



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary	Tuxedo	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 11, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson): Mr. 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 Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Forecast

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): I have a statement, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba has experienced some very heavy rains during this month. This is of concern to all Manitobans, especially for those who have been directly affected by residential flooding. To date, there have been four resolutions passed by municipal governments requesting provincial support as a result of these heavy rains. These municipalities are Lac du Bonnet, La Broquerie, Stuartburn and Springfield. In addition, I am advised that a number of other municipalities are considering similar resolutions.

Staff from the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization are in contact with local governments to monitor the impact the heavy rains have had and are having across the province. While the significant precipitation has increased saturated groundwater levels and are

raising the levels of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, all major waterways in the province are within their banks and no communities are being threatened. Staff at Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization are also working with other departments to ensure a capability to respond to this issue on a co-ordinated basis if there is need for emergent action. Thank you.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, we on this side appreciate the Minister's statement of concern. I think that is the best way you can describe it. We also take note, and I would ask all members of the Chamber to take note, that while the inconvenience and the cost of flooded basements can be pretty onerous on too many of our citizens, add to that the loss of income if it involves agricultural land and farmlands, which all too many farmers are also experiencing at the same time.

I only want to encourage the Government, through his agencies, Emergency Measures Organization, to work in concert with the municipalities to the best of their ability. It is a difficult situation when Mother Nature turns on the tap.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the June 2000 Provincial Auditor's Report to the Legislative Assembly on Value-for-Money Audits as required by sections 52.27(1) of The Legislative Assembly Act.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to table the 2000-2001 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Legislative Review for the Manitoba Civil Service Commission.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Financial Statement for the year ending March 31, 1999, for the Leaf Rapids Town Properties.

I would like to table the Supplementary Estimates for the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, 2000-2001.

* (13:35)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flooding Disaster Assistance

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister responsible for disaster assistance did make a statement in the House and talked about the communities that had flooding, did not mention the homes in the city of Winnipeg that have had their basements flooded, but I think significant issues right across the province with the heavy rains need to be addressed. I would like to ask the Premier if his government has put in place the proper supports necessary for those homeowners, businesses and farmers affected, and do those individuals have access to information that tells them what programs might be available to them?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Emergency Measures Organization, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Conservation and the Crop Insurance indirectly affected or potentially affected by the water damages have all been working full out. The Department of Conservation last week put out an alert on flooding for streams and an alert on the rather dramatic saturation of the basin that is taking place and has taken place, particularly in the storm of last Friday morning. We are certainly monitoring the situation today with weather forecasts for potential hail in some agricultural parts of our province that we are watching very carefully for its impact on producers. We are also very concerned and have on alert the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Conservation, particularly in the La Broquerie area, for livestock and potential damage there with the very, very high water levels in some of those regions.

The specific requests from different municipalities and particularly flooding in the Capital Region—I believe there were over 300 homes flooded. We are assessing now which

homes were flooded based on backup of sewers, which would be legitimately covered by insurance and which homes were flooded by overland water damage, so the answer to the question is yes.

Information Briefings

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for the answer. The custom in the past when natural disasters hit the province has been for the Government to provide timely briefings to members of the Opposition. I would ask the Premier if he would be able to set up some briefings for members of our caucus, specifically critics for Agriculture, Intergovernmental Affairs, Conservation and others that might be appropriate, so we could be up to date on the information that is coming forward, and that we also might understand and know what measures the Government is putting in place to address the issues.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did appreciate in the flood of '97, the former minister of Natural Resources providing daily updates, and as well the former minister responsible for Emergency Measures providing updates often. Sometimes there were two updates with ministerial statements in the same pre-Question Period item on the order of business.

We will continue that practice and have further information from our ministers on the status. We are certainly prepared. This is an issue that is not partisan. The rain is not partisan. The policy differences, when we are dealing with people in need, are real across all constituencies, and we are certainly willing and able to put forward our ministers, not only to give you advice on what we are hearing from our experts in our departments but also to listen to the advice you are getting from your constituents.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the Premier again for that answer. We would look forward to those regular updates and briefings.

Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance Shortfall

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, recently in the farm media we have seen reports that the

AIDA program could experience a shortfall in dollars to cover the 1999 crop year. In fact, an AIDA spokesperson has stated that there is no guarantee that the dollars will be there.

Whenever Manitoba farmers are experiencing a second very difficult year as well as continued low commodity prices, what assurances can the Premier give to Manitoba's farmers that the safety net programs they count on will be there for them and that their payments will not be delayed or prorated?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): There have been articles recently in the paper about the possibility of a shortfall in AIDA. In fact, the federal government has reduced the amount they are putting out in the preliminary payment. The province is maintaining their level at the same level that it was last year.

It is a little early for us to prejudge, because the deadline for the AIDA has not been completed. In fact, the deadline for AIDA applications has been extended for a couple of additional months in order that farmers can get their applications in. When those applications are in, the administrators will be able to determine whether or not there is a shortfall, but from the numbers that I have had, the Province will have adequate money in the fund.

* (13:40)

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): On Saturday afternoon, I had the occasion to tour much of the flooded part of the eastern part of the province, the municipality of La Broquerie, some of the municipality of Stuartburn and indeed part of the Beausejour area. Some of the flooding that I saw was disheartening to say the least. Cows standing up to their bellies in water, dairy barns flooded, machine sheds and homes surrounded with water. Indeed, many of the roads were not travelable because they were washed out or being washed out as we watched, and much of the farmland, including potatoes and hay land, bales of hay floating down streams.

Can the Minister of Agriculture explain how her new disaster program will help those farmers

who will have virtual total crop losses, and how the design of the new program will in fact help alleviate the hurt that is being experienced by those farmers that we see currently?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The disaster assistance program that the Member speaks of is one that we have just signed a framework agreement on. The details are being worked out. I hope the details that we work out will provide producers with better protection than they had under the AIDA program, which the Member knows farmers were very frustrated with.

I want to tell the Member that I am very concerned about the situation in the southeast part of the province. It is one that we are monitoring very closely. We are looking at what supports are going to have to be provided. The applications under Crop Insurance, as well as the disaster assistance program, I am sure are going to increase dramatically, but we also have to monitor the situation with the livestock, which is very serious right now.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister would be able to or could explain to us how the people in Québec, the farmers in Québec were given a 38% funding increase under this new so-called disaster assistance program, how the farmers in Ontario were given a 28% increase, and indeed the farmers in British Columbia were given a 92% increase.

How will this minister be able to assure the farmers in her province when they face total crop losses, as many of them in the La Broquerie area especially will, how she will compensate those losses under the current designed program when she in fact is going to take less federal government money or at least no more than we had last year? What kind of a program is she going to design or has designed? What kind of assurance is she going to be able to give those farmers that they in fact will have their losses covered?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the Member raises an issue that I have been raising for several months now. That is the fact that eight provinces wanted to change the funding formula for the safety net programs, a process that began under

my predecessor's time as Minister of Agriculture. I would encourage him to talk to his colleague as to what the process was as to why we went to this formula. Certainly it is not one that Manitoba supported, but the federal government decided to move and support the eight other provinces, and it is going to mean that other provinces are going to be able to offer richer programs than we are.

It is disappointing that we do not have that additional money, but we are going to be able to maintain the level of funding that we had previously, and the details of the program are being worked out.

Mr. Jack Penner: On the second supplementary question, I want to ask the Minister whether she can tell me what level of comfort she thinks farmers will have by just blaming each other or blaming other levels of governments for not bringing forward the support.

Can the Minister tell us whether she is finally going to make a decision and make a commitment to the farmers of this province, as the previous government did in the Swan River Valley in 1988, as we did in 1988 in the Interlake, and as the Government did in 1997 in the Red River Valley? Will she now finally commit to supporting those that lost their crops and their livelihood in 1999 in the southwest or in the western part of the province, and will she commit to that same level of funding now in the rest of the province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the Member raises a very serious situation in the southeast part of the province, and one that has to be monitored very closely, and one that we hope will result in farmers at least being able to get some crop off.

With respect to the money for the southeast part of the province, I wish the Member would have thought about that when he refused to pass an all-party member resolution in this House that we tried to bring forward so that we would have the support of their party when we were going to Ottawa to try to negotiate further assistance for the people of the southwest part of the province, but he refused.

Mr. Speaker, I raised the issue of the southwest part of the province again with the

federal Minister of Agriculture when I was at the conference, and the federal Minister of Agriculture has said there is no money from the federal government for this particular issue. I hope that we can work through the southeast part of the province in a way that will not require us to have such difficult negotiations.

* (13:45)

First Nations Casinos Selection Process

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, we are back to the casino issue. It is unfortunate that the public of Manitoba has lost all confidence in the way in which this government has mishandled the expansion of casinos and gambling in Manitoba. In fact, as each day goes by, we witness new bits of evidence indicating how badly this issue has been flawed from the beginning and, in fact, the process was not as independent as this government would lead Manitobans to believe.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Member for Thompson, the Minister of Government Services, and the Minister responsible for gambling in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind the Honourable Member that when addressing members of the House, they are by constituencies, or ministers by their titles.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, yes, thank you very much. My question is to the Minister responsible for Gaming, the Minister of Government Services. Did the new Minister of Gaming or his staff contact the Nadeau and Freedman selection committee or any members of that committee in any way to show support for the Nelson House First Nations casino proposal?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I think if the Member was to follow up in terms of his preamble, he would have asked another question about some of the concerns they expressed only yesterday. In terms of Doctor Korn, by the way, I want to quote what he has said. He has said he was misquoted when he called for a moratorium, and he is quoted as

saying: I think it is acceptable to go forward. I think part of the issue is that there are definitely economic gains that come from casinos.

We put in place a balanced process that recognizes those economic gains and the social concerns. We put in place an independent process, and the Member knows that that independent process was put in place. I can assure members opposite that we are committed to continue in terms of that process, a process that is balanced and recognizes something that the previous government failed to do, that is, with the proper attention to some of the social concerns we can have significant economic benefits for Aboriginal people.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Member did not have his earpiece in, because he failed to answer the question completely. I will ask the question again. Just for clarification, can the Minister responsible for Gaming assure Manitobans that he or his staff had absolutely no contact with the selection committee during the selection process?

Mr. Ashton: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I was not the Minister of Gaming during the selection process, and even though I could argue that it is out of order to ask somebody in terms of their activities as an MLA, I can say on the record I have not spoken to either of the two individuals on the selection process. I have not spoken to them either as an MLA or as a minister.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, he answers the question partially. My question was whether he or any of his staff had any contact with the selection committee or the two gentlemen involved with regard to the casino proposal.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I can only speak to my own direct knowledge, which is that I had no contact. I have had no contact with them, either as an MLA or as a minister subsequently, and I can only assume that is the case in terms of my staff as well.

I made it very clear, as did all members on this side of the House, that we wanted to respect the process that was in place, an independent process. The five sites that were selected reflect the independent analysis of the two individuals

involved. They do not reflect in any way, shape or form any political influence. I think it is about time that members opposite dealt with that and respected the selection and worked with us to try and get First Nations people some economic opportunities in this province, something our balanced approach will do.

* (13:50)

First Nations Casinos Community Opposition

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Gaming has been one of the most vocal opponents to gambling this province has ever seen.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the Minister of Gaming has been one of the most vocal opponents to gambling this province has ever seen. Now his First Minister (Mr. Doer) has put him as the Minister who will oversee the privatization of gambling in Manitoba. The Minister's own constituents have voiced concerns over the establishment of a First Nations casino in Thompson, concerns this minister is choosing to ignore. Does the Minister of Gaming support the comments of Reverend Jake Enns, from the church council of the Thompson Christian Centre who said, and I quote: Here in Thompson, local welfare rates will increase, driving tax rates even higher than they are now if a new casino is established.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I think part of the problem with members opposite, quite frankly, is, you know, they are trying to pretend that they were not the same party that was in place in the 1990s. I remember when the Interim Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Mitchelson) was quoted as saying lotteries do really make good things happen. She indicated: I do not believe that the incidence of compulsive gambling will increase. This is when they were bringing in the Fort Garry Hotel. I think they have to remember that when some of us—and I am proud that we put on the record some of the

concerns, the fact that the previous government was involved in taking, for example, VLTs to 26 times their original level in 1992-93 in seven years.

I say to members opposite, in the same way that we have always acknowledged the social impacts of gambling—you know, I acknowledge the social impacts of drinking, but I and members of this caucus have always sought a balanced approach. If you question the social impacts of drinking, it does not mean you support prohibition, it means you support a balanced approach, and that is what we are doing in terms of First Nations casinos.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister agree—given that he did not agree with Mr. Enns' last comments—with Reverend Enns when he says, and I quote: Do not sell your constituents out in this way simply because there are economic and political pressures to do something. We cannot absolve ourselves of the responsibility of the results of our decisions simply because the results are found in the community and not directly on the property of the casino.

Mr. Ashton: I want to say that I and every member of this government respect those, including the individual that you quoted, Reverend Enns, who do not agree with gambling. I want to say that, unlike the previous government which waited until 1998 after the massive expansion of VLTs to build in any process that allowed for community input, what will take place in communities across this province and will take place in the community of Thompson is that the community of Thompson, the proposed host site, will have a say, Reverend Enns will have a say, my constituents and people in the host communities throughout Manitoba will have a say through their councils. I say that is far better than what happened under the previous government.

*(13:55)

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, given that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) believes that when 65 percent of Manitobans support an issue they represent a clear majority and their wishes should be followed, what does this Minister of Gaming have to say to the 65 percent of Manitobans who oppose First Nations casino pro-

jects? Is he saying that he now agrees that there should be binding referendums?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, as much as I would love to get into a discussion of labour legislation, I will leave that to the capable hands of the Minister of Labour, I think, who pointed out respect in terms of the democratic process. I want to say to the members opposite that one of the conditions of this process was the support of host communities, that is part of the RFP, that is part of the process that is in place, and we respect the role of local councils. We respect the role in terms of expressing support on whether those proposals were a go-ahead. I will say we learned from the mistakes of the 1990s when the previous government waited until after the fact, in 1998, before they even considered community input. We fought for it in the '90s. We are making sure now that local councils representing the people of those areas will have a say.

