within the near future.

* (1750)

Ms. McGifford: I will look forward to reading that and seeing how it is working, as I am sure the minister will.

I wonder if Culture, Heritage and Citizenship has a particular role to play with the Pan Am Games. Perhaps there are many roles and perhaps it would be best discussed in other places which I am willing to do, too.

Mrs. Vodrey: We may wish to discuss this in other places. At the moment it is support, secretariat support, secretarial support to the festivals division. That has been the area where our attention has been focused.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, if you would like, we can proceed.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$463,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$74,200—pass.

14.1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,312,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$317,500—pass.

14.1.(d) Manitoba Film Classification Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, perhaps I could start here by asking the minister about one of my constituents who runs a small business and has a small store on Osborne Street. He apparently sells the odd video but not as a matter of course. Anyway, he was apparently approached recently and asked to I believe it was purchase a licence. I believe if he purchased it before the 1st of April, it would be \$105, and if he purchased it after the 1st of April, I think it might be slightly more expensive. I spoke to somebody at the Film Classification Board who sent me the regulations, and so I read that anybody who is distributing videos—I am summarizing—is required to purchase a licence. But I am wondering if that is something that has always been enforced or whether there is a new effort to enforce this.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the requirement to purchase a licence has been in place since 1991, and periodically there are blitzes to make sure that there is compliance for the licences.

Ms. McGifford: Well, then, are we currently in a blitz period?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, we have been. That does not mean that that is not part of the regular routine of inspection, but periodically there is a

decision to prioritize a review for licences and there has been recently an effort to look at that.

Ms. McGifford: Could the minister enlighten me as to this possible differential in fee? Would it in fact have been less expensive if this individual purchased it before the 1st of April and then more expensive if he purchased it after?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that there is basically a discount or an incentive to pay before April 1, and so there is a \$20 differential. That would be the reason for the difference in fees.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me why there is an incentive to pay before the 1st of April.

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, it would be simply to encourage people to complete their payments and to avoid a long delay or the sort of dragging in what is actually an issue which require the purchase of a licence. So, for people who are able to complete that, then there has been the incentive should they complete it before April 1.

Ms. McGifford: So a licence that is purchased before April 1 or presumably indeed after April 1 is good for the fiscal year beginning April 1 and ending the 31st of March?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: So then the individual would be purchasing the licence a little ahead of time, and that might be one of the reasons for the incentive?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct, or they could pay the full fee, the larger fee, without the incentive if they desired to withhold their payment until after April 1.

Ms. McGifford: I would like the minister to define what a video retail outlet is, because my understanding is that anybody who has a video retail outlet is required to purchase one of these licences.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand it is defined in the regulations, but in short the definition is that it is somebody who sells to the public.

Ms. McGifford: What about rents to the public?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, that would be included in the regulation.

Mr. Chairperson: The time being six o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

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

We are on Resolution 21.2. Program Support Services (f) Human Resource Planning and Labour Relations, on page 84.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, I asked the minister yesterday whether it would be possible to accommodate our questions Wednesday and Thursday dealing with regional boards, hospitals, USSC and the like, by having officials attend, and I wanted to give notice so the minister could arrange—or those people, it would not cause their schedules too much difficulty. Can the minister advise whether or not those officials can be in attendance?

* (1450)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): The reason I was having a brief discussion with staff now is I did not get a chance to discuss this last night. I went straight into meetings and then went straight into meetings when I came in this morning. I was going to try and call the member for Kildonan and have a further discussion. I never did.

I do want to indicate I am a bit of a traditionalist. Really the normal practice has not been that you bring in arm's-length organizations that receive funding from government. I am trying to sort of envision it in other departments. It would be like Education bringing in all of the universities, or universities' heads, or bring in all the school divisions. Where do you begin and

end with that? I know last year there was also some direct responses from staff during Estimates which again was a bit of deviation from traditional Estimates. I am not intending to do that. I am going to answer every question and so on.

I am certainly prepared to have a discussion with the member for Kildonan on this issue, but my inclination is to do it in the more traditional way which is me responding, having appropriate staff here. I am certainly prepared to do whatever I can to provide him whatever information I possibly can on all of these issues. I know he is concerned about information in a few areas like Urban Shares Services and so on. I will certainly do my best to provide as much information as I can in all of these areas. I am prepared to have a further discussion with the member, but as of right now I would prefer to proceed on what I would call the more traditional approach which is myself responding to questions and having the appropriate departmental staff who are here who are ultimately the ones that are responsible for departmental policy and departmental expenditures, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: I am prepared to discuss that with the minister at some point. I will not use up valuable Estimates time on that particular point. I am very concerned about what is meant, on page 47, of the subappropriation. One of the activities is to determine appropriate workload measurement systems. I wonder if the minister can give me a specific answer to specifically what that is. That is the second last item under Activity Identification.

Mr. Stefanson: What I am told is basically page 47 pertains mostly to doctors, to medical, and 48 is more nurses and other people in our health care system. If you look at the top of page 47, under Objectives, you see reference to medical remuneration, medical professionals. The only reason I say that is that this really pertains more directly to some of the issues relative to doctors.

In fact, one example of this, and I am certainly prepared to return with more detailed examples, but I will give the member one example, what is meant by this, is the establishment of a relative value guide. I think

the member would have probably noted when we announced the funding adjustment for anesthetists, but it was done on the basis of a relative value guide, looking at the qualifications, the nature of the work, and a number of variables in terms of the whole issue of the fee adjustments in that area. So that is one example of determining appropriate workload measurement systems, the introduction of a relative value guide which we used in the case of anesthetists. I can certainly undertake to return with additional information on that, and, of course, when we get to Medical, we can have a broader review, a broader discussion, if the member wants, but that is really what was meant by it as it relates to doctors' services in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. I understand that, while the workload measurement system is a term to be applied to issues relating to doctors' remuneration, it does beg the question of something that is quite fundamental to what I am sure the minister has heard as often as I have heard, and that is the workloads on nurses and nurses' aides in the institution. I am wondering what response the minister has to the issue.

I do not think it can be denied in any quarters of the incredible strain and the incredible workload being placed on caregivers in the system, as manifested by many comments, thousands of comments, of individuals who are in the system, increased stress leave and the like. I could go on on this point for a long time, but I wonder if the minister can indicate for us today what response the government has to that.