First Nations Casinos Community Opposition

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the casino issue. I want to ask some very pointed questions of the Minister regarding process here, because I think it is very, very important for the people of Manitoba and people in First Nations communities to fully understand the process by which this government is proceeding. I would like the Minister to now clarify that his government's concept of consultation in the communities on this issue will not be with a binding referendum in those communities but rather simply a resolution of the councils. Would he please confirm that?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I can assure the Member opposite, in this case the host communities will have a heck of a lot more say than they did about frozen food. And as much as I am tempted, I am not going to ask for the Member's retroactive resignation over that.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the Member opposite should be aware—and I note, as a former Minister responsible for Gaming in this province, that we have recognized in this particular case, and I think it is important to note it was

based on the Bostrom report, a report which the Member opposite knows well, the role of local communities in the process and in fact, local councils, local communities will have the say in terms of whether they will host those casinos. That is part of the RFP, part of the process, and we are committed to that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, members opposite represent frozen food; as one of my colleagues says it must be so good, they bought the company. They bought the company, and they are going to operate it. It is very important for the people of Manitoba to understand the process, and the Minister avoids a simple response to a simple question. We asked him very clearly is his government committed to local community decision making by either a resolution of their councils or a binding referendum, and he refuses to really provide a simple answer. It is a very simple question. I ask him again: Is it the policy of this administration to accept as the decision making of a community a resolution of their council as opposed to letting their ratepayers or their members vote in a binding referendum? Which is it? We would just like a yes or no to what they will accept as community decision-making.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I can indicate to the Member who, as a minister in the last months of the previous government, expanded the number of VLTs in First Nations communities by 65 percent without any input from communities, in fact, expanded many other areas. There were several hundred additional VLTs brought in across the province without any community input. I want to say to the Member opposite that we have indicated as part of this process that we respect the role of local communities and their councils.

I notice in the case of Thompson, for example, the Mayor in the community has already indicated his support, proceeding with a plebiscite. There are discussions underway now. Certainly there was a plebiscite in Headingley. There is one underway, I know, currently in Brandon. There is a lot of discussion at the City Council, and we respect the right of local communities. I wish the previous government had done that for most of the time that they were in office in the 1990s.

* (14:00)

Revenue-Sharing Formula

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, in sort of the hubbub, I did not catch the entire answer, but from what I gather the Minister was committing, where there are binding referendums, to recognize those.

Mr. Speaker, my third supplementary to the Minister is this: He said yesterday in Question Period that 70 percent of the benefit will go to the First Nations proponent. I want to ask him: Will he guarantee that there will not be 20 percent, 30 percent, 40 percent of the proceeds going to the management companies, all of which are out of province, who will rake off a sizeable amount of money if that, in fact, happens? What amount of money will he allow to go toward management fees?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): First of all, the Member knows the process and he knows, in fact, that what is in place is a process whereby we have community input, and we respect the role of community councils in deciding the route in which they go. In fact, two of the councils have gone the route of a plebiscite. That is under debate right now in terms of Brandon, and we respect those local communities. That is why we respect the input from the communities as decided by their elected representatives, the council.

I want to say, in regard to the second point, the Member should understand that this is a partnership with the AMC, something of which we are very proud, a partnership that eluded the previous government that more often than not was focussing on short-term political issues vis-à-vis First Nations. I suspect at one time they were trying to punish First Nations. I remember Mr. Newman with some of his comments in the House.

We have worked out a partnership arrangement. We have a process whereby Lotteries will administer the casinos, the Gaming Commission will regulate those casinos, and we will work with our partners the Aboriginal people to ensure the maximum benefit goes to the people who need it, the First Nations people of this province.

Ombudsman's Report Recommendations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the worlds of life and art come together. Faced with real people and real promises the NDP have made, they are now hiding.

Yesterday, I met with the provincial Ombudsman, Mr. Barry Tuckett. He briefed me on a lengthy report to Mr. Zisca Singha and Mrs. Tahira Singha in which the Ombudsman concluded quite clearly that they got caught between two departments that could not agree between themselves as to what was required and whether letters of approval were issued appropriately.

The Ombudsman recommended that the Government apologize to the Singhas and consider compensation for the things that happened to them which were the Department's responsibility.

I ask the Minister of Family Services whether he will apologize and provide compensation.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I regret the fact that the Member for River Heights has chosen to use this approach. He wrote me this morning, July 11. I received the note at one o'clock. I wrote to him on the note that I would meet privately with him and speak with him and brief him about this extremely complex issue. Instead he has chosen to grandstand.

The issue is before the courts. He ought to know that.

Mr. Gerrard: Ma question supplémentaire: C'est une question qui est publique depuis longtemps. Le ministre en est responsable. Je demande au ministre, est-ce qu'il fera ses excuses et donnera de la compensation à Monsieur et Madame Singha?

[Translation]

My supplementary question: It is an issue that has been public for a long time. The Minister is responsible. I ask the Minister: Will he make an apology and provide compensation to Mr. and Mrs. Singha?

Mr. Sale: Je regrette que ce n'est pas possible pour moi de répondre en français à la question du député. Mon vocabulaire et ma grammaire ne sont pas assez bonnes.

[Translation]

I am sorry that it is not possible for me to reply in French to the question of the Member. My vocabulary and grammar are not good enough.

[English]

My answer stands. This is a complex matter. Counsel has been retained. An issue is before us, and I will brief the Member, if he chooses to be briefed. If he wants to grandstand, he can grandstand.

Mr. Gerrard: My second supplementary to the Minister of Family Services: I ask the Minister what changes he will make to the Department policy to ensure that individual citizens in the future are not painted into such a confusion corner by the situation that arises, as this one did?

Mr. Sale: The Department is always open to learning, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to do so. This is an extremely rare circumstance. As I have said to the Member, if he wishes to learn more about it, I am prepared to brief him.

Health Care Facilities Food Services

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): My question is directed to the Minister of Health. With the tabling today of the Auditor's report on the frozen food project of the former government, what measures has the Minister taken and will he take to reduce reliance on the horrible frozen food system in Winnipeg health facilities, particularly Deer Lodge Centre?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for the question. I was anticipating questions from members opposite because it is of such significance to the people of Winnipeg and particularly given what has happened in the frozen food field.

One of the first decisions we did was to buy back the mortgage, which is clearly identified in

the Auditor's report as one of the single significant difficulties and problems regarding the fiasco with frozen food.

The second thing we did was put together a working group made up of clinicians, dieticians, et cetera, and other experts, to study the whole frozen food situation, another thing that was highlighted in the Auditor's report as being lacking by the previous government.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we put in place a process whereby I can assure members of this House that Deer Lodge Centre, as soon as the committee provides its report and once we can put the situation into operation, will not have the frozen food fiasco and the frozen food any more as a result of bad decisions by members on the opposite side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask you to fill me in on a little something, but the Honourable Member from the back bench over there is referring to a report that has been tabled before this House, just today, which we have only just seen. I do not see a copy in front of her. I am wondering if the Opposition has been passing off these reports to their members prior to them being tabled in the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members, *Beauchesne's* Citation 168: When rising to preserve order or to give a ruling, the Speaker must always be heard in silence. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

A point of order is a very serious matter. I recognize the Honourable Government House Leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point, Mr. Speaker. I know the Opposition is embarrassed by this report by the Provincial Auditor. We also know that they should be embarrassed by the fact they

never asked a question about it. They purport, they hold themselves out as being in some way responsible.

When the Opposition House Leader rose, he did not cite any citation in *Beauchesne's*, any rule. Indeed, there is no point of order. There is no departure from any rules here. A question was simply asked by a member of our caucus.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I thank members for their advice. I will take the matter under advisement to peruse Hansard and consult the procedural authorities, and I will report back to the House.

* (14:10)

Fort Garry Courthouse Status Report

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice last week asked if anyone wanted to buy a courthouse. My question to the Minister of Government Services: Will he confirm that, despite the Justice Minister's earlier comments, the Government actually has no intention of selling the courthouse building in Fort Garry?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm a number of things. I can confirm that it cost \$2.2 million to construct the courthouse. I can confirm that, out of that amount, about \$200,000 can be salvageable in terms of equipment that can be moved. I can indicate we have identified a number of options for the courthouse, something I think is increasingly seen as a white elephant.

I want to say to the Member opposite that one of the options is indeed to sell it because any other use by government would involve either gutting or substantial renovations. So I say to members opposite it is a white elephant. In fact, we have already received a number of inquiries from people looking at buying it. That is where it is at, and I say to members opposite they made a huge, huge error, I think, in creating this white elephant for the province.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Justice: Will the Minister please explain to Ralph Hoehne of Kingston Realty, when he went with a buyer to the Minister of Justice and to the Minister of Government Services' office to buy the building, why Mr. Ralph Hoehne was told that the building was not for sale? Mr. Ralph Hoehne wants an explanation.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Member opposite realizes the court case that was in place only finished last week. One of the first things we did, in terms of entering into office, was try to assess—and I did this as Minister of Government Services in co-operation with the Minister of Justice—what we would do with this facility once it was no longer being used. I want to say to the Member opposite, I have not been contacted by this individual, but another individual contacted me directly, and I indicated that is one of the options we are looking at. In fact, I am arranging for the Department of Government Services to look at that, and I would suggest to the Member opposite that if she has somebody that has a serious concern and interest in that property, she might wish to consult and contact me directly rather than get up in the House. This is the first time I have heard of this particular individual.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, will this minister then meet personally with Mr. Hoehne from Kingston Realty and explain why his bureaucrats told him—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then will this minister meet with Mr. Hoehne from Kingston Realty, meet with him personally, and explain to him why his bureaucrats told Mr. Hoehne quite categorically from the Minister's office that that building was not for sale when he came with a client's viable offer for that particular building?

Mr. Ashton: I realize members opposite are a little bit sensitive about this \$2.2-million facility on \$1.5 million of land. I want to say to the Member opposite that I do not think she understands the process. First of all, the individual that contacted me directly, I will have the Department look at it. But I want to say we could not

exactly sell it while the court case was still going on. I do not know if she realizes the court case ended last week. We are looking at a number of options, none of which, Mr. Speaker, will recover the amount of money that was put in by the previous government. It is a white elephant. We are trying to salvage what we can from the mistakes of the previous government.

Minister of Labour Consultations

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, another day has gone by and the Minister of Labour's cruel assault on the business community of this province and an assault on the democratic rights of workers continues. During the Estimates process, the Minister said that most of her consultations as minister had been with business-orientated groups. One wonders why this minister even met with the community for which she has such obvious contempt. Welcome to the Manitoba of yesterday's NDP, where business is a crime.

To the Minister, Mr. Speaker: Who exactly did you consult prior to launching your vicious assault on the business community?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, since being made Minister of Labour on October 5 last year, I have met with literally hundreds of groups, as I mentioned to the Member in Estimates, many of whom represented individual businesses, many of whom represented business associations, the Chambers of Commerce, a wide range of groups that I have met with both individually and as groups.

Prior to the tabling of Bill 44, the amendments to The Labour Relations Act, though our proposals went to the Labour Management Review Committee, a committee made up of an equal number of representatives from the labour community and the business community, I must say that Bill 44, before us today, includes partial or complete consensus by both parties to the Labour Relations Committee of seven of the eleven proposals that were sent to that committee.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Volunteerism

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud volunteers in Manitoba for doing their part. Manitoba recently celebrated Volunteer Week, and we had a lot to celebrate. An estimated 40 percent of Manitobans performed some sort of volunteer service. That is 9 percent above the national average. Collectively, Manitobans donate close to 45 million hours annually to their volunteer endeavours; 44 percent of individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 volunteer their time and talents. This is the highest of all provinces for this age group. Manitobans between the ages of 35 and 44 had the highest volunteer participation rate at 49 percent. That means that half of all Manitobans between the ages of 35 and 44 volunteered.

Manitoba volunteers represent 21 percent of Canada's volunteers despite having only 16 percent of the country's population. The economic value of our Manitoba volunteers is estimated at \$525 million. This is amazing, and we all should be proud of ourselves.

We should all thank ourselves or someone we know who devotes their time and talents without asking for anything in return. We should not wait until Volunteer Week or special events such as the Pan Am Games to say thanks to those in our community who put others ahead of themselves. I would like to call on all Manitobans to recognize the critical role that volunteers play in our daily lives. Thank a volunteer today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Human Services Guide

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the House of a new Internet information service that the Department of Family Services and Housing and the Department of Education and Training have jointly developed under the Better Systems Initiative.

* (14:20)

I would invite all members of the Chamber, as well as the public, to visit the Human Services

Guide which has been available to the public on the Internet in both official languages since June 27. The public can access the guide from the Manitoba Government's home page by visiting the Human Services Guide listing either under Featured Sites or the on-line services Living in Manitoba or Working in Manitoba.

The Human Services Guide presents information on the programs and services provided by both of these departments in a number of categories, 13 service categories. These groupings are intended to assist the public to access information on a wide variety of programs. The guide includes basic program information, eligibility requirements, contacts and links to related sites and frequently asked questions.

The intention is to expand the information contained in the guide over time to include human services delivered by other departments and non-government agencies as well. This version of the guide has been tested with both internal and external users. A group of 11 members of the public tested the guide for content, navigation and ease of use. Responses were very positive, and some suggestions for improvements which have been implemented for the Internet version are now available. It is a great example of how we can make government services more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, for one example, Manitoba students can now access our enhanced and new student loan and bursary programs by applying for student loans and bursaries on-line. I hope that we all have a chance to visit the site. It will probably also help us all in our work as MLAs in our constituency offices. Thank you.

Winnipeg Folk Festival

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend Manitobans and visitors to our province had the opportunity to experience the 27th annual Winnipeg Folk Festival. This year the four-day festival attracted the second largest audience in its history, a total of 33 750 fans. Not even the heavy downpour on Thursday night that left the grounds in Birds Hill Park completely saturated was enough to keep the crowds away.

Even with nasty mosquitoes and ankle-deep mud bogs, the Winnipeg Folk Festival is still one of the finest large-scale music festivals on this continent. The mud and mosquitoes that distinguished this year's festival united the volunteers and audience alike in their appreciation of the performances and festival ambience.

I would like to congratulate the producer of this year's Folk Festival, Pierre Guérin, and the executive director, Trudy Schroeder, for an amazing festival. I understand that this perhaps was Mr. Guérin's final year looking after the Folk Festival as its producer, and certainly a lot of accolades need to go to him for the incredible success he has created for all of us here in Manitoba.

A big chunk of the credit for this year's Folk Festival belongs to the 1500 volunteers who made the festival a huge success. Again, it was the volunteers, the Manitoba volunteers who were the heart and soul of this event. On behalf of all of us in Manitoba, a big thank you to this very, very dedicated group of people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dakota Collegiate–Manitoba Marathon Volunteers

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, Dakota Collegiate located in St. Vital has developed a 16-year tradition of volunteering for the Manitoba Marathon. About 140 students, several teachers and alumni, organized by teacher Dean Favoni, spent the day of June 17 at the Manitoba Marathon. They worked as huggers at the finish line, servers at the pasta fest, timers, station hands and tag and microchip collectors, the new microchip device being one that gave runners an accurate reading of their finish time.

This dedicated group from Dakota Collegiate was responsible for supporting participants in the last 40 to 50 metres of the run. They offered much-needed hugs, comfort, assistance, and shared in the celebration as each participant accomplished the goal of finishing the marathon. The enthusiasm, commitment, and energy displayed by these individuals was greatly appreciated. Recognition for their efforts was received in congratulatory comments and commendations from race officials and competitors.

Thank you to Dean Favoni and this incredible group of volunteers. Congratulations to the Dakota Collegiate staff members and students who participated in the Marathon 2000. This being Cole Hunt, Darryl Conrad and Ray Houssin in the half marathon, and Jason Conrad in the full marathon.

May Dakota Collegiate's volunteer commitment at the Manitoba Marathon continue year after year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Frank and Louella Fehr

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to residents of my constituency who have been recognized for outstanding achievement in their field.

Mr. Speaker, Frank and Louella Fehr, who farm near the community of Grunthal, were, on Friday night, presented with Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmer Couple Award. This award recognizes farmers between the ages of 18 and 39 who demonstrate successful farm management, proper land usage, and an ability to grow their operation.

The Fehrs currently operate a hog farm which employs 14 full-time individuals and which maintains 3400 sows, with two weaning units and one finishing barn. I am told that Frank Fehr built his first barn at the age of 21 and has pursued and grown his dream as an independent farm operator ever since. Mr. Speaker, the Fehrs have shown the success that young farmers can have in our province, if given the opportunity to succeed, and have demonstrated the important impact that farming and the hog industry have in our province and in my constituency.

As the representative for the Steinbach constituency, I can tell all the members that the Fehrs exemplify the type of progressive and responsible farms which make their home and living in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the Fehrs will now move on to national competition to compete against young farmers in the Regina competition in November of this year. I know that they will represent our province well and make all Manitobans proud.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of this Chamber, I would like to congratulate Frank and Louella Fehr, their young children, Colten and Dexten, and wish them all well as they compete in Regina.

Committee Changes

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin); Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff); St. James (Ms. Korzeniewski) for Transcona (Mr. Reid); The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers).

I move, seconded by the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for Brandon West (Mr. Smith); St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Motions agreed to.

* (14:30)

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) and Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Friday, July 14, at 10 a.m., to consider the annual reports of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the years ended March 31, 1998, and 1999, and also to

consider the annual reports of the Crown Corporations Council for the years ended December 31, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Friday, July 14, 2000, at 10 a.m., to consider the annual reports of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the years ended March 31, 1998 and 1999, and to also consider the annual reports of the Crown Corporations Council for the years ended December 31, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999. *[Agreed]*

It has been moved by the Honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty. *[Agreed]*

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

CONSERVATION

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): 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 Conservation.

When the Committee last sat, it had been considering item 12.2. Regional Operations (a) Headquarters Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,415,700 on page 37 of the Estimates book.

2.(a)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,415,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures

\$1,245,400—pass; (3) Problem Wildlife Control \$245,600. Shall the line pass?

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I would like the Minister to offer us some insight as to how and by what means the Department is controlling some of the problems that we have in the province with wildlife. We are talking about, first of all, \$245,000 in this appropriation. I would like to have some idea of what that money is being spent for. Is some of that money being spent to compensate, or just generally speaking—despite the fact that we are passing other legislation to prohibit it, the problem of wild boars is a real one for some areas in this province.

I can speak from some experience. I came home to my farm last summer to be encountered by six wild boars which decided to root around in my yard for a little while. If you were in attendance at all to the most recent conventions of our rural municipalities, those of us who attended those know that the subject matter of control of the wild board took up a fair bit of time of the local councillors' decision making at that council. I am also aware that we have a certain population, a growing number of population to the effect that they are doing more and more damage. I know that from my experience in the sister Department of Agriculture working through crop insurance, more and more dollars are being paid out in compensation for crop loss, for instance, to various wildlife populations.

I am just ragging this a little bit because I am a generous and kind critic. This gives the Minister a little bit of time to consult with his senior staff to give us an idea about how this \$245,000 is used. It is under the heading Problem Wildlife Control. I would be interested in having some idea of how that is proceeding.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): As the Member would probably know, eight or nine months ago he was in government, he would still be quite familiar with some of the programs that were in place at the time that he was in government. For example, I think he would probably remember that some of that \$245,000, a good chunk of it, I am given to understand that about 80 percent of it, is earmarked for controlling the beaver problem.

I know even when I was in opposition I used to have people approach me with all kinds of those wildlife problems, but I remember very clearly that the problem of beavers damming up creeks and ditches, I think that was the item that was brought to my attention the most times when I was in opposition. So about 80 percent of it is earmarked for beaver control. We renewed the program with the municipalities for another bit of time, but in the meantime, I think even municipalities are finding that the program that we have with them has problems. So I have asked our people is there something better that we can do to try to get ahead of the beaver problem, short of just going out there and slaughtering the animals. I would like to see if I could come up with a good program that will not offend anybody, but at the same time address the problems that municipalities are facing.

I know quite frequently I travel to the northern part of the province. Even there, where there are no adjacent municipalities, along the highways I see a lot of work that the beaver has done. Along No. 6 Highway, for example, I will go by there on a Sunday evening coming to Winnipeg and everything is cleared up. Thursday night or Friday morning, I travel back and everything is back in place. So it is a big problem, and we are trying to come up with a better system in terms of the beaver problem.

The Member will also remember the problem of wolves and coyotes, particularly areas where there is agricultural activity being carried out. Wolves have a habit of coming onto farming areas and preying on the animals that are there. So that is about all I can tell him for now.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I should inform the Minister and his department that as of September 21 last when I was abruptly deprived of some \$25,000 in pay, my wife has gone into sheep and goat farming at our little hacienda out there in the south Interlake. While I applaud her innovation and her entrepreneurship, I am also very much aware that we have many of those coyotes that the Minister speaks of. Not too many wild wolves in the southern part of the Interlake, but certainly a heavy population of coyotes who have an affinity to sheep, I am advised. I live in dread that I will come back from the Legislature sometime and the only remnants that I will see

of my wife's sheep flock is just a few fluffs of wool on the fencing somewhere, where they have all of a sudden disappeared. I will be phoning your department and asking for some consideration and some control and protection, in fact, maybe even for some compensation. I think there is a compensation program in place for domestic animals lost as a result of this kind of damage. Can the Minister confirm that just so that I can comfort my spouse when I see her later on in the day?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I would also like to applaud Mrs. Enns for going in the direction that she has. According to what the Member is telling us, I also admire her entrepreneurial spirit.

Every time you do something in conservation, it seems to me—and I think the Member for Lakeside will be appreciative of this—you please one part of your constituency and then, on the other hand, there is that other part of the constituency that is displeased by your actions and policy. So you sit there, you listen to the one group and then the next day you listen to the other group, the pros and cons of their view of what you are doing. Wolves and coyotes, for example, there has been quite a bit of controversy over poisoning these kinds of animals, especially around Riding Mountain area. So, for that reason, we are now reviewing the situation to see if we can come up with a better way to control those animals, especially in those livestock areas I referred to. We are looking at ways to develop a program that would not involve poisoning, bait, because people are offended by this. Some part of the community is offended by that and another part of the community supports it wholeheartedly.

Mr. Enns: I thank the Minister for those comments. Just on a little different subject, I think both the Minister and I acknowledge that if we—and there is controversy involved here as well—had more stable and better prices for the wild fur. We have a long history and tradition, not just in the Aboriginal community, but in the community at large, particularly northern Manitoba, of successfully trapping these furs.

A good part of the Department's involvement is in supervising the regulations

surrounding the trapping of furs. If a beaver pelt was worth what it should be worth, the Department would not have to be involved in these programs, or the municipalities involved in these programs, or the unacceptable, and I agree with the Minister about the slaughter of these animals at times of the year. A healthy, wild fur market would be of considerable help here. I am aware that the Department has over the years supported different agencies—their names escape me, the Canadian Fur Institute, the Manitoba Trappers Association—in their efforts to help educate, particularly the Europeans, it is kind of ironic; they got us into this fur trapping business to begin with—about the fur trade industry and about its importance to a lot of our citizens, and, quite frankly, also the role that it can play in keeping a control on the overall population numbers so that they do not become problem situations.

This may not be the right spot and the direction, but I would hope that the Department would continue to be supportive of those kinds of organizations. It was not a great deal, but I think we played a role in supporting organizations such as I mentioned, and specifically the Manitoba Trappers Association in their programs.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, I do agree with the Member's observations and statements about this issue.

As a matter of fact, when I first became minister, the first time I was faced with this issue was in a meeting with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, for one group. I met with the Manitoba Trappers Association at least three times since I have been minister. I attended the fur table in Thompson. Twice I met with them to discuss some of the resolutions that they had passed at their annual meeting. Yes, the beaver problem was one of the items that they had included in their resolution development.

As a matter of fact, I had asked our staff to look into the possibility of maybe making some kind of an arrangement with the Manitoba Trappers Association because I think if you are, I am not sure, I am just assuming here, but if you are a farmer or an AMM official, you have a tendency to look at the beaver situation differently, say, than if you were a trapper. Therefore, I was looking to the Manitoba

Trappers Association to maybe get involved in this brainstorming, trying to come up with a program that would alleviate this type of a problem. So far we have not come to any final agreements, but I know that I think we have put the bug in their ear and they are talking about it. I have also put the bug into AMM, at least the official part, into their ear to talk about it.

Yes, I think that is the only way to go; it is to work with those kinds of organizations. They work with the issue every day. They know how to deal with it. They are experts at it. I think we support the Manitoba Trappers Association in the amount of a little over \$60,000 a year in recognition of the work that they do in this province.

* (15:00)

We also support the Fur Institute. I think \$29,000 is what they get in provincial support. So from time to time we have a meeting. Whenever I get an opportunity to meet with those groups, I never fail to seek their expert advice so that whatever they tell us might be incorporated into our programming.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I, too, have a few questions in this particular area before we move forward into the different regions of Manitoba. If I could indulge the Minister for a moment on some of these. Some of it has to do with the regional operations, I guess, of the Department. First of all, just as an overview to ask the Minister if he sees any particular change in direction from the Department.

Mr. Lathlin: I do not know if the Member was here yesterday when I believe I was asked that question about the regional operations in terms of the integration work that we are doing. I believe I gave the response something to the effect that we are proceeding with integration work. We are amalgamating the departments. So far, at the regional level, we have not made any major changes. As a matter of fact, I think things are in a sort of status quo situation at the regional level, because we recognize the fact that if we make too big of a change right off the bat at the regional level where all this front line work is happening, that it would probably not be

a good idea. It would not be the right thing to do because it would really hamper our operations where they count the most.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I could further advise the Member that we are currently looking to move regional boundaries to be consistent from one department to the next. Therefore our boundaries might change a little bit, but we are still looking at it today. But, so far, in terms of human resource positioning, we have not made any major changes.

Mr. Maguire: So, Mr. Minister, you just alluded that there might be some boundary changes to the regions as they are presently set up in Manitoba, but that has not been determined yet.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, that is right. You know, any time that you are into reorganization, especially in this case, we are talking environment and natural resources. So it makes sense for us to try to align in the geographical setting the responsibilities and functions that are going to be required in each area.

So far we have not made any boundary changes. We are busy at the present time making sure that our planning processes are the right ones and trying to come up with a good plan, some clear direction for our staff, particularly at the regional level, to follow.

Mr. Maguire: The follow-up to that is: so you are still establishing the criteria that would make changes in those jurisdictions. I just wondered if you could elaborate on what those criteria might be.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairperson, yes, currently we are looking at the boundaries of all the departments, government departments. We do that because I think it is important for us to have common boundaries. For example, we have interdepartmental work going on right now to align, for example, Culture, Intergovernmental Affairs and Conservation, and recommendations will be coming to my office probably by fall time, September maybe, at which time we will review, and we will go from there.

Mr. Maguire: So just for clarity, you are looking at perhaps combining some of the

jurisdictions of those areas that you just mentioned, Northern Affairs, Conservation and Agriculture. That is in regard to policy of departments. Is it in regard to planning and office space, or is it a geographical boundary that we are talking about as well?