Mr. Stefanson: A good question because the most immediate issue that has been brought to my attention in this area is the need to fill the vacancies. I am talking now specifically about nurses, but it can apply in some other areas, obviously, but particularly nurses. I am going to return with the breakdown of the 650 positions for the member, the combination of vacancies versus new initiatives, but obviously vacancies are a significant amount of those 650 positions. By having vacancies, what it is doing to nurses in the system is that either they are having to work overtime or, if they only want to work less than full time, they are working more hours than

they want to work. So that is the immediate strain on the system, so by bringing more nurses into the system, by all the things that we have talked about, that will go a long way to reducing that requirement to work overtime and work extended shifts, which will relieve some of the pressure.

That nurse task force that we talked about yesterday that is going to give us the overview of the numbers of nurses, numbers of vacancies in the system, its next phase will also be to look at the mix in the system in terms of the issue we discussed yesterday, the types of nurses, types of functions and so on.

But I think when the member asked me what can we do and what should we be doing, I would say the most immediate thing we should be doing is addressing the filling of the vacancies that are already existing in our system. That will be a very good first step to significantly relieve some of the pressure on our nurses in our health care system.

* (1500)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, it is very clear that there is some controversy surrounding the mobility agreement that is presently a subject of concern, and I do not want to, again, get into a long discussion about this because it could be argued all afternoon, and there are all kinds of different dynamics, but to my mind, the bottom line and difficulty with the mobility agreement is frankly the nurses do not trust management to keep their word with respect to the provisions of the mobility agreement.

Now, I am wondering what the role of the minister will be with respect to (a) giving assurances to nurses and (b) ensuring that management lives up to what they have said and stated with regard to the provisions of that mobility agreement because, frankly, in my mind, from my discussions, that is what it boils down to. It is a question of trust.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, the member is right, that I believe the one area of concern has been this issue of mobility. We now have the two facilities, Seven Oaks and Grace, that meetings are taking place on Thursday of this week to

work on the outstanding issue, which is really the outstanding mobility issue. I continue to be optimistic that a solution can be found for those two facilities.

I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) will have seen a letter that was sent by management, I believe on May 14. If he has not, I am certainly prepared to provide a copy. It tries to outline very clearly this issue of short-term mobility, that it will only be done in—I cannot recall exactly the words that were used but basically saying extenuating circumstances, urgent circumstances and so on. We agree with that, that those are the only situations where that should be the case.

So management has put that in writing. We certainly agree with that. We have indicated we agree with that, and, obviously, we will be working with management to be sure that that is exactly how that whole initiative is applied in the facilities. Obviously, if any concerns are brought to my attention by any nurses in the system, I will follow up on those, as well.

So we support that kind of application that has been put in writing by the management, and we will work with them to be sure that it is applied on that kind of a basis, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not want to debate the provisions of the contract. I will leave that to the negotiators on both sides, but since the minister did mention the term "extenuating circumstances" in terms of the definition, and this has come up to me, one could easily argue, politics aside, that the people have been in the hallway of St. Boniface Hospital literally for the past eight to 12 months.

One could have deemed that is extenuating circumstances, that entire period, and would justify the implication of that provision. I think that is part of the problem with the application of that kind of terminology and a justification by management, because what does constitute extenuating circumstances when you are in a situation where one could very easily say that, for example, St. Boniface, or Grace for that matter, or Seven Oaks right now or Concordia are in extenuating circumstances presently for whatever reason without getting into politics.

That is extenuating circumstances which could invoke the provisions of the agreement.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I, too, do not want to get into sort of negotiating the agreement. I am prepared to return with more information. I guess, in particular, we still have two facilities that the employers are hopefully going to reach agreement with fairly shortly. But, the pressures that the member refers to in individual facilities, even some of the pressures where there have been individuals in hallways in our hospitals, have been dealt with in those facilities. I should bring the letter back because I cannot recall all of the words, but certainly my interpretation, my understanding is that it has to be extenuating or urgent situations where for some reason a nurse would have to go on very short notice to help out at another facility.

There also is a system in place as to how the nurse going would be arrived at. The majority of nurses would have to volunteer. There is a process in terms of how it would happen. If the member is not aware, I do not want to leave the impression that just any nurse in any facility could be forced on short notice to go to another facility. That is not the case. That clearly is not the intention here of that particular provision. It is just that for whatever reason we end up with an emergency situation in some facility in Winnipeg where additional nursing staff would be absolutely critical and important to providing those services that a nurse could be moved to help out in that situation. I think the letter does outline it quite clearly. Certainly all of the feedback I have had from the facilities, that is the overriding intent. It is not to be moving nurses between facilities on short notice. That is not going to serve anybody's best interests.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate what is meant by, on page 48 under this subsection, implementation of new training programs for allied health professionals that would be more responsive to employer needs. Now I know the minister has made mention of standards in legislation, but what does it mean by implementation of new training programs? Who is going to be implementing those programs? What are those programs? What do they deal with?

Mr. Stefanson: An example in that area would be the introduction of training programs for technicians as early as the fall of 2000 through the community colleges, I think Red River basically. We are looking at an integrated technician program for lab, X-ray, ultrasound. In fact, I, along with some staff, met with one of the associations recently that has the support of the people working in the system, has the support of the employer. I think that would be the best example I could give of the introduction of the program that will be taking place, not this fall but the fall of 2000.

* (1510)

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister table a list of the various programs that the government is contemplating implementing?

Mr. Stefanson: Just for clarification, I take it the member is asking for any other examples of programs in this area that he is asking about that we could table. Yes, I will undertake to return that information.

Mr. Chomiak: Now, I do have questions relating to physicians in this area, but I think we had agreed that we would defer that until we got to the medical section. Having said that, I am prepared to let the line pass.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.2.(f) Human Resource Planning and Labour Relations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,039,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$342,900—pass; (3) External Agencies \$301,100—pass.

21.2.(g) Grants for Evaluation and Research (1) Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation \$1,850,000.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as I indicated earlier, I hope we can move right along the rest of the Estimates. I do not think I have too many questions in many areas, just specific questions on a whole series of items.