Mr. Lathlin: I think what we are doing here is looking primarily at geographical locations of the offices. We are not necessarily combining functions at the present time. We are looking to ensure that once we realign boundaries geographically, for example, you go to one building in The Pas and you get all your services, information, whatever. You may go and pay your lease fee if you have a cottage at the lake, or park fees, or whatever. That is where you go and do everything in that one-stop office building. So that is what we are trying to achieve from that initiative.

* (15:10)

Mr. Maguire: Are you saying that there will be no geographical changes in boundaries of the offices at this time?

Mr. Lathlin: Probably the best way that I can explain it, Mr. Chairman, and that is when the Government initiated the regional health authority boundaries, when they first started to implement that policy they did not realize that particularly up North there were certain working patterns or travel patterns or relationship patterns. For example, The Pas and Pukatawagan, they relate to each other. The people from Pukatawagan come to The Pas to shop and marry people from Pukatawagan and The Pas and so forth, and the same thing with Easterville. Easterville and Grand Rapids, Moose Lake, there are a lot of people who come to The Pas to do commerce or buy groceries or play bingo or whatever.

When the regional health authority boundaries were established, for example, Pukatawagan was deemed to belong to the Burntwood, which is in Thompson, and the people in Pukatawagan said: Why do we now have to start going to Thompson when all these years we have been going to The Pas for everything, medical, entertainment, groceries and stuff like that? So we made representations to government

at the time. Fortunately, they listened and they were obliging. They changed the boundaries. Now Pukatawagan belongs to the Norman Regional Health Authority. I think that is probably the best example that I can use. So, as we go into boundary changes in this effort, the same principles will be looked at.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I just raised this, Mr. Minister, because of your comments yesterday in your opening remarks. I believe you mentioned that there might be some issues that you would look at as far as decentralization, and I wondered if you could expand on just what your comments referred to in that regard.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, let me say firstly that we are not looking to removing offices from the different communities that they are in. If that is a concern of the Member, well, we are not looking to do that. What we are looking at is—again, I will give him another example. If you are buying, say, a cottage in Clearwater Lake and you go to the local office there to do business, well, much of the function, the responsibilities, are here in Winnipeg. So, although the local worker there will gladly take whatever information you have in order to lease a lot from the provincial government, the first thing they will tell you is it takes a long time. That is the first thing they will warn you, and you will say, well, why does it take a long time? Well, because it has to go to Winnipeg. It goes to that department and here and there and by the time it comes back, you know, you are looking at a long time. It is not very efficient.

So some of the things we are looking to do is, you know, approvals, for example, permitting, those are the kinds of services we are looking to decentralize, strengthening the frontline workers so that they can actually do the work there without having to frustrate the customer, saying, look, you know, take whatever information you can give me, but I am going to have to forward it to Winnipeg and you are just going to have to wait. I think that is the kind of realignment that we are looking at.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I concur it is rather ironic that the Minister would mention Clearwater Lake and the cabins there, because I have a great uncle who was one of the first

founders of a cabin in that area. Mr. Moore originally from this area of Manitoba, but he trapped and hunted in that area for decades up in that area, as he founded that whole region. He has been gone from us for about 20 years now, but I did have an opportunity to meet him a couple times in my youth. He could tell you some pretty tremendous stories about the area that you just outlined. I believe his cabin is still there. If you want to go and have a look at it someday, Oscar, I welcome you to have the opportunity to do that.

Decentralized, as you said, and part of the discussion that we had in committee this morning was just based on that. I guess that is why many of us felt that I would just throw this in, that your comments about being able to get permits on a basis that is responsive I think is very important. I commend you for that effort if that in fact is what takes place in the rural areas, in the regional offices, I should say, not just rural, because that is more of a hands-on issue with those types of developments.

That is why we raised some of those concerns in committee this morning on Bill 15 with the Province taking back the control of water rights. That is an issue with farmers out in the country and rural people in an area that they need to be able to get their hands on a permit in a timely fashion, not just under an emergency basis, but to be able to carry on and plan. Many of them will plan long enough ahead that they will give the Department, I think, long enough lead time because they try to fit it in to the work schedule of their own farming operation.

But sometimes, either by oversight or by an immediate system that comes up or you may purchase some new land on the 15th of October that you may want to get a permit before freeze-up to move on, they need to have the assurance that they are going to be able to have a responsive system that will meet their needs. As you combine these departments, I think those are some of the difficulties that you may go through in trying to have a responsive system. I would encourage you to move forward in that area if that is what decentralization is meaning, as you have outlined in your previous answer.

I noticed under, as we move on, Mr. Chairman, the Regional Operations, you have mentioned a number of things, from delivering the department programs, ensuring the resource-related regulatory controls done in a responsive manner, implementing of forest fire prevention. We will get into a number of these as we get through Estimates. They can be talked about further down the road.

But there are some issues, I guess, around—you have one here in regard to the whole decentralization. I do not know if this is where it comes in or not, but I will ask the question anyway. You have one of the regional operations here that is to maintain an effective community relations role for the Department with particular emphasis on Aboriginal and organized sportsmen's and park user groups. So I see that as kind of three groups there. I wonder if you could just refer to each of those and give me some indication of why you have pinpointed each of those three groups?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if I understood the question, but let me say this. If I understand the question, I do not think we are trying to single out a select group of organizations. I think what we have listed there is some of the things that our people are doing out in the region.

For example, that list that you see there, but we do carry out liaison activities with everybody, trappers, youth, whoever comes to our offices. That is who we liaise. We do not restrict our liaison work with just those groups that are listed. There are other groups that we liaise with.

* (15:20)

Mr. Maguire: There are so many groups. I looked at it, the bullet before that is Parks and Natural Areas branch. Looking at those, I wondered if you had any particular significance as to the organized sportsmen's groups, park user groups, whether it was a situation where you had some particular role that you had Aboriginal community to play in that area, some particular role for organized sportsmen, if there were different rules for park user groups that you were planning, maybe not in place today, but planning

down the road. Can you just give us any elaboration on that?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I am glad that is the direction the question is going, because I think it gives me a great opportunity to expand on some of the ideas, directions, thinking that I have been doing since I have become Minister of Conservation.

One of the things that became very clear to me when I became Conservation Minister was, and I did this, I phoned certain offices just to get a feel of how the public is treated. Even when you phone an office somewhere, it could be in Gimli, it could be in The Pas, it could be wherever it is, Brandon, I want to see when the person, the government worker answers the phone, how they treat me. As a minister, I started doing that because I wanted to get a good feeling of how our department works with the public, our clients, the people who pay the taxes to put us here.

So, for the most part, it is okay, but I am detecting in some places that we could improve in our relations with the public. For example, if you phone somebody and you get the feeling that they do not want you to talk to this person, they say he is in a meeting, he is not available. You can give the answer a no, but give it in a way that the public will accept it. Not just a flat no, for example, no and that is all there is to it; there is no other way; you hang up the phone. That is not the kind of a relationship that I want our people to have with the public.

Right from Day One, I have told our people that we want to work with the community so that we get along. I do not want the community to think of us as those government guys or those government people that deny you the licence or that enforce the regulation. The only time you see them is when they want to enforce something or when they want to come and jab you in the chest and say you are charged for doing this. That is not the kind of way that I want our department to work, and I have had a meeting with our senior people, all the way down to the regional directors. I want our relationship to improve with the general public. When the public phones or when we make contact with the public, I want them to feel that we are listening,

that we hear what they are saying. I want them to think that we are not actually wanting to give them the runaround. I want them to think that we are actually making every effort to address whatever it is that they came to see us for in the first place.

I was in Calgary attending a City of Calgary police graduation. A bunch of Calgary police recruits were graduating and the Chief of Police gave me a lapel pin. What it said on that lapel pin was "Working with the Community." So, I had on occasion later on to run into a fellow who had been an RCMP officer for about four years. He proudly gave me an RCMP lapel pin, and that lapel pin said exactly the same as what that Calgary city police pin said. It said "Working with the Community." I even suggested to our deputy that maybe those are the kind of lapel pins we should get—Conservation, working with the community—just like what the RCMP and the City of Calgary police are doing, because that is the kind of relationship that I want. *[interjection]* He said it was a darn good idea and he said why did I not do that before.

So, anyway, that gives you an idea of why we have the groups there. I am not in any way suggesting that because Aboriginal people are listed there that they are the one group we are to let in, although it is high time, if you ask me, that they should be part of the group that government departments liase with.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I would just say that the emphasis is on all three that were mentioned there as user groups, sportsmen and Aboriginals, Mr. Minister. Clearly, you have placed your thoughts before me here, and I appreciate that in moving on in that whole area. The issues that are listed in the other bullets there: constructs, operates, water drainage, that sort of thing, Crown land allocations, we will talk about as we come to them, I think, further down the Estimates in those processes.

There was one question in regard to the whole issue of the problem wildlife before we move on past that line, Mr. Chairman. You have looked at objectives under headquarters operations to provide NROs with services within the Winnipeg department area of responsibility and to minimize accidental shootings related to

hunting. Can you elaborate on just exactly what you mean by that?

* (15:30)

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, that statement there reflects the hunter safety program that is carried out by the Department and its house in Winnipeg, but it is really delivered all over the province. The delivery vehicle is through a contract with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, the Hunter Safety program, education awareness.

Mr. Maguire: So if I read the Minister correctly then, it would be along these lines of delivering the Hunter Education. The Member for Lakeside has asked you about the Hunter-Killed Livestock Compensation Programs. Well, actually, no, he did not. The Member for Lakeside was talking about wildlife capturing and killing livestock.

I have had some local constituents who have had concerns with the issue of people hunting livestock, if you will, not accidental shooting of it but perhaps some cases where livestock have been shot, loaded in trailers in the evening. Let us face it, Mr. Minister, a cow-calf pair out there today is worth about \$2,000. These are unprecedented prices and there is some night activity going on in the province of Manitoba, well, all across the Prairies. It might be a situation that will certainly be raised in Agriculture, but when you have got a Hunter-Killed Livestock Compensation Program in place, I would assume that this is not to be confused with the theft of livestock in those areas.

Mr. Lathlin: I understand that we have a program in the Department where if livestock are shot and destroyed accidentally during hunting that there is some sort of compensation provided to the farmer. But in cases where there is illegal activity going on where, as I say, people coming during the night, I think people refer to that as rustling in the industry. In those situations then, we would rely on the RCMP to investigate and see whether criminal charges will be laid and people be made to face the consequences.

Mr. Maguire: So I would assume that the Hunter-Killed Livestock Compensation Program would apply to livestock like bison and elk as

well. I think we are the same as Saskatchewan in that regard. I know some people in Saskatchewan a few years ago who had elk in their pasture. It was during hunting season as well. They came out one morning and two of them were dead. They had been shot from the fence. It brought a whole new meaning to the term penned hunting, believe me. They were in a pen. They were beside the barn in a particular yard site. Of course, the road went by this particular area as well. Whether these people jumped out and did not see the fence or whatever, they did eventually come back and own up to the crime. Can the Minister confirm that this kind of a program, the Hunter-Killed Livestock Compensation Program, would follow along. It would not be just cattle and horses and sheep, it would be elk and bison in that area as well.

Mr. Lathlin: I understand that elk and bison would fall under that same category as if they were cattle. But also, I do not know what area the Member is referring to, but I am given to understand that so far there have only been six claims made under that program in about a year. We experience about six claims a year for cattle. I am also given the understanding that we have not had a bison claim or an elk claim under that program. Maybe the incident did happen in Manitoba and nobody reported it or nobody came to us. Maybe it happened in another province.

Mr. Maguire: Just for clarity in my question, it was a situation in Saskatchewan that I was referring to.

Mr. Lathlin: I am sorry.

Mr. Maguire: It did happen in Saskatchewan. And so, no, to my knowledge it has not, but I appreciate the answer.

The other issue is to ensure quality of guide services in Manitoba. This arises not so much from wildlife in my area but from waterfowl. We have a number of guides, if you will, that provide a guide service around Whitewater Lake in southwest Manitoba in regard to geese and ducks and that sort of thing in the fall period of time. It leads to a number of issues around wildlife compensation on swath crop and that sort of thing. Can you just give me some idea of

the qualifications or what rules there are to ensure the quality of the guiding services in Manitoba at this time?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, yes, there is a standard in place. There are qualifications that you have to meet in order for one to become employed as a guide in Manitoba. I understand they have to, for example, pass or go through a first-aid training program, they have to pass a written exam, and they do get a licence once those requirements have been met.

I think probably the best quality control program that is in place right now is lodge owners are very particular with whom they hire because their business depends on the type of services they provide to their customers, who pay big sums of money to come to their lodges. So they are not about to jeopardize their bottom line by hiring less than qualified people.

Mr. Maguire: Good, Mr. Chairman. You know the other issue is that there are Expected Results of some of these areas. So I think that we can go ahead with some of the issues here on Headquarters Operations and move further down the line.

Mr. Chairperson: We will look at 12.2.(a)(3) Problem Wildlife Control \$245,600—pass.

2.(b) Northwest Region (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,939,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$678,500—pass.

2.(c) Northeast Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,151,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$948,900—pass.

2.(d) Central Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,363,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,715,200—pass.

2.(e) Eastern Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,209,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,006,600—pass.

2.(f) Western Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,217,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,587,400—pass.

2.(g) Fire Program (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,388,300. Shall the line pass?

* (15:40)

Mr. Maguire: Oh, we have some questions in this area. I notice that there are some details in regard to the Fire Program that I just wanted to raise. Looking at the \$4,300,000, virtually the same amount of money in salaries and benefits in this area, can the Minister give us some indication of the actual dollars that were spent in this area?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I have to apologize to the Member. I was momentarily distracted. I did not hear the question.

Mr. Maguire: I was just asking if the Minister could give us some indication of how many dollars were actually spent in the whole area of fire programs last year.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, last year's expenditures in fire were a total of some \$42 million. I understand about \$16.3 million, \$16.4 million is spent up front and then another \$28 million was spent for fire suppression as an extra item to the budget.