On this particular section, I noted last year that this area had a function: to co-ordinate a contractual fee-for-service or grant funding for policy evaluation and research initiatives. That

has now been eliminated. Can the minister explain that?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I apologize. We do not have a copy of last year's Supplementary Information here which we normally do. I will look into that issue and return, but I am told there have been no changes, no functional changes, no operational changes in these areas, so as to why there was a change in—whether it was under one of these identifications, activity, or whichever, the member referred to activity. I will get back, but there have been no functional changes in this area.

Mr. Chomiak: Just for my own understanding, the government makes a grant of \$1.7 million and change to the Manitoba Health Research Council, and the Manitoba Health Research Council then carries out its studies. Can the minister provide us with a list of all these studies, or should I obtain that from the annual report? Well, actually, if the minister could provide it, that would be more helpful because the annual report will be dated.

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I know the member knows that the most recent annual report that is available is '97-98. I am sure he has had a chance to look at the functional areas. Obviously we do not have the '98-99 annual report yet, but I will undertake to provide him what information I can on a preliminary basis based on '98-99.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister provide us with a list of the ongoing contracts for studies between the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation and the province?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, an example of some of the deliverables for 1998, you do not have it?

Mr. Chomiak: I know the '98s.

* (1520)

Mr. Stefanson: You know the '98s. Really, I am impressed. There were six of them. Six deliverables in 1998, and we are looking of course at a further six in 1999.

In terms of the 1999, then approved deliverables to date, they are an update of the surgical wait time report on participation in the Western Canada Waiting List Project. Another will be Understanding Patterns of Influenza: Toward a Better Strategy for Prevention of Winter Pressures in the Hospital System, which I know the member will be very interested in seeing; No. 3, Assessing the Health of Children in Manitoba; No. 4, Alternatives to Acute Care, an Update; No. 5, Population Based Patterns of Use of Home Care Services; and No. 6, which I gather there are still some issues around data availability, is the issue of use of medical care by aboriginal populations.

At this point in time those are the six tentative deliverables.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I note for the past three years the grant to the Research Council has been fixed at \$1,752.6, is there any reason for that?

Mr. Stefanson: This mostly represents core funding for the programs which the member is very familiar with, from their scholarship renewal to the fellowships and various student awards and so on. But I do not want the fact that this amount is at the same level to leave the impression that health care research has not been continuing to expand in Manitoba because it has.

As the member knows, we are matching the Manitoba innovation fund, which is matching the Canadian Foundation of Innovation. We also have expanded the core support through Industry, Trade and Tourism by an additional million dollars for our health research facilities this year. We have also done projects through programs like the Canada-Manitoba Partnership Agreement, where we provided support for projects at facilities like St. Boniface Research. I certainly would be prepared to provide a summary or a compendium of the numbers of things we are doing related to health research for the member, but this amount has remained at the same level for the last few years, I believe.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister anticipated my next question. I would appreciate an analysis of this, because I can tell the minister in about three or four or five months, the

minister, presumably I, and the Leader of the Liberal Party, a research doctor, are going to be engaged in political debates, and I can assure the minister that one of the first questions or one of the first comments from the Liberal Leader will be Manitoba's lack of support to research, and I want to afford the minister the opportunity to practise his response here in Estimates with respect to what Manitoba has done in research. So can the minister provide us with a complete listing of that area?

Mr. Stefanson: Absolutely. I appreciate the opportunity to do just that because we have significantly enhanced our funding for health research in Manitoba on a number of fronts. So we will prepare a summary document for the member, and perhaps we can have a further discussion at that time.

I, too, look forward to the debate that the three of us will have sometime in the next few months, and probably rolled into that debate will be what the federal government was doing during the 1990s when the current Leader of the Liberal Party sat around a caucus table and a cabinet table and significantly reduced funding for health care in Manitoba and right across Canada. But we will save any other comments on that for that debate or another day, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the government basically satisfied with the data and the evaluation, the kind of materials and the support it is receiving from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation?

Mr. Stefanson: I have had an opportunity to meet with representatives on two occasions and obviously to read some of the reports. I am very impressed, and I think it is incumbent on us to obviously have good research at our disposal, good information at our disposal. I think that allows us as elected people to make better or the best possible decisions. I think the key challenge for us is when we have an opportunity to access this kind of research talent, that we choose the right projects to be reviewed.

Again, of what I have seen of the outcomes, in spite of the odd comment made by some people, it really is done on the basis of pure

research and providing all sides to an issue. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and I can disagree on lots of things, I am sure, but it sure enhances our ability to discuss issues if we have good information at our disposal.

I think this organization is extremely competent, of what I have met of the individuals, of what I know of the organization, and I think they do excellent research on behalf of the people of Manitoba. I think it allows us to have healthier discussions about priorities, but it also allows us to make better decisions.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.2.(g) Grants for Evaluation and Research (1) Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation \$1,850,000—pass; (2) Manitoba Health Research Council \$1,752,600—pass.

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,739,800 for Health, Program Support Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

We now move on to Resolution 21.3. External Programs and Operations (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$313,000.

* (1530)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister has previously made reference to an update of the goals and objectives of the provincial health care system. In light of the activities of this part of the department, is this basically where it is coming from or is there some other area that it is coming from?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I gather the member is really working out the first objective on page 56, I believe. Really, what that is referring to is the planning for the programs within this section, but I understood his question to be the more overall planning of the Department of Health, which would really include similar aspects from all of the departments working its way through our deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers and so on.

Mr. Chomiak: There are four people in this particular branch, and they are supposed to oversee the development and implementation of best practices throughout the provincial health services. I do not know how four people can do that. Having said that, what is meant by the development of best practices throughout the provincial health service delivery system? That is item 4 of the objectives.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, actually, the objective, I am sure the member knows, applies to this entire department. Really, these four people are the associate deputy minister and staff, but we are obviously talking about whatever the total complement is in this area, which I am sure I can provide him with 696 EFTs in this section alone.

Mr. Chomiak: I have kind of addressed my questions on a line by line, but I recognize that, in fact, there may be a crossover. Well, I will just keep asking questions, and we will pass the lines. The minister is not anticipating changing staff for this section, is he?

Mr. Stefanson: I think that is appropriate. We have a few other staff available, but the member is right. We can either return with answers or maybe have somebody come down, if there is a detailed question, but I think we can carry on.

Mr. Chomiak: We received—I do not know if it was last Estimates year or the year before in Estimates—a listing of the core services as offered by the department, both at a central level and a regional level. I wonder if we can have a listing and an update of those particular programs.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told the core services document really is unchanged, so, if the member still has his copy, he could use that as a resource. If he needs another copy, we can certainly undertake to provide that.

Mr. Chomiak: I am essentially moving to 21.3.(b), so we can pass 21.3.(a) or come back, because I will be asking general questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.3. External Programs and Operations (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$313,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$267,300—pass.

21.3.(b) Regional Support Services (1)
Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,927,900.

Mr. Chomiak: To lead off in this section, I am very interested under Activity Identification, the last item: "Develop a plan for all imaging services in Manitoba that includes funding (capital and operating), operations, benchmarking, best practices and training programs."

Now, the minister has talked earlier in the Estimates process about a putting together of a committee or a group of individuals to deal with this area, but perhaps the minister can start off by commenting on this particular activity, because this is a fairly significant and fundamental operation.

* (1540)

Mr. Stefanson: Really, the last two bullets under the activity are directly related. I know we discussed, I think, somewhat in Estimates, I am trying to recall, we discussed the whole issue of the new integrated lab services, the idea of one program on more than one site, having got the RHA, WHA working on a proposal for government on that service for the public laboratory. So that includes imaging services outside of Winnipeg and other lab services related too.

We are in the process of waiting for that proposal from that working group, even though we were involved with them in the sense of providing information on the issue. That, then, will form a significant part of the overall plan for imaging services in Manitoba. Some other aspects are the aspects that we have already touched on, the issue of the training program. We have had the ongoing discussions with technicians. That is one of the reasons we are looking at the integrated program for the fall of 2000 as being an important part of these services. So a significant part of it really is the proposal that we are going to get from the RHA, WHA on the integrated lab services across Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Now the integrated model is an old idea that was proposed and has come back again. So can I get a sense from the minister where we are going in terms of labs and

imaging, both in the city of Winnipeg, outside of Winnipeg, Brandon and northern and rural Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I may be confused. I thought we discussed this a little bit in Estimates, but maybe I am wrong there. I am probably about to be repetitive. I think, as I have indicated, we have a working group of the RHAs and the WHAs that are giving us a proposal on the lab and imaging for Manitoba for the public labs, Winnipeg public labs and outside of Winnipeg. The objective is basically one program but more than one site, more than just a Winnipeg site, probably a Brandon site and perhaps another site.

So they are in the process of preparing a proposal to submit back to government. We have shared with them information because as the member for Kildonan knows, this issue has been around for a while, the issue of lab services. That information is being provided with them, and I am waiting for them to return with that proposal. I am not sure what else I can say about that area. I am certainly open to any questions.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can we get copies of an inventory of the lab and imaging services available throughout the province?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, we can provide that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, again we come across the words "best practices," and I am trying to determine where in the department the concept and the determination is made of best practices with respect to protocols and the like for the provision of lab and imaging services. If it is not here, can the minister outline for me, or if it is here, regardless, what the protocols are for best practices for the various major testing areas in labs and imaging services?

* (1550)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am told there are protocols for most tests. I am certainly prepared to return with more information on those protocols. An important part of this proposal from the RHA, WHA, will also be protocols that will be recommended to be in

place for various tests. So it is an opportunity to review those protocols in terms of the functions of the public labs and of the labs and imaging outside of Winnipeg. So I can certainly return with an outline of some of the protocols as it relates to the current lab and imaging procedures.

Mr. Chomiak: This is relatively significant, and I do look forward to receiving that. I will be doing follow-up on that because this issue is all tied up in a very complicated process that is sometimes difficult to answer.

But I think I would like to know where the initiative is coming from. I see Best Practices; I see initiatives from SmartHealth to reduce various lab tests in an amount of \$20 million to \$30 million. I know that primary care providers are frustrated because, if they have to go beyond the particular protocol, they have to fill out a form in quadruplicate in order to justify particular tests. I know that the MBS proposal is tied up in this. I know in terms of reducing costs, and there are additional costs. I mean this area is extremely rife with difficulties, and I really do want to have a bit of a discussion on this. So I am alerting the minister that when he comes back with that information, I will be following up on that fairly extensively.

Did the minister indicate he would provide for us a listing of all of the lab and imaging sites in the province?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, I did, and I too look forward to that discussion because the member is right: they are all interrelated, the advancements that we are going to make in terms of information technology, but also the whole issue of appropriate protocols being in place for lab and imaging services. So I look forward to that discussion as well.

Mr. Chomiak: I think this is the appropriate point for this question; if not, we can return to it at the appropriate point. There are at least three areas where it is clear, or it has been at least indicated, that there are problems with integrating the particular activity within the regional activity. That conclusion could vary across the province, but I will name the three areas: mental health, aboriginal health, people with disabilities.

It seems to me that what is required is a mechanism at a regional level or an administrative mechanism, some kind of structure, to integrate all three of those areas into the provision of regional services. I am wondering if the minister can comment on that.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I would welcome the member giving me some examples in this area because, again, I am told that when it comes to the area of mental health and disabilities, that the structure is to integrate these into the regional services. They are being provided at the regional level. The one area that continues to have some issues and some challenges is the issue of aboriginal health, and the issues there are similar to what they have been I guess in the past. We have discussed it here, in part, when we had the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the whole issue of federal jurisdiction versus provincial jurisdiction. So even when we get down to the regional level, we still get into various issues in that area that have to be addressed.

I think the member for Kildonan knows and probably shares my frustration in terms of dealing with the federal government on really trying to sort that out in a meaningful way and on some kind of a long-term basis to go forward in terms of the federal government clearly accepting their responsibilities and defining them and allowing us to integrate that with everything that needs to be done for the aboriginal community. So that area definitely has room for significant improvement, but I am told the other two areas are integrated into the regional services, so if the member can provide me some specific examples or some issues to address there, I am obviously willing to do that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, in my most recent meetings with the Canadian Mental Health Association and at the town hall meeting and the convention that I attended on Saturday with the Manitoba League for the Disabled, in both instances both groups expressed as a primary priority concern the lack of recognition of their particular problems in the regional health care system and both expressed a need for a mechanism in order to ensure that their voices are heard.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I certainly agree with the objective of opportunities for their voices to be heard, and there are various avenues to do just that starting with the regional health authorities, the boards themselves. Individuals can be nominated or even self-nominated to the boards. We have our district advisory committees in all of our regions, again, which individuals serve on. There are opportunities to meet with boards through the various meetings that they have. I believe the CEOs, board chairs of the RHAs meet monthly. I am sure there would be opportunities to meet with them.