Mr. Maguire: That was for fire suppression?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I understand the \$16.3 million that I referred to is really the base budget. The \$28 million is the amount of money that is spent on extra fire suppression, and that is not included in this budget. It is in Government Services as an emergency fund expenditure item. I would also like to advise the Member, for his information, when you look at last year's fire expenditures compared to this year with all the rain that we have been having, so far we have spent \$5.2 million, which is a very big difference from last year, but that is not to say that it will remain that way for the rest of the season. I think there are still people out there who are experienced in the northern forests, and I could probably vouch for that observation myself. People still tell us, in spite of all the rain that we have been having, it is still pretty dry up north. When you fly around in the aircraft you can tell

that the lake water levels—you can see where the shoreline was and where it is now—are still pretty dry, so we are not about to say we have beat the fires this year. Who knows what may transpire in the coming six weeks, eight weeks?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Minister, on the issue of fire protection in Manitoba, it has always been some difficult calls that the Department has had to make. It is an uncontrollable expense. I would like to suggest that in a year like this, when weather is in your favour and you are saving considerable money, particularly with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) a little bit preoccupied at the end of the table, you should be able to manage to garner those dollars for regional services or water resources, even for wildlife purposes, things like that for the rest of the Department. What I am getting at, if I recall, I am just wondering whether there has been a change. The policy has been to, of course, protect the life and property in the settled areas, and then it moves forward to protecting valuable timber stands and then it has been a policy to—knowing that there is a finite amount of dollars available that you cannot protect the entire province, that there have been areas of the province that have not received fire protection even though fires are burning in those areas.

Mr. Minister, I am aware and I certainly was aware of that during the time it was my privilege to be involved with the Department that that has always been a difficult question. It has been a difficult question with respect to the Aboriginal community, for instance. It has been a question of placing the appropriate value on other resources other than timber, wildlife, wildlife habitat and so forth, that should figure into the consideration for receiving fire protection, but I can just kind of remember looking at the map of Manitoba in the Fire Centre, you know, Director Buck, I believe it is, that would, from time to time, go through the business with you, and you could see those areas of the province that normally do not get fire protection, even though there is a fire, unless residences are involved, unless property or life are involved.

* (15:50)

I am just asking the Minister whether this is something that he has had an opportunity to

think about and whether or not there has been some rethinking within the forestry, within the fire protection service as to the priority settings of where and when firefighters, bombers and the rest of it, the whole apparatus of the Department's fire protection services will be called out to put out fires even in places that have been deemed to have no commercial value in terms of timber, no loss of life or property being threatened and that, up until a short while ago, would normally not receive fire protection.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chairperson, I would like to advise the member that, no, the policy has not changed, at least since the time I have been there. The priorities have not changed either. We still have the same priorities that were there probably when the Member was in government.

However, yes, he is absolutely right, and I am probably one of those people. When I was a chief of my reserve, I used to feel that you would go and protect those timber areas that we knew Repap and Tolko and Pine Falls were interested in. That is what we used to accuse governments of neglecting, especially the Aboriginal, isolated communities, you know, well, let them burn, I mean, there is nothing useful out there anyway. But we took a different view.

I think we have the responsibility. It is our responsibility to make sure that, yes, we protect the interests of all Manitobans. We are currently reviewing, as a matter of fact, as to how we can change the policy in terms of including everybody in the priority list so that everybody feels that they come under this umbrella of fire protection. For example, people in the Hayes River forest unit have from time to time come to government saying, look, protect our area too, because it is important to us.

Also as we move into the land-use study program that we have initiated for the east side of Lake Winnipeg, I think we will have to look at maybe changing the policy a bit to include the east side of Lake Winnipeg, you know, like all the way north to the Island Lake area and beyond. So I want to thank the Member for raising that issue, because it certainly reminds us

that that is one more piece of work that we have to do in Conservation.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I simply want to indicate to the Minister that I did listen to his complaints or concerns when he expressed them as a member of the Opposition on this matter. I know that it is a serious matter for the Department to consider. It would, of course, considerably obligate or make possible the need for considerably more and more resources to provide that what I would call greater protection.

I think I certainly would want to be supportive to the Minister and to the Government for looking at it that way. I think the broader interpretation of land use and land protection, you know, will obviously push government in that direction. I think it is the right direction, but it has been my experience that the Department that you head, Mr. Minister, while we are quick to accept and take on additional responsibilities, we seldom have the political clout to get the necessary financial resources to come along with it. If you were Minister of Health you would not have those problems. You would just get that automatic additional \$30 million or \$40 million that you would need to do that. Even if you were Minister of Justice you would get that kind of money, but being the Minister of Natural Resources or Conservation or Agriculture or Highways, it is a different matter.

I look to this government to changing that two-tier system of priorities that has been established in this administration, part of the administration that I was for too many years and even before.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, I thank the Member for that counsel.

Mr. Enns: As your elder, I am always pleased to provide that.

Mr. Lathlin: And I deeply appreciate that.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Cerilli): I think the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has a question.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I was just going to let you catch up to the speakers here, Madam Chair.

Yes, you have indicated, Mr. Minister, that there was some \$5.2 million spent so far in this budgetary item, the Fire Program. The total appropriation here is just about \$12 million, slightly up from last year, slightly more in transportation. It seems to be the only area that has an increase. Could you give us some indication as to why that was required?

Mr. Lathlin: Maybe I could clarify a little bit about the \$5.2 million that I mentioned. The base budget that I referred to earlier only looks after salaries. The \$28 million, for example, last year, that is an extra budget that is not in here but in Government Services. So the \$5.2 million is the same thing. It is part of the extra fire suppression that is housed in another department, Government Services. So that is not here.

The increase that the Member refers to is the increase that was necessary for the cost recoveries made by Government Services, their division for pilots and service personnel and salary costs that are related to the salary adjustments of some \$361,000; leased accommodation \$12,000; hangar insurance \$10,000. So those were the extra costs I think that he was referring to.

Mr. Maguire: So that \$380,000, then, you have outlined a bit of it. Can you just elaborate on that larger number again as to what it is spent on. Plane rental? Hangar rental? Is this for emergency staff that are on site at any time ready to roll? Can you give us a breakdown given the fact that we have spent so much less fighting fires this year?

Perhaps this is just your budget, and we are not going to assume that we will use all that money, but can you give us an indication of why the transportation budget was up \$380,000?

Mr. Lathlin: I think the Member is asking exactly the same questions as I asked when I received briefings from the various staff people when I first came on board.

The budget that is here, when I was briefed here, I thought it was quite an operation. The

reason I say that is in different places in Manitoba we have pilots, planes, that are leased by the government. We have hangars. We have standing lease offers from helicopter companies, for example, regardless. We have Fire Tac crews that are in the communities. They are under salary. Regardless if there is one fire or no fire at all, we spend that money.

Now, when there is a fire occurring, then we, of course, have to go into the extra fire suppression budget that is housed in Government Services. But, yes, that is a lot of money that we spend. Even if there is no fire, we spend that money.

* (16:00)

I know when I visited some of the offices when I first became minister, I was very much interested in that because I had direct experiences with the fire suppression program when I was chief at OCN, so I was always interested in how they managed the fire suppression program. Even the Fire Tac crews, I did not understand that when I first came here, because I was always under the impression that, well, if there is a fire, we just go and grab 10, 12 guys and we rush to the fire and put it out, and, you know, we just pay them for that. If they are out there in the bush for 15 days fighting the fire, that is all the expenditure we incur. But it does not work like that.

So that is why we see this \$361,000 that is used for that purpose. Then, of course, there are other expenditures, as I indicated earlier, leased accommodation, hangar insurance. Last month. I think it was last month, I had a chance to fly in one of the helicopters when I went touring the cutting area of Tolko and other companies up North. I was quite impressed by the operation that we have out there. We landed in Snow Lake, and that is a Tac camp, and I saw all these guys running around in orange-coloured clothing. They have a camp set up there just ready to go into action. So I was impressed.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you for that answer, Mr. Minister. It gives me some more comfort. I have a son who is a pilot, and he has gone to Ontario to find work, and he has found work. I was just about to the process of suggesting that if this was

for ministerial transportation, that I would have to get him back to fly you around. But you have assured me that it is not for that.

I think we can go ahead and pass these lines.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Cerilli): 12.2. Regional Operations (g) Fire Program (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,388,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$7,611,100—pass.

Resolution 12.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$36,724,100 for Conservation, Regional Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001. Shall the resolution pass?

Mr. Maguire: I just have a comment, Madam Chair. Maybe it is my hearing, I thought you said \$36,741,000. I believe it is 46. Are we looking at Resource Programs?

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Cerilli): Just for clarification for the Member, in the main Estimates book, it is page 37. Shall the resolution pass?

Resolution agreed to.

There has been a request for a brief recess, five minutes or so. Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

The Committee recessed at 4:08 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:14 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. This continues our Estimates this afternoon. We will begin Resolution 12.3. Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$251,400. Shall the line pass?

Mr. Maguire: Just in regard to Water Resources, or before we get into that, Mr. Chairman, as we go through some of these sections this afternoon, now that we are out of the regional offices and that sort of thing, there will be an opportunity, as I have just spoken

with some—we have some questions in regard to the gas and oil industry. It is my understanding that there will be some staff to deal with those in subsequent days and that we will not bother doing that today?

Mr. Lathlin: The answer is yes.

Mr. Maguire: I have many colleagues, too, or a few colleagues who may take the opportunity of coming in in the next day or so, tomorrow, who may not be available today, to ask a few questions on some of these issues. I do not mind proceeding and passing some of these lines, provided that they may be able to come in and ask a question or two. They may have some individual constituency concerns they would like to get on the record. Would that be acceptable to the Minister?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, the answer is yes.

Mr. Maguire: I thank you for that, Mr. Minister, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the concerns that we have in Manitoba, obviously, is the whole issue of water resources, and it is going to be a big issue as we move forward. We are looking at lines here dealing with not just the resources but Water Licensing, Water Planning, the whole strategy around water development. We talked about that a bit in committee this morning with Bill 15, drainage in the province, but it is much bigger than that, Mr. Minister. It is to look at the situation of water management, the overall situation in Manitoba.

We had talked about geographical boundaries earlier today. You started to talk about the process of some of the districts that we have set up: northwest region, northeast region, central region, et cetera, and we have passed the Budget lines on those. Some of the issues that I was talking about on boundaries was to deal clearly with geographical boundaries. Can you give us some indication of whether or not it is your government's mandate or idea to move ahead with, or would you even consider using these particular regions to correlate with watershed areas in the future of Manitoba?

Mr. Lathlin: Let me first tell the Member, yes, we agree with the concept of managing our water in Manitoba on a watershed basis. I think that would be moving in the right direction. I think it makes sense for us to do that, but the boundaries of those watershed areas in relation to the regional boundaries that we are contemplating on making it as our integration work continues. We have no plans to align the regional boundaries based on the watershed areas because I just think that the two are unrelated for that purpose right now. I think we should concentrate on aligning geographical boundaries in the way that I tried to describe earlier, by using the RHA boundaries example. I think that is the way we want to go, but I agree with you wholeheartedly that we should look at the management of our water based on watershed areas. That is where we are striving to move to.

Mr. Maguire: Part of the whole process of water resources, of course, is to provide the administration with the opportunity to put in place what it feels is the necessary means to protect and conserve our resources in Manitoba, and the water resources. A great impact of this is not only in the mining and the forestry industry, the wildlife habitat, but particularly in agriculture as well. I know the Minister is looking at various processes, with the bills that he has brought forward, of trying to protect the water systems in Manitoba, to protect the integrity of the environmentalist aspects of the water development that we have in the Province of Manitoba. Can he give me some indication of what he believes to be the issues that are most heavily involved in surrounding that? Can he give us any indication of whether his government has any new direction, what his priorities are in that particular area as well?

* (16:20)

Mr. Lathlin: The issues, new directions, I do not know if I would say that they are new directions. They are activities that we have to involve ourselves in, in the next little while. In many cases, we do not have a choice but to look at these initiatives, for example, if we have to look at the most effective way to allocate water, that we do not overallocate and put ourselves in a bind. I think the quality of the water is also

very high priority. We want to make sure that there is enough water for the many purposes water is needed for, but in this case, we want to make sure that there is good potable water for everybody in the Province. The other one we are looking at is we have to make sure that there is adequate flood mitigation measures put in place, diking and putting in the infrastructure so that the impact of flooding can be lessened.

Mr. Maguire: No doubt that the Minister is familiar with the issue that I wish to raise. We have dealt with it somewhat in regard to the issue of the lindane issue that came up in the northeast side of Winnipeg here. These products were, we think, moved in there, placed on the ground, have subsequently been removed. We have been there and seen it, and it has been removed and, hopefully, cleaned up. I wonder if the Minister could give me an update on just exactly where that issue is at this present time.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, I have to agree with the Member that the lindane situation was a very serious situation. That is why I took a great interest in that particular area. As a matter of fact, I personally visited the area just so I could see what we were talking about in terms of proximity to the street, the wells, the homes in that area. As of this past week, I am advised that from all the sampling that we took, all but one sample, apparently, showed some trace elements of the product. It is well below the levels of even the standards that Agriculture used when this substance was still being used by agriculture in the old days; the residual material left in the soil is quite minuscule. We have taken a position that the area has been decontaminated, and we have classified it as having been fixed up, if I could use those words. We continue to send written reports to the councillor that is responsible for that area in the City of Winnipeg and also the Reeve of the R.M., advising them on the status of the sampling that is going on and the monitoring that is going on, as well as giving them the results of all the sampling and monitoring that is going on. I know at the time that it occurred, there was quite a bit of anxiety, and rightfully so. But I think now, people are quite satisfied that we have taken the appropriate measures, and the area has been virtually decontaminated. Everything is well.

* (16:30)

Mr. Maguire: So the levels that the Minister has referred to are the test holes that were drilled near the site that contained traces of lindane in the water in those test holes—test wells, they were called—at a lower level. Is that correct?