* (1600)

There are opportunities to meet with Manitoba Health staff, opportunities to meet with myself, which I have done to date with some of these organizations. So there are a number of vehicles to ensure that the voices are heard of individuals involved either in mental health or on behalf of the disabled. So, again, if the member has something more specific—I know the only other thing that has been mentioned is whether or not there is a separate committee on behalf of mental health or on behalf of the disabled that would report through to the boards or whatever. I think that is the only other thing that has been suggested.

I guess the caution or concern with that is then where do you begin and end with what organizations you should do that with, when the process itself is meant to be very inclusive and to create opportunities for individuals to have input through all of these means that I have outlined. I am always open to suggestions to enhance input and hearing from individuals and groups, and I would welcome any specific or further recommendations the member has.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister indicate whether there has been any update on the community health assessments that were provided last year, and if so, can he provide it to this committee?

Mr. Stefanson: I think the member has already asked me for copies of the community needs assessments for all of the regions, and we agreed that we are preparing that and we will provide that to him.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, clearly the department must do at a central level an analysis of the budgetary needs and requirements of each of the regions. Can the minister provide us with that information?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if this is a test or not to see if I am consistent because I think we discussed this last time as well. I believe we indicated that for '98-99, we are in the process of basically finalizing all of those—

An Honourable Member: I think it is a test.

Mr. Stefanson: You think it is a test? All of those allocations, the final year-end adjustments in any particular situation. I did indicate that once we are concluded with that, I would undertake to provide the member with that information. I think he also then asked me on a go-forward basis what information I could provide on the budgets for '99-2000, and I think I indicated I would be looking into what information I could provide. I hope that is consistent with what I said last time.

Mr. Chomiak: I do recall that. What I was actually trying to do was to get a sense of a central analysis, for example, a sense of what area of the province certain needs are required, what other area of the province certain other needs are required, and how the budgets are adjusted accordingly. That may or may not be available.

Mr. Stefanson: I am not sure if I am even answering the question here, but all of the budgets from the RHAs come into the Department of Health. They are dealt with by one central unit. That unit then meets with the individual RHAs to go over their requests, their priorities. So it is done on a combination of working directly with the RHAs in terms of what they have requested, what their priorities are, but then that unit also looks across all of the RHAs before they bring forward recommendations through our system, through our budget process and so on and so on. I think that answers the question.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Can the minister indicate what the

policy is in terms of funding for the program? Does it follow the individual? How is it worked between the various regions?

Mr. Stefanson: I think again, as the member knows, the funding currently is provided to the regions, to the facilities to provide the services. They are not funded on a per-capita basis, they are funded on the needs within the regions and the needs within the individual facilities. I think I have indicated to the member I have met with the RHAs, the CEOs and the chairs, and we have discussed a number of issues.

One issue we discussed there is the whole issue of—I will describe it as a funding model. We had discussions earlier today about funding models, and we talked about various funding model options going forward that relate more to needs and services, as opposed to historical funding and so on. That group has put together a working group internally to work with Health and, again, return to me with some thoughts and ideas and recommendations in that area.

So I see a system where we start to get away from funding on historical patterns and so on, and we fund much more related to needs and services. We are starting to make some progress in that area, but there is still more to do, Mr. Chairman.

* (1610)

Mr. Chomiak: So I take it that there is a working group that has been prepared, that is looking at this. Is the group planning to tender for consultative services for any funding model?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the member is thinking of putting in an RFP for this or not. We are at the stage right now where the RHAs have just designated whom they want on the working group, and we are about to designate our people. That working group will then start their process, and with all seriousness they will decide early on whether or not they feel they have access to the information and skills that they require internally or whether or not they need some resources to draw on some external help.

So I am sure that will be one of the early decisions that that committee makes once they start the process.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if perhaps it might be appropriate to take a break at this juncture. We can pass this item. We are going to move into the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist next. I was anticipating to ask not a lot but some mental health related questions at this juncture because of the nature of the department's setup, and I am assuming I should ask them at this juncture before I move on.

So perhaps we can pass the item and then take maybe a 10-minute break.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.3. External Programs and Operations (b) Regional Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,927,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$645,700—pass. 21.3.(c) Chief Provincial Psychiatrist (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$165,900.

Is it the will of the committee to just take a few minutes? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:13 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:32 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will come to order.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister give us a sense of who and where the process of mental health co-ordination and reform, where it is located and who is overseeing that particular function?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, if the member were to look on page 73 of the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the second bullet under Objectives in this particular section, it deals with "to promote the co-ordinated delivery of a comprehensive continuum of health services encompassing home care, long term care and mental health."

I think that was the question, where that service is provided relative to the co-ordinated delivery of mental health.

Mr. Chomiak: Under whose auspices is it in the Department of Health?

Mr. Stefanson: The executive director of these health programs is Marcia Thomson, who reports to Sue Hicks, the associate deputy minister.

Mr. Chomiak: Probably my questions in this area will bounce around between questions relating to the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist and questions relating to mental health programs in general. But I assume that that is appropriate with the staff members. The minister is nodding in the affirmative.

I wonder if we can get an accounting or an update of the community-based mental health programs that are available both in urban and rural and northern settings in Manitoba and a listing of beds that are designated for psychiatric or mental health patients in those jurisdictions as well. I appreciate that that cannot be accomplished today, but if we can get those up-to-date listings, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we can provide that information requested.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister is in receipt of a memo dated May 20, as I am, directed to Carolyn Strutt, director of Mental Health from the PACT steering committee relating to a Program for Assertive Community Treatment. I am wondering if the minister can indicate what the status is of the implementation of that program and that pilot.

Mr. Stefanson: The individual referred to I believe is the director of program services for the WCA, so I can certainly undertake to get this information for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Just for terms of clarification, PACT, or the Wisconsin model has been reviewed and studied by the department. It has been advocated by virtually everybody in the system. I understand that there is an effort and an attempt to discuss with the minister an implementation of that kind of a program. I guess I am wondering of the minister (a) if he can give me his preliminary comments of the departmental view of the implementation of a project like this, and, (b) if he could indicate what the status is from a departmental view of a program like this. Maybe I asked the same thing

in (a) and (b), so I want actually an update from the minister as to what the departmental view of the program is.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think I would rather confirm and review the issue with the WCA and with the department and get back to the member.