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, the test holes that the Member is referring to were taken right at the site. I would like to advise the Member as well that the written reports that we have, we will provide him with those reports. The test wells' sampling that we have taken, the soil sampling that we have taken, the results are all recorded in the written report, and I pledge to the Member that we will get him a copy of that report as soon as possible.

Mr. Maguire: I would thank the Minister for a copy of that report. I was at the site on at least one occasion when the Minister was there, and I know that the members along the street involved were glad to see us there that day to have a chance to ask first-hand the process that you and your department were going through, and I think they appreciated that. But, I think, they are still more than sceptical that there could have been other problems occur. Would you concur that the soil structure of such a nature in that area that the process of leaching would be very difficult in that particular area?

Mr. Lathlin: Apparently, the small amount of leaching that may be occurring and has occurred in the past is very small. But I think the soil that area in there has is a very heavy clay base apparently and, whatever small amount of lindane might have leached, it would not have gone through the clay base. So, we are going to probably not be carrying out the extent of activity that we carried out when the issue first came to light, but we are continuing to monitor, just to make sure.

Mr. Maguire: Can the Minister indicate to us what kind of monitoring they are presently continuing in that area?

Mr. Lathlin: One of the things we are going to be doing is monitoring the ground water wells and continue to advise people in that area by way of written reports as we get the results from

our monitoring the water quality in the ground water well.

Mr. Maguire: So you are continuing to send water samples out of those test holes to water resources and there will be continuing reports on that area?

Mr. Lathlin: That is correct.

Mr. Maguire: Can the Minister indicate to me—and I know there was a great deal of concern amongst the citizens that live in that particular region—that he is satisfied that the soil structure is uniform enough in that area, that there are no sand streams, gravel streams, that sort of thing, in that particular location of an area, that would perhaps have allowed some of the product to have ventured into these test wells, if you will, through the soil structure as opposed to surface water movement?

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, I can advise the Member that based on the advice that our technical people are giving us, the soil structure seems to be solid in that it is uniform and there are no holes where the lindane material can go through. But even though the technical advice that we are getting is suggesting that everything is above standard, or everything is okay, we are still going to continue the monitoring and giving the reports to the people that live in that area. I agree with you people got really anxious for a period of time. I know there are probably still lingering doubts as to whether the situation has, in fact, been rectified. Just to give him that extra reassurance, we are going to keep monitoring and keep sending the reports to them so that there is no doubt in everybody's mind that we had actually remedied the situation.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The situation, I guess, is exacerbated and the concern of these people by the fact that as you move further out of the city, maybe just beyond the Perimeter, this being just inside the area there, the Perimeter Highway, that the soil structure does change as you move out into Springfield and into the rest of the area.

Having had an understanding of the situation with the refurbished dump area, waste area that has been reutilized just neighbouring these folks,

that where there are ongoing test wells in that area all the time, they had concerns about perhaps what might happen to surface runoff.

Can you give us an indication or me any indication or this committee any indication as to how close some of the change in soil structure occurs to that region? Does it come close to the Perimeter? Is there some of it that is not actually such a heavy soil clay nature inside the Perimeter area?

Mr. Lathlin: I have to apologize to the Member that I do not have that particular information right on hand and, given the technical nature of the information that he is looking for, I prefer to go back and ask our technical people and give us the right information. As soon as I have it, I will forward it to your office.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for that. If you could just bring that and table it here in the Committee, that would be very good. I would appreciate that. I think there is a concern there as well that there was some distance between this area and these people's homes. Were there any test holes done in between that area, test well sites done between the lindane site and the people's homes, say perhaps halfway between and again closer to their homes?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I understand that test wells were put in on either side of the lindane site, in other words, the test hole between the lindane site and the houses along that road, that street, but I understand too that we did test wells on the other side. I guess what I am advising the Member is that we did test wells on either side of the lindane site.

Mr. Maguire: Just for clarity, Mr. Chairman, so those test well sites were within what proximity of the lindane site itself? Can you give us a distance?

Mr. Lathlin: I can visualize that area but rather than trying to guess now, is it 30 feet, 10 feet or whatever, why do I not give the Member a site map, because the site map would have all the locations of the test holes and would also give the distance, you know, either way. I could give him a copy of those maps as well.

* (16:40)

Mr. Maguire: Thank you. That would be helpful, Mr. Minister, as well. I guess I was not looking for specifics in the number of feet, perhaps more like it is a quarter of a mile across country to those people's homes and it was maybe within 50 feet of the site, but a test site plan would be great. I would appreciate that. That will show in greater detail the types of questioning that I have.

Can the Minister indicate then what his department's view is? If the clay base is as secure as what has been indicated, then can he give us some indication of what the department thinks might have been able to have taken place in regard to surface runoff, that it is their concern that any particular contamination that might have occurred from this site would come from surface runoff as opposed to leaching through the soil.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, there was quite a bit of concern in regard to the run-off from the site, but I think that, if the Member will recall when we visited the site that day, he may have observed some berming that had been done around the site. That berming was put in there in the fall, and so there would have been very little run-off when the snow melted.

So, based on that information, I would advise the Member that, even though there was that concern there. As we speak today, I know people are going to continue to have those concerns, no matter what we tell them. I do not blame them; I would feel the same way, too, no matter how much sampling and monitoring we do, which we are going to do anyway. But I think, nevertheless, people are going to be concerned, quite rightly so, because they do not really know what they are dealing with. They are relying on the advice of the Minister who relies on the advice of technical people.

I think, from where I am sitting, observing the type of remedial work that was carried out in this situation, in my estimation, it was now—in looking at what we have done so far, it has been adequate. One of these days I am going to invite the Member to travel with me to some northern communities, and it will shock him, I am sure, to

see for himself, first-hand, some of the conditions that particularly the Aboriginal people have to live under where there has been no action at all from governments. I made it my business to visit, personally, the site again. As he said earlier, it meant something for the people for me to be there as Minister of the Crown, but, unfortunately, I cannot say the same thing for his government in dealing with contaminated sites in northern Manitoba. As a matter of fact, this Friday, I am travelling to Lynn Lake again to personally see for myself the tailings and the chemicals that are leaching into the waterways around the Lynn Lake area, and downstream we have people living there and they are drinking this water.

One of these days, I would like to be able to say the same thing to Marcel Colomb First Nation that we have taken all the steps that we can think of to remedy the situation so that their health would not be at risk.

I, for one, was glad and happy for those people that government took the action that it did, and I hope that that incident never repeats itself. If it does, I will be very, very disappointed because I have made it known to our people that under no circumstances, while I am in this office, are we going to allow those kinds of activities to go on.

There is going to have to be some very tight, close scrutiny of anything that goes on. If there are any breaches of any agreements, licences, I have advised our people that people are going to have to face the consequences for the actions that they take. As I said, I am quite satisfied that we have taken the proper measures. I think we have taken the right steps. I would just like to repeat that I hope those people are able to get over that trauma, and pretty soon they will be able to enjoy their properties in that area.

* (16:50)

Mr. Maguire: We are all as concerned, I think, with every area of Manitoba, as you have indicated. When you referred to my government, I will refer to the fact that I have never been here before, but I know of from whence you come. The situation is just as important and it does not matter what industry you are in. It does not

matter whether it is the removal and management of waste that we have seen here in this particular situation or whether it is the waste from the mines that you have talked about. I have had some experience in that area myself and certainly more experience in the livestock industry. I would like to get into that in a few moments a bit, but I think that one of the big concerns, I would like to, in closing, just ask you what procedures have been done in removing the lindane, where it was taken, what time frame that was done in and what testing has been done since?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, the material, as I understand it, was scraped off by heavy equipment machinery, loaded onto trucks and transported over to the Miller hazardous waste site, which is located in the R.M. of Montcalm and which is also a licensed facility. So that is how we removed it and that is where it went.

Mr. Maguire: When was that done, approximately? I do not need an exact date.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, at the risk of being held onto these specific dates, I believe the last bit of activity that we had there was May 24, the last week in May.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Minister, and has there been testing done then of that site since then? Have we any test results, and what did they indicate?

Mr. Lathlin: That monitoring and testing activity is ongoing. As I said earlier, we are going to continue to send those reports to people who live in that area.

Mr. Maguire: And so have any test results been brought forward since that date, since that time, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, that activity has been ongoing, even as of May 24. In fact, the last testing that was done, I believe, was about a week ago.

Mr. Maguire: So there are test results from that determination.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes. As a matter of fact, those were the test results I was referring to just a while ago.

Mr. Maguire: Have you sent those results out to those people, Mr. Minister, or will there be more testing done before any results will be sent out to them?

Mr. Lathlin: In fact, we have already sent those reports to the people.

Mr. Maguire: Have those reports gone to all of the citizens in those communities or just the ones who have made an immediate presentation to the Minister in letter or personal form?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, let me clarify my last response. The results of that particular testing that I just referred to were forwarded to the city councillor—his name escapes me at the moment—the councillor responsible for that area, City Councillor—*[interjection]* Mark Lubosch, that is the one. He was sent a copy of that, also the reeve of the R.M. was copied that.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I think that is all I have in regard to that particular issue. There was still some concern. I have received some phone calls for information in regard to that issue out there. They were hoping I would be able to pass that concern on to you that they are still watching and monitoring, very interested in any kind of test results there would be. Of course, we were looking at the one site when we were there that day with the Minister. There was another site just to the west of that. I would assume that both of them have been cleaned up.

Mr. Lathlin: The information that I have is all of the site had been cleaned up. The lindane had been removed from the site we visited that day.

I want to also further advise the Member that those results I referred to earlier, copies of which were forwarded to the city councillor and the reeve of the R.M., I would like to pledge also that copies of that report would be forwarded to the people living along that street. I do not know what street it is. The name I do not recall. *[interjection]* Knowles. Because those are the people we met when we were there. I will ask

our people to send copies of the report, the results, to those people.

Mr. Maguire: The question I have is in regard to how many other sites that there are in Manitoba where the waste management products such as this lindane exposure and the clean-up process can be taken to. Can the Minister give me some idea how many waste management areas that there are such as the one in the R.M. of Montcalm?

Mr. Lathlin: If I understand the question correctly, the Member is asking me what other sites do we have that can take in that kind of contaminated material. The answer is in Manitoba we only have one that is licensed, and that is the Miller site.

* (17:00)

Mr. Maguire: I guess my question then to the Minister is in regard to the fact that there is one, if he can give me any indication as to whether or not these people have applied to have more of these kinds of site locations in the province of Manitoba, and would they be necessary to be used in a situation that the Minister has referred to in regard to the mining industry?

Mr. Lathlin: No, Mr. Chairman, we have not received any other applications for those kinds of facilities.

Mr. Maguire: I guess the second part of my question then was, Mr. Minister, would there be a consideration to allow such facilities to be developed further in the province of Manitoba? As I say, I have referenced many areas where waste products need to be managed and this kind of taking on the responsibility of doing this in a particular location might be something that we want to look at further. I wonder if his department under his leadership has taken the opportunity, under your guidance, or have you suggested to look at any further such sites in the province of Manitoba? Or is it the Minister's belief that all such products in the province of Manitoba could be handled in this one location?

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, we would be prepared to look at other proposals provided the licensing requirements were met.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Maguire: Welcome, Mr. Chairman. I guess, I am looking for the financing of these kinds of sites. Can the Minister indicate to me—my cohort from Lakeside here that has left probably would have been able to handle it and given me this answer, but can you give me some example of how these kinds of sites are funded? How are they established? What is the situation around them?

Mr. Lathlin: Apparently the history of the facility in the R. M. of Montcalm is that it originally started out as a provincial Crown corporation. It went through quite a process in site selection. We had to satisfy the Clean Environment Commission licensing process. There apparently was quite an extensive review done before the licence was given to this provincial Crown corporation at the time. Subsequently, the Government sold its controlling interest of the facility to Miller, where Miller now owns 51 percent of the shares. Apparently, the Government still has some shares, but they are not involved in the day-to-day operation of the facility. It is run privately now, Miller being the controlling interest, but at one time it was a provincial Crown corporation.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Thanks for indulging in my understanding or learning about the last couple of questions in regard to how it was established and where the Miller site, how it was established and where it is located.

Before passing these lines and some of the subsequent ones, some of the preamble under Water Resources here, as we move forward, obviously everyone wants to insure the protection and conservation of our soils and our water and our natural resources as much as we possibly can. The Minister has a great deal of responsibility, as I said yesterday, perhaps one of the largest areas of responsibility in the future development of our province in regard to any kind of industries, because all of them are going to have to continue to be sustainable in this area of environment.

We are the watchdogs of our own future. We have to make sure, as I have said yesterday

and said many times publicly, that we have to take the opportunity that has been given us as a developing province, even though we have been here many, many decades, to determine our own future. I would see us as an established province but one that is still developing very well in many areas.

We have seen new responses in mining with some of the new products that have been developed or found very recently in Flin Flon, in the new opening of that mine, with some of the expansions that we have seen in other mining areas. There is the odd new well actually being drilled down in the southwest part of the province in the oil industry that I can assure the Minister is taking place, as I saw a few of them last weekend myself. We are ongoing in the development of the livestock industry in this province. I see that from an agricultural point of view being very, very important to the future of many, many of the smaller communities out there today, outside the Perimeter Highway and here around Winnipeg. It is a growth area for us in the Province of Manitoba, and one that many farm families and family units want to continue to be very involved in, to contribute to the economic viability of the Province of Manitoba, not to mention, of course, their own viability from an economic standpoint.

These people live in that culture and in their heritage throughout the Province of Manitoba, whether it is in the North or in the forestry, mining, fishing areas that we have seen, or in the agricultural land base that we have on a sustainable development mechanism for the future of our changes in agriculture that are taking place, not just in livestock, but in special crops as well. So we are going to see a great deal of opportunity arise, and I will refer to the agricultural industry, which I am most familiar with in regard to the kinds of development we have seen in special crops areas, in livestock. Many of those opportunities will arise from the management of the water and the resources that we have in future, and that has been talked about many times in the House and through some of the bills that you have brought before us. I think we have an opportunity here to make sure that we utilize water management for other purposes, not just, we can say, run-off or drainage or those kinds of things. Perhaps all too often in the past

we have wanted to get the water to the mouth of the river, whether that is the Souris, the Assiniboine, the Red or the Churchill, maybe a little faster than what might otherwise be required.

I would present to the Minister that the amount of water management that we could have in the province of Manitoba would not impact in the long run the flow in the mouth of any one of those rivers, but it would perhaps much better utilize the water that could be managed. I would use the term "held back" for want of a better phrase. "Managed" is the phrase that I like to refer to, but many would take it as that meaning of holding it back in reserves that are available for our use down the road, which perhaps would lead to much better riparian opportunities along the banks and many of the rivers that we are seeing.

* (17:10)

I mean, I have talked with people in the last few days who are very concerned about the banks of the La Salle River. The Seine River, out where I am in southwest Manitoba in relation to the Pipestone Creek, there have been situations in the past. You have to go back some decades, to my understanding, and correct me if I am wrong in that there has been in more recent times, but back in the 50s, 60s, there were some periods of time there when I am told there were some opportunities presented by the provincial government and local governments, various levels of combination to manage these stream banks, the kinds of trees that may normally die and fall into creeks.

This is not normally a situation that is of great danger to an area, but, as we continue to build highways and roads throughout our regions, and I would make the comment, given today's budgets in some of those areas, that maybe we have built enough roads in some of the areas of the province, not all of them, but in many of the, I would say, areas of greatest development at this point, that it does present some opportunity for blockage, if you will, that these trees end up in some of these smaller creeks. We only have to look at the Assiniboine and the Red today, and you are not so sure you want to put a motor boat in either of the facilities

that we have with the flooding that is going on. Even at this high water levels, there are a lot of trees floating in some of that water today.

My thoughts to the Minister, I am expressing them here from what I have heard, concerned individuals in the last few weeks, that they are looking at an opportunity of sharing with the Minister, sharing with the Department the opportunities of being able to be better stewards of their streams. It is very much a personal situation. It is not on an individual basis but on a municipal basis whereby these levels of government would like to partner with the provincial government if there was funding available to do clean-ups in these particular areas.

The one area that I am looking at in western Manitoba along the Pipestone Creek would be a situation where it is dead elms. There is a situation where elm disease has been rampant throughout that area. There are a lot of large trees that normally do not bother. They are dead trees still standing, if you will. Many of them lean out over riverbanks and when all of a sudden you get the kind of four- to five-foot increases at a much higher speed than normal current allows, the riparian damage along these creek banks can be pretty tremendous. I am sure this happens in rivers throughout Manitoba, northern Manitoba as well, although the elm situation is probably more prevalent in the southern region, given the decay there at this point. The Minister may correct me on that if I am wrong.

The situation that we are looking at got so bad in the '50s and '60s along this particular creek that it was cleaned up. It was cleaned up in the wintertime. There was some co-operation to go in and remove these trees from riverbanks and from the streams as much as could possibly be done with chain saws and perhaps even at that time by handsaws in a lot of that area. I wonder if the Minister has given any thought, given the high water levels that we are seeing in some of these areas now, to providing any kind of assistance for riparian damage, creek blockage, removal of these trees from these particular creek beds before they do what the beavers do and dam up the streams and cause a lot of

flooding in backwater situations in some of these areas.

Mr. Lathlin: No, our department does not really have any specific programming to address the situation that the Member is describing, and that is clean-up programs for riverbanks, removing the dead trees and generally cleaning up. But I would not rule out any local group, perhaps getting together and putting together a proposal for those types of remedial activities, perhaps giving them some seed money or partial assistance in such a project. I am thinking we could look at the special conservation program that is there or maybe even the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund. Not funding the whole program, but I would not rule out looking at that kind of activity, those types of project proposals.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for those comments. It is a situation that is of great concern in the municipality of Pipestone at this particular time. I know they are also looking for some funding in regard to lagoon projects. Can you give us any indication of where the federal infrastructure programs are at, the federal-provincial shared infrastructure programs that you may be looking at at this time?

Mr. Lathlin: Unfortunately our department has not been directly involved in the negotiations that have been taking place regarding the federal infrastructure. I can advise the Member that as far as we know the federal government is looking into giving certain activities under this program some priority. I am given to understand, for example, in what they call green projects the federal government has allocated a certain amount of funding for that purpose. Green projects would include improving on lagoons, maybe enhancing streams, and just generally looking favourably towards projects that would be geared towards either improving on the environment or protecting the environment.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the offer that the Minister made earlier. I understand that the federal government seems to be holding the cards right now in regards to any infrastructure programs that might be there.

I think the offer that the Minister has just made would go a long ways in that particular area of municipal jurisdiction. The municipality by no means was looking for the provincial government to fund such a clean-up process.

When they talked to me about this very recently, it was a situation that had arisen just from the heavy rains. All the water that came last year has fallen many of those trees, fell into the banks last year, were stuck in the ice that was there in the winter, were still there this spring when the water levels were not nearly as high to carry them away. But now that it has rained so much, the creeks are actually higher than they were with this spring's runoff, the complete reverse of last year. It has caused a lot of softness along many of those banks and a lot of riparian damage that we think is occurring there right now, not we think, I mean, it is occurring. You just have to fly over it and see the dead trees falling into these small creek banks. Basically when they fall over, it is not like here, where it cannot reach the other side. It basically builds a bridge right across the creek, because these trees are two feet in diameter. Some of them are falling on both shores.

* (17:20)

When those roots come out of there, of course you are well aware of the kinds of problems that can be caused on those banks. I know that I could be opening up a kettle of worms here, because certainly the Assiniboine might want some and the Red River we know needs bank stabilization in some situations. What we are seeing here in the country is a situation where it may actually build a dam and hold water back and cause a vast amount of flooding in a whole creek basin. The Pipestone basin is very flat and has been drowned out in the past. This is why, it is my understanding, such a procedure was undertaken in the late '50s, early '60s to have made some movement in this area to clean it up at that time.

By and large it is my understanding that it is the elm disease problem that has caused these trees to die and are creating the problem on these banks at this particular time. I know the Minister may be inundated with these kinds of requests, but this is more damage repair as opposed to

dealing with the situation before a disaster occurs, is basically what I am saying. There could be an awful lot more money needed and have to be spent down the road if in fact we have to go in and use dynamite to blow these things out to let water get away. That is a very uncontrolled manner when perhaps some winter employment, part-time employment could be utilized to clean these particular locations up.

It may be beneficial to do it at a time where a person could go in in the winter to drag out what they could and do the least amount of damage to riverbanks or to creek banks while it is frozen. You are not going to get all the trees out obviously at that time. Some of them will be frozen in the water but it might be an opportunity to move some of them out of there and even cut some of the ones that are dead now that might—cut them so that they fall away from the bank and haul them out or drag them out. It would not even be possible from my view of this situation to get cats in there to put them out. It might even mean four-legged critters, dragging some horses in there to pull a few of them out in the wintertime or other time, so that, to carry it to the extreme, to be able to move these out and clean up these banks.

I was going to suggest the SDIF, the Sustainable Development Initiative Fund that the Minister has referred to as a means of helping out this situation. I am glad that you have raised that and would really look forward to your department taking a further look at this. I may in fact give you the names of the individuals that have approached me on it and perhaps we can work towards trying to find some solution to this matter. It was only since the initial discussion that I spoke recently with some people that may have had the same concern along the La Salle creek here as well, so I just raise that for your purview as well.

Mr. Chair, I do not know if the Minister has any more comments on that or not.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, yes, the Member has raised a number of very important issues, and I empathize, I understand what he is talking about, but I do not mean to be blunt or belittle or come across as not being sensitive. I say this because I want him to understand how it is that I

have come to understand what he is talking about by putting maybe some things into perspective. Yes, I have on occasion in the past travelled down the Red River and only the Red River and only because I had agreed to go on this boat, you know, that goes up and down. I was able to view the shores of the Red River from that vantage point, and it is not a pretty sight. Banks coming down, trees exposed to the roots, trees hanging down. I agree that it is a problem.

But I would like to also mention, I am going to invite the Member, one of these days, to come with me to go North. I really mean that. I am not being facetious, because if we fly over the Burntwood River, the Nelson, Churchill River system, the Cedar Lake area, wow, it will just make you sick, what you see down there, just millions and millions of pieces of just like little matchsticks, just strewn all over in no particular order. They are just sitting there and these are trees. They are in the water, they are rotting, and sometimes fishermen will run into the odd deadhead that is there and some people have actually been killed by running into some of those dead trees that project out of the water.

But that kind of devastation was really not caused by nature, it was caused by men and so that makes it particularly a hard subject for us to talk about whenever we talk about it because at least if it was caused by nature and all we would understand the strength of Mother Nature. We have to respect Mother Nature. Sometimes Mother Nature has her way of cleansing, as some people put it, and there would not be this anger when we talk about all the man-made devastation that has been inflicted on some of those northern communities.

* (17:30)

Then I look at the Saskatchewan River and the Carrot River, yes, the same thing there. You know, when I go up and down river I see dead trees hanging over the bank and roots being exposed and so on, and I know that people, particularly around the Carrot River area, wherever there is no settlement or no communities around an area, the unsettled parts of the river, wow. Nobody comes to you, but I know the people from the Carrot River area and

the valley, and often when I was in opposition they would come to me and in fact invite me to their homes, and I would go and have a look at their banks being eroded by the river system. I know what the Member is talking about.

The reason I mention that is because I want him to understand that I understand what he is trying to relate to us here, and that over the long term, as we begin, in earnest, formulating some of our policy and our legislation, indeed there is a big, big job to do. I do not want to be negative. The Member, being a new member in the legislature, of course I welcome his comments and his suggestions that might help us improve along the way.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the Minister for your sincerity in the issue, and if you can see your way clear to—I was not looking at this, as I said, opening up a can of worms or a situation, but it was to prevent flooding in a certain particular small zone. Larger creeks will generally carry these products away. Not that that means there are not problems down the road, but the particular situation I was looking at was a smaller stream, I guess, and has the potential, in about a 10-mile area, to create a lake, really, if it was allowed to back up. So I just raised that as a concern. It is more a private one for my constituency perspective, but it has also gone, because of my critic responsibilities, to some of the other creeks around as well.

Mr. Minister, I am prepared to pass some of the lines here in regard to a few of these projects or some of the lines that are here today, notwithstanding the fact that our agreement previously is that some of the members may come back and ask questions on some of these at a later time.

Mr. Chairperson: Could we go back to Resolution 12.3. Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (1) Administration (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$251,400—pass; (b) Other Expenditures; \$771,700? Shall the line pass?

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The line is accordingly passed.

Mr. Maguire: I just have a question on the numbers.

Mr. Chairperson: We will revert back to line 12.3.(a)(1)(b) Other Expenditures.

Mr. Maguire: Is there some difference, or am I not looking in the right area under Other Expenditures: Grants, Transportation, Communication, Supplies and Services—total Other Expenditures—oh, pardon me, okay, it does include the Grant Assistance, and that is the difference. There is \$25,000 there that is the difference in the number that you have announced. Okay. From the supplementary information is the difference. Yes, I will allow that line.

Mr. Chairperson: I will read it again. Line 12.3.(a)(1)(b) Other Expenditures \$771,700—pass; (c) Grant Assistance \$25,000.

Mr. Maguire: Can I get some clarity as to what the Grants/Transfer Payment is, that \$25,000?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, the Member is referring to, under Other Expenditures, Grants/Transfer Payments \$25,000. That is grant funding that is budgeted for various water user groups. These are, I understand, irrigator groups in the various regions of Manitoba that get grant money to use for their projects. Irrigator groups, irrigation.

Mr. Maguire: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The only other question is in regard to Communication and Other Operating. I see Communication is down \$6,000; Other Operating up some \$17,000. Is this normal for restructuring? Can the Minister indicate what the variance is there, what all is included under Other Operating as to why that has increased?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, the numbers that the Member is referring to, under Other Expenditures, there is a net increase of some \$11,600. The increase of \$17,000 is for the computer services that we put in, and there was a decrease of some \$5,400 related to communications and advertising. The reason for that decrease is because we are doing less advertising.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will let this line pass.

Mr. Chairperson: 3. Resource Programs (a) Water Resources (1) Administration (c) Grant Assistance \$25,000—pass.

3.(a)(2) Water Licensing (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$659,300—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$45,800—pass.

3.(a)(3) Water Planning and Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,024,400—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$87,900—pass.

3.(a)(4) Surface Water Management (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$785,700. Shall the line pass?

* (17:40)

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chair, before we go any further, I guess I just would like to look at the situation of Water Licensing for just a moment. In the Expected Results under the Objectives of the Water Licensing program on page 54 of the supplement, it indicates that there is a timely response to requests for information concerning allocation of water and water impacts, with the billing and collection between \$80,000 and \$300,000 in revenues to the Province for water use charges of approximately \$50 million from water power and land rentals.

Can the Minister indicate to me the base for those numbers and where they come from?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, let me start with the approximately \$50 million they have listed. That \$50 million is generated from water power and land rentals. I understand it comes from Manitoba Hydro and some from Winnipeg Hydro. The way they charge those utilities is per unit of water that goes through their turbines. Whatever revenue is generated from those kinds of charges is put into general revenue. So that is the \$50 million. The other numbers, the \$80,000 and the \$300,000 in billing and collections, what I can offer the Member is why do I not look at the numbers in more detail and maybe the next time we sit I will have the numbers broken down for the Member. I am referring specifically to the \$80,000, as well as the \$300,000.