* (1640)

Mr. Chomiak: Just by way of advice, Mr. Chairperson, the minister will be in receipt of another letter from myself this week dealing with an individual whose family is concerned about their well-being because of the concern about a follow-up of treatment. I have asked the minister to provide us with statistics and information as to what processes are in place with respect to programs to deal with follow-up treatments, specifically in relation to the legislation that was passed last year.

The minister will regularly get letters from myself and I am sure other MLAs respecting individuals who are in the community whose families are concerned about their well-being in the community. Having said that, I think that it ought to be of the highest priority, the highest priority, to put in place measures and a program like this or similar to this. It has been done in some jurisdictions, and given the frequency with which we encounter these problems, and given the need in the community, I cannot over-emphasize strongly enough the need for this type of or some related programming.

Mr. Stefanson: The member referred to another letter to me this week regarding follow-up treatment. Again, I will certainly follow up on that. I think he realizes when he does correspond with me on these issues, I do take them seriously. I get them into the department very quickly to do the appropriate follow-up and try to get back to him within a reasonable period of time. So, again, any letters in this area that he is sending me with specifics related to an individual, we do take those seriously and will follow up.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am not suggesting otherwise. In fact, that is one of the reasons that I employ that method of

communicating. I was just using the letter that I gave to the minister this week as an illustration of another example of what seems to me to be lack of follow-up programming in the area and my strong recommendation to the department or to the minister to put in place a system and a program to deal with these issues, so we do not have to go through—I mean, we will always have difficulties, but we need a system and we need a program and we need a series of supports in place in order to deal with the next phase of mental health reform, period.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: I know the member is well aware of the significant number of support programs that are already in place and are community-based, and I am certainly prepared to return with a summary and more information on those support programs. But in terms of the specific issue he has raised here relative to the correspondence, I will be following up and reporting back to him, Madam Chair.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, can the minister indicate the number and regional breakdown of psychiatrists in Manitoba; secondly, the number of physicians that participate or are acting in their capacity as psychiatrists as a result of programs that were introduced by the department about three years ago; and, thirdly, where the minister sees the additional need for psychiatrists and psychiatric resources that are offered by psychiatrists with relation to the program the former, former minister, Mr. McCrae, put in place, a program to—I do not know if accreditation is the right word—permit family and other physicians to offer psychiatric services to individuals where psychiatric services perhaps were not available?

Mr. Stefanson: I can certainly return with a listing of psychiatrists. I think the question was by region or by RHA and by program. We can definitely do that. The issue of where there were some cases of family physicians providing some of the psychiatric services, we will certainly determine how readily available it is to provide a listing of that.

I just want to be clear that I understand the third question, which was: where is the need for

additional resources? If the question is, where is the need for additional psychiatric resources, again I can return with a listing of that. I think there are a few areas that we need psychiatrists. I can provide that information as to where that is required. I think those were the questions.

* (1650)

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, the third question may be answered by the first two. It was just the question of trying to gauge some sort of need. That was the purpose of the question.

Psychogeriatric services available, I do not know if I should ask questions at this point, but there has been a lot of difficulty determining both location and services available for psychogeriatric services. I wonder if the minister can provide us with information with respect to those kinds of services and an inventory of where available and where plans are to provide psychogeriatric services in Manitoba.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, I can return with the information. The question was location and services, an inventory of where they are now on the basis of our personal care homes having dedicated psychogeriatric beds and other services being provided through our hospitals, other health care facilities. So I will be able to return with an inventory of where the services are provided and the nature of those services. We also have a geriatric team as one of the project program teams at the WHA, and I will certainly contact them, because the latter part of the question was some of the future initiatives, and return with information in that area as well.

Mr. Chomiak: One of the areas that I often return to through the Estimates process in the area of mental health is two areas. Firstly, if we talk about prevention, probably, next to the nonuse of tobacco, the single biggest area of prevention in my view, would be in early intervention and early education concerning mental health. I would like to know if the minister can indicate what initiatives the department may have or will undertake in this area. The second area is something that has been referred to before as well, and that is in respect of youth suicide, whether or not the province has any undertaking in this regard.

* (1700)

Mr. Stefanson: In the whole area of prevention and early intervention and education, really a good portion of that comes down to our mental health workers in our schools, in our communities. They are certainly providing those kinds of services. I will return in more detail some of the elements of the services they provide.

Related to the question the member asked, as well, Manitoba Health has entered into a partnership with Family Services and Education and Training and Justice to develop the youth emergency and Crisis Stabilization system, which, again, I think the member is familiar with. It meets the needs of most youth who are in crisis. It obviously responds to crisis or emergency situations in the community. There are four beds at psych health that are being funded on a permanent basis to support this service where inpatient hospitalization would be the most appropriate resource. Manitoba Health has contributed close to \$300,000 towards the development of a brief-treatment team as a component of this service. As well, Manitoba Health is funding four child and adolescent psychiatric beds. Those are some examples of that particular program.

The whole issue of youth suicide, just to I guess put some statistics on the record first of all, in the case of Canada, only three provinces have shown a decline in overall suicide rates during the 1980s and early '90s. Manitoba was one of them. The Youth Suicide Information Centre health programs monitors youth suicide rates in Manitoba, but, more importantly, the Youth Suicide Information Centre provides information and training to professionals and the public to try to reduce the impact of youth suicide throughout the province. In 1998, the Youth Suicide Information Centre held programs, cohosted the ninth national CASP Conference on Suicide in Winnipeg. Over 180 people attended from across Canada and the U.S. One of the main themes of that conference was the issue of aboriginal suicide. Many aboriginal people from across Manitoba attended the conference. Community mental health workers, as part of their job, assist individuals in communities with suicide issues and concerns.

There are 25 adult and adolescent community mental workers in the North alone.

That is a combination of some information on the issue but, more importantly, some of the initiatives that are in place to deal with those issues.

Mr. Chomiak: Would the minister be prepared to table a complete inventory of those programs?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, definitely.

Mr. Chomiak: I have a series of more questions in this area. For the hundreds of thousands of readers of Hansard, though, I am just apologizing in advance, because I want to move on to a whole number of areas. I am going to ask some questions. I guess we can pass this. Can we pass this?

The Acting Chairperson (Mrs. Driedger): 21.3. External Programs and Operations (c) Chief Provincial Psychiatrist (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$165,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$43,000—pass.

21.3.(d) Selkirk Mental Health Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not have to ask whether Selkirk is going to become a special operating agency, because the minister has given his assurances that that is not, in fact, the case as I understand it.

My next question is that I note that there are 25 forensic patients in—perhaps the minister can clarify. There are 25 forensic patients at Selkirk. If that is correct, what is capacity? Do the present facility and arrangements meet the needs of the province?

* (1710)

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, as the member was pointed to under Expected Results, there are 245 inpatients and 25 forensic patients, for the total of 270. At the facility, there are 18 high-risk, high-security beds for long-term patients, which was developed by renovating one of the existing patient care units at Selkirk Mental Health Centre. So those other seven patients would still be in the facility, but in other beds.

Just to clarify the first comment or question, yes, Selkirk Mental Health Centre will not be established as a special operating agency.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just for clarification, do we now have capacity for the need for forensic patients in Manitoba in line with the recommendations that have been made by numerous inquests and related bodies for the provision of proper accommodation for individuals who have been found needing this type of facility?

Mr. Stefanson: The answer to his question is, yes, as we have outlined, we have the 18 high-risk, high-security beds. By being at 25, we are able to accommodate the other seven elsewhere in the centre. So we do have the capacity to meet the needs, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: A comparison of last year's Estimates book and this year's Estimates book bears an analysis. I wonder if the minister can explain why, in last year's Estimates book, it indicated that 400 outpatients were treated at Selkirk Mental Health Centre, and this year's Estimates book indicates 50 patients are treated annually. I assume it may or may not be related to Brandon, and it may be just a definitional difference, but I wonder if the minister can provide an explanation of that. In last year's Estimates book, it says, and I quote: "Treatment of approximately 300 inpatients and 400 outpatients at Selkirk Mental Health Centre."

Mr. Stefanson: We probably should not spend any more time on it now. We will check on it, and I am sure it is one of a combination of things. It might even be a typo error, or it could be, as the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) referred to, the combination of Selkirk and Brandon because, really, all of those services have, by and large, been shifted to the community. So we will check on that issue and report back.

* (1720)

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder, and I do not expect the minister to have this response today, if the minister can provide us with an update as to the

status of all of the former patients in Brandon, location and plans for the allocation of resources in that regard. In other words, what has become of them, where are they going, what are the plans for the future?

Mr. Stefanson: We will certainly return with information on that issue, as the member knows, not that he is requesting individual patients, but a sense of where those patients have gone, whether it is into a personal care home, into community living. So we will return with some further information on that.

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if also the minister could provide us, again, not today, with an analysis of the number of beds available at the forensic unit at the Health Sciences Centre, occupancy levels and the status of that particular unit.

Mr. Stefanson: The psych health facility, which opened back in January of '93, has 20 beds for the assessment and treatment of short-term patients, and I am told that generally those beds are full.

Mr. Chomiak: I am not sure whether or not I asked this specifically. We will be getting a bed count, et cetera. I did ask for an assessment of all the community-based programs and the like. I do not know if I, in my question, asked to provide a count of all of the psychiatric beds available in the province, but if I had not, I am asking the minister if he could also provide us with that update.

Mr. Stefanson: We can provide that as well.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.3.(d) Selkirk Mental Health Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$18,425,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,326,900—pass.

21.3.(e) Emergency Health and Ambulance Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,005,200. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr Chairperson, the issue of provision of emergency services specifically outside of Winnipeg has been the subject of several questions in the Legislature recently. I wonder if the minister can specifically clarify for

me what the status is of the working group that is meeting or what their objectives are, and when they plan to come down with recommendations.

Mr. Stefanson: I will table three copies of just the summary, because I think we did discuss this briefly before about the terms of reference, the membership of the committee and the scope of the working group, so I think that answers the question the member has asked.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister table the recommendations of the Emergency Medical Services working group?

Mr. Stefanson: The one part that I did not respond to was just to reconfirm that I am expecting the report around the end of June is the date that I have been provided. Obviously we will deal with that report, and I fully expect the report will become available publicly, so we will receive it hopefully at the end of June and obviously have a chance to go through it. Then I would expect very shortly thereafter that that report will become publicly available.

Mr. Chomiak: I might have been confusing in my last question. The minister is providing me with a copy. Is the information the minister is providing me dealing with Emergency Medical Services working group? Do I understand that correctly from the affirmative? [interjection] Okay, then I will ask the minister, there was another working group that made recommendations with respect to emergency services. Now I do not have it in front of me and if I can I will come back with the specific name of that, and I will ask that when we next meet.

The Lifelight Air Ambulance Program is expected to deal with approximately 600 acutely ill patients. Can the minister outline what the contract costs are for that purpose?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, we do not have that breakdown here right now, but we can certainly provide a breakdown of the cost of the 600 patients.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of the present existing funding arrangements for providing interfacility transportation in emergency services?

Mr. Stefanson: Just to give a sense of the quantity of interfacility transfers, throughout rural Manitoba, there are roughly 16,215 interfacility patient movements each year in the Emergency Medical Services system. In the city of Winnipeg, the City of Winnipeg transported approximately 5,700 patients within the EMS system. As the member knows from previous discussions here and during Question Period, the City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Hospital Authority are working on the issue of transferring the responsibilities for the interfacility transports to the WHA from the City of Winnipeg ambulance system. They have just set aside 90 days to do it and those discussions are ongoing.

* (1730)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister is saying that the WHA and the city are examining interfacility transport as opposed to emergency transport. Do I understand that correctly, as opposed to a transport from the place of injury or the accident to the facility? Do I understand the differentiation?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, the member is correct. It is the interfacility transfer issue between hospitals in Winnipeg and, as well, from the airport to hospitals under certain circumstances. So those are the issues that are being reviewed by the City of Winnipeg and the WHA.

I have been provided with some information. The City of Winnipeg about two weeks ago, I think, put out a press release on the issue, so I am certainly prepared to provide the member with that press release and any other information on this review. I am fairly certain it is 90 days that they have set aside to conclude these discussions.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister provided me with statistics. Those related to interfacility, did I understand correctly that they relate to interfacility transports? Are there also statistics which relate to transports in general, emergency transports as well that the minister can provide us?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I believe we can provide that. I understand the question is the

overall utilization of the ambulance system both outside of Winnipeg and Winnipeg. The total numbers, I believe, we can provide those.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I apologize. I was distracted a few moments ago when I was asking this question, but will the minister be providing us the present funding models for the provision of emergency services both urban and rural Manitoba? If I have not asked, the minister did not respond directly to that, can we obtain that information?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, we can certainly provide information on the amount of funding we provide on a per RHA basis, as well as, the funding we provide to the City of Winnipeg for ambulance services.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.3.(e) Emergency Health and Ambulance Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,005,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,694,200—pass; (3) External Agencies \$51,900—pass.

21.3.(f) Public Health (1) Public Health and Epidemiology (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,793,800.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister give us an update as to what the status is of the national harmonized food inspection system?

Mr. Stefanson: Apparently last year there was a detailed briefing note on this. I guess we did not expect the member would ask it again this year, so there is no detailed briefing note. I am told I can return with that update very shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: I appreciate the comment. The minister can simply seek an update on the ongoing development. Can the minister provide an update of the status of the hepatitis B vaccination program?

Mr. Stefanson: As the member knows, last year the hepatitis B vaccination program was introduced in Grade 4. That is going to be continued again this year, and it is going to be expanded to include newborns as well as high-risk groups, like certain health care workers. By starting with newborns and having a Grade 4

program, ultimately the gap will narrow, and they will come together. So there is additional money in this budget for the expansion of the hepatitis B program.

* (1740)

Mr. Chomiak: I would like assurances from the department as to the ongoing review and study of the efficacy of offering a mass immunization program. I am still not convinced from data that I have received from the minister's office that we have adequately considered the ramifications of the French experience, that is, the experience in France, as well as some of the other jurisdictions. I know the minister has probably been lobbied by individuals, as I have. I am wondering what kind of ongoing evaluation is done on the process to ensure that we are effectively promoting health by virtue of the immunization program.

Mr. Stefanson: I think what I should do, if the member is so inclined, is arrange for a personal briefing with Dr. Greg Hammond, which I have had the benefit of in terms of discussing this issue at length in terms of doing exactly what the member is referring to, being sure that we are continuing to review and evaluate any information, any international information, positions of organizations like the World Health Organization and so on. I believe even the French situation was a removal in school, but that they are still doing it for newborns, so I can assure him that we are watching the latest information, latest events, and certainly after my detailed briefing, I was very comfortable that we are doing the right thing in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate and, again, not today, what water and food testing is done by the Department of Health, who does it, and how it is paid for?

Mr. Stefanson: I will return with more details, but when it comes to water testing, we have a contractual arrangement with the environmental lab that I will return with the terms of that and the dollar amount of the contract. When it comes to food testing as well, I believe we still have responsibility for food testing in restaurants and other related facilities, and I can again return with more details on the nature of that service and complement and costs.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there any kind of—I have not seen it and perhaps I have just not noticed it, but do we have an epidemiological analysis of some of the major public health concerns and issues in Manitoba? I am thinking of issues like flesh-eating disease, as well as, some of the diseases that affect children in terms of statistical information. Is that available, and if it is, could it be tabled?

If it is not available, I am not asking for any statistics to be compiled, but I am assuming that there are some kinds of studies that are conducted by Public with respect to frequency and location of occurrence, that type of information.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will return with details on any studies that are available and have been done in recent years, if that is appropriate.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed. 21.3.(f)(1)(b) Other Expenditures \$8,781,500—pass; (c) External Agencies \$238,100—pass.

21.3.(f)(2) Cadham Provincial Laboratory Services (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,080,000.

Mr. Chomiak: I would like to get a sense of the operating capital requirements of Cadham Provincial Lab in terms of what has been requested and is available to serve their needs. In other words, has there been any input of operating capital at Cadham Provincial Labs recently, or is there any in the budgets and any sense from the government as to short-term or long-term needs from the lab?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told that if you look at the appropriation on page 69 under Other Expenditures, you will see Minor Capital of \$69,300. That is available for ongoing equipment requirements. Beyond that, there is no additional capital commitment to Cadham Lab.

*(1750)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can we get a listing of—and I know this could be fairly

extensive, but there must be a listing in terms of the services provided and volumes from Cadham Provincial Lab. I am not asking for it today, but effectively I am just looking for an update as to services provided and volume, et cetera, effectively an annual report of the functions of Cadham Provincial Lab. Is that available?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, we could certainly provide a copy of the annual report. We will look at whether or not, depending on if it is a '97-98, there is any more current information available.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass? Pass. Other Expenditures \$3,325,200—pass.

21.3.(g) Medical Officers of Health (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,250,800.

Mr. Chomiak: The only question that I intend to ask in this area is a listing of all of the medical officers of Health and their location.

Mr. Stefanson: No problem, Mr. Chairman, we will return with that.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass? Pass. (2) Other Expenditures \$51,100—pass.

21.3.(h) Health Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,523,400. Shall the item pass? It is accordingly—[interjection] Health Programs.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we are sort of into a bit of a different approach to the Estimates in terms of how this item is lined up. What I intend to do is ask some specific questions, and then some of them may be dealt with in Section 4, which we will most definitely reach when we next meet. But what I am saying by way of introduction is that it might be a little difficult to not cross over between this section and the next section.

Well, I will start off this way. Can the minister give an update as to all of the pilot projects being undertaken in the primary health care under this section?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will return with that information.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to pass this one and deal with the questions that the honourable member is bringing forward within area 4? Is there a good enough cross over there for the member to deal with everything in 4?

21.3.(h) Health Programs (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,523,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,303,900—pass; (3) External Agencies \$5,474,200—pass.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$63,688,900 for Health, External Programs and Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

We now move on to No. 21.4. Health Services Insurance Fund (a) Funding to Health Authorities.

An Honourable Member: Let us call it six o'clock.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

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

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being six o'clock, this House now adjourns until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. (Wednesday).

Corrigendum

Vol. XLIX No. 35 – 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 31, 1999, page 1963, first column, third paragraph, reads:

Ms. Friesen: We have little laptops here now. We did not before.

Should read:

An Honourable Member: We have little laptops here now. We did not before.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 1, 1999

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