Mr. Maguire: It is billing and collection, but between \$80,000 and \$300,000. I do not think it is two specific numbers. That is quite a variance, and I guess I was looking just for more detail in regard to what that kind of variance could pertain to. I do not know if it is licences or billings for what. Obviously, billings and collections, but maybe if the Minister wishes to do that, we could do it at another time.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, that is what I am proposing to the Member that we do. I will determine the breakdown. Yes, I understand. Let me correct myself, it is between \$80,000 and \$300,000 in revenue. I will write that out and provide that information in writing to the Member.

Mr. Maguire: At this time, my colleague from Portage la Prairie has some concerns in regard to some of the issues on surface water management and water planning, and I would turn the floor over to him.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon and to pose a couple of questions that are of the utmost concern to residents of my constituency in regard to surface water management. I did bring up a number of points with the Honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) in regard to the Assiniboine River Management committee, which is under your department's auspices. The management committee has rendered a number of reports, and I wondered whether the Minister has had the opportunity yet to peruse those recommendations and findings.

Mr. Lathlin: The Assiniboine River Management board, under the direction of Ian Dickson, has apparently finished the report. As a matter of fact, it was given to our department. We are currently reviewing the contents of the report. I want to finish reviewing it before I meet with the management board to see where we can go from there.

Mr. Faurichou: I appreciate that there is a great deal of information in the reports, certainly a lot of food for thought and needs close examination. I would encourage, though, with the Minister's perusal of those reports, understanding that there is a great deal of overlap into the management of that waterway as it concerns irrigation and the

diversification and value-added crops that require waters, and whether he would consider involving the Minister of Agriculture as well in some of those deliberations on those concerns.

I know the advisory committee is most anxious in garnering an audience with the Minister in this regard, and I would like to emphasize at this time that he meet with them and carefully evaluate their recommendations, as they are very pertinent to the overall scheme of things. as not only relates to the waterway as surface water management but also to the management that involves PFRA and a number of projects that involve that waterway.

So I will then lead on in that vein as to the consideration for surface water as it pertains to irrigation. and wondered whether the Minister has had any discussions as to the control structures or diversion of the Assiniboine for the capacities offered to irrigators.

* (17:50)

Mr. Lathlin: Let me go back to one point first before I get to the other part of my answer, and that is the suggestion that perhaps we get together with the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I think that is not a bad idea. I think it makes sense for us to do that. After all, most of the pressures that are being brought to bear impact on Agriculture. So it makes sense for them to be involved.

As far as the other part of the question is concerned, in looking at the expanding potato industry around that area, it has caused us to assess the amount of water that is available in that area, which includes, of course, the Assiniboine River. There are various water supply initiatives that are going to have to be undertaken so that we can get a pretty good idea of the kinds of supply of water we are talking about before any major commitments are made to interests for expansion purposes.

Mr. Faurichou: Yes, I can appreciate there has to be a long-term recognition of capacities and sustainable water flows before one issues licences, because there is not only that investment by the Minister's department, but there are significant investments by producers for

equipment that operates in the fields, dispersing the water.

I would like to ask the Minister, though, just perhaps expanding further, that there are a number of studies done and certainly an inventorying of the aquifers and service water. Are his department and he looking at a strategic overall water plan, which involves the requirements not only for expanded irrigation but for domestic purposes as well so that the greatest usage of our natural resources is there? I know this will require consideration of not only flood control measures but drought proofing as well, with retention ponds and dams in certain areas. My most specific question is: Is the Minister's department going to undertake a strategic planning for future requirements of our water in this province?

Mr. Lathlin: Let me say to the Member from Portage la Prairie that my colleague and I have been discussing that, maybe not to a great extent, but certainly we kept mentioning the need for developing a policy that would manage our water supply in a comprehensive way in Manitoba. I have given him some of those answers, I think.

He kept referring to some of the initiatives that we have come up with so far since we have been in office. But let me, Mr. Chairman, advise the Member that we talked about Bill 15—is it?—this morning. It gives me an opportunity to talk about that a little bit more, because this morning I did not get the opportunity. Bill 15 is just part of this overall planning that we are doing. In the fall we are going into this comprehensive overall review of how we should be managing water in Manitoba.

I was just looking at a report here, for example, a land drainage review that was done in the fall of 1997, winter of 1998—open houses were made. Now I have got a summary of the report here, and a bunch of recommendations that were made by that review process. The consultation that people keep referring to, consultation that may not be happening in this case, because we are responding in an emergency way to a court decision that was made recently that virtually rendered the Manitoba Government—I mean, we are not in that business

anymore, according to that court decision. In view of all the phone calls and representations that we were receiving from people, it was felt that we should move fast on that one particular component of water management.

We are, in fact, going to be involved in having consultation meetings and inviting people to come and tell us, probably much like what we are doing on the livestock stewardship consultation process. We will have people come in, and they will give us advice and ideas as to how this policy should look in the end. That is the water management policy of the Government of Manitoba.

I am very much interested in doing that because, number one, I do not think we have a choice, and I think, if we wait too much longer, it will become a very, very serious problem. We look at the flooding that is happening right now. I am not a professional engineer, I am not schooled in that area, but just common sense tells me that, because things have been allowed to go on in an uncontrolled way for so long, now we are having to pay the price.

Perhaps if we did not have this over 4300—was it kilometres or miles—of drainage ditches in Manitoba, I think it is 4300, perhaps we would not be in the position that we are in now. If there had been a plan formulated before and we were implementing that plan and managing water, including drainage, I do not think we would be in the position that we are in today. Today we are scrambling to get it under control. That is what we have in mind when we say we are going to do the overall assessment and see if we can come up with a plan that will address every facet of water management in Manitoba.

Mr. Faurichou: Thank you very much for the Minister's response. I appreciate this morning I wanted to ask questions of the Minister, too, and the Minister was, as I was, restricted by the committee's protocol.

I will say that the planning is very much lacking on a long-term basis. I am going to cite the Assiniboine River floodway, for instance. There was a great deal of property purchased by the Government of Manitoba for that channel. I, as one landowner, lost a great deal of property to

that—my grandfather, actually; it predates myself—but the Government agreed to sell back some of those properties to the landowners. Then, after that offer was placed by the Government for us to purchase back, another department came along and said, oh, no, no, please, this land we are going to retain.

There are so many departments involved in any particular waterway. I did cite the Assiniboine River floodway for one, which is exactly managed by five different branches or departments of government. In fact, the Department of Highways has the last say whether to put any water in there, because they have structures that go across that floodway. That is why I left with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) the thought pattern that we have to have a management team, where it is, effectively, one place where the decisions are made.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The time being 6 p.m., committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): 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 now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Education and Training.

Consideration of these Estimates left off on page 57 of the Estimates book, resolution 16.1. Administration and Finance. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Chair, there are two points that I committed to bringing back to the Committee yesterday with regard to agencies that we have agreements with separate from school divisions, in terms of outside agencies. I put into the record yesterday the Knowles Centre, St. Amant Centre and so forth. Marymount School has an agreement directly with the Department of Education and Training, as does the TRY program which is under the New Directions for Children, Youth and

Families, the Training Resources for Youth, and I will table that with the Committee.

The second commitment I made yesterday was to bring information back to committee—I will preface this a little bit. It was about the political candidacy of Dr. Curtis Nordman in the past. I want to put on the record before I state this activity that in the Department of Education and Training, individuals have every right to participate in political activity of their own choice. I know that we have in the Department individuals who involve themselves in political campaigns for the Progressive Conservative Party, in political campaigns for the Liberal Party and in political campaigns for the New Democratic Party. I assume that there are likely people involved with the the new Alliance Party, Reform Party and other such parties as well. My main interest, of course, is the degree of professionalism and service to the Department of Education that individuals working for the department bring with them.

Having said that, I am very proud of the Department, very proud of the staff of the Department. They do extraordinarily good work. I do not concern myself at all, as I mentioned earlier, with their political activities, nor do I think it is proper for me to do so.

In response to the Member for Fort Garry's (Mrs. Smith) question about Doctor Nordman. Apparently in 1969, Doctor Nordman, before he was a doctor, I expect he was somewhere in his early twenties at this time, did run for the NDP in Assiniboia riding during the Ed Schreyer victory of that year, and in 1977, Doctor Nordman did run for the NDP in St. James.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): I thank the Minister for that information, and I compliment him on his thorough answers of I know some of the difficult questions that have come up. I do appreciate your approach that way.

Today I do have a couple of questions, and then following that, my colleague Mr. Derkach I know has some series that he would like to pick up on as well, and, just to review, we have not passed anything for that reason. I think I mentioned earlier, Madam Chair, that we would

have to do things that way to allow for the colleagues to do that.

Madam Chair, my first question is: The Minister has told this committee that the change in funding formula—just to clean up on a couple of things because I do not want to go back. I just want to get through the Estimates in a timely manner, so if you will bear with me, I just have one more question about the Schools of Choice and the supplementary support.

The Minister has told this committee that the change in the funding formula from eligible students for resident students under 21 has very little effect on school divisions. Could the Minister please explain to this committee, if this is the case, why this change was made then from eligible students to resident students if, indeed, there was very little change that had occurred? Could the Minister please clarify why that change was even made?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, the short answer for that is that the change was designed to be fair to school divisions. Supplemental support is designed to be an equalization component in the formula, and from the standpoint of school divisions it is fairer to have resident students being the criteria as opposed to students that are eligible students.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I thank you for that clarification.

I just have one question around the Red River initiative. I just want to say that when we look through the Red River College new campus and the kinds of objectives that are there, I know this minister has stated that the CEI, the College Expansion Initiative, is one of the most major initiatives, and that is why Doctor Nordman or Mr. Nordman was placed there.

I just want to put on record that the Red River campus's intent is to be a world-class facility delivering leading-edge information technology and new media programs in a learner-centred environment. The Red River College will stand as a model for college, government and business co-operation in the new millennium. I would say that under this new initiative, it would be just to—and I am sure the

Minister's attention has been put on this—but just to have it on record, I think it is very important to note that the college initiatives are centred on business partnerships and availability of students within the business field.

* (15:00)

The objectives of the Red River College's new campuses will focus on careers for the new economy, information technology, new media, creative arts and film. These programs were selected for the new campus as they require the technology and rich learning environments best provided in a new facility. So these basically are reasons as to why these locations have been placed where they are placed in the downtown area. I know this has been a two-year plan, and it is something that this government and this minister has taken over. I know that there is careful attention put to all these variables. So I am just putting these on record to remind the Minister, Madam Chair, of these very important goals and objectives of the Red River College's new campus.

Another objective is a dynamic campus linked to the community. It provides RRC with opportunities for new partnerships that will benefit students, staff, and the college image. Locating the campus in the vicinity of the information technology, communications and arts industries will provide powerful synergy with college programs. I would like it on record, Madam Chair, for another very substantial reason for having those locations in place as pre-planned. Also, employment opportunities can be increased for Red River College's graduates when their learning takes place in the midst of future employers and amid fellow entrepreneurs.

Also, and I know this is something that this minister will be very interested in, it is something that this minister has mentioned as well, the links with Aboriginal agencies will allow Red River College to better address the needs of Aboriginal people, and that is another reason the Red River College initiative has been set up the way it is.

Also, a prominent location will provide opportunities to provide for private sector support through sponsorship, shared use and

joint initiatives. Also new media-rich learning environments require access to digital technologies which as you know are located in those downtown areas, broadband networks and the fastest fibre optic backbones available. We all know that these are all integral reasons why Red River College's new high technology campus belongs in Winnipeg's downtown.

A downtown campus will make the college accessible to learners, Madam Chair, residing in all areas of the city. It will create the greatest connections with knowledge industries, Aboriginal organizations and the college again. It will establish a college presence in the heart of Manitoba's information technology cluster which, as we know, is CyberVillage-Smart Winnipeg innovative corridor.

So we know, Madam Chair, that the development of a campus will be a catalyst for downtown economic, social and cultural renewal. I know these are all things that this minister is aware of. I know that in the decision making that is being made, I am sure this is definitely an integral part of the considerations that this minister is looking at.

The information technology and creative arts programs will reinforce the emerging business activity in the Exchange District, and ESL programs which must be located downtown can contribute to immigration initiatives in building a workforce for the 21st century. Also alliances with other downtown education providers will be enhanced and the addition of 1500 people to the downtown will create opportunities in the private sector for the provision of a broad range of goods and services typically required by college campus, of staff and students.

Madam Chair, there are many, many good reasons. Also, I would like it on the record in talking about the cost elements which I am sure is something we discussed yesterday in the creation of the CEI initiative and with the putting in place of Mr. Nordman. We went through the cost. One thing I want to point out is that government has consistently indicated that funding for capital works is severely constrained and that major projects are only considered when other funding is available, for example, fund-

raising, partnerships, other levels of government. Any plans for the Red River College to own a new facility must consider the ongoing operating costs such as taxes, utilities, maintenance, et cetera, as part of the funding requirements.

Madam Chair, I know this minister is very aware and very concerned about the fact that presently we are looking at leasing agreements as opposed to buying facilities. Also, deferred maintenance costs at existing post-secondary institutions are a clear indication of the difficulty that government and institutions experienced in maintaining facilities over time. I am sure this is something that we are all looking at, and I am sure this is something that the Minister will take into considerable consideration.

Also ownership requires, Madam Chair, continuous upkeep, and this may be an unmanageable liability for government and institutions. I know with the Minister's consideration of the Red River locations, outright purchases present some risks. I am sure this minister is taking a look at that as well. Outright purchase is not seen as a viable option for Red River community college, as Red River community college has no capital funds available, and the Government has indicated that there are no funds available for capital works of this magnitude so the College and the Government need a more capital-friendly solution. With the outright purchase the ownership risk is transferred to the College or the Government, and in 25 years the College will be the owner of a facility that may no longer meet its programming needs in the event that a new campus or a new building is created.

Experience across Canada demonstrated that educational assets that are created today are unlikely to be suitable for delivery in 25 to 30 years, so, Madam Chair, when we are talking about this Red River College without access to \$25 million in capital and the operating costs that go along with it, Red River College concludes that a public-private financing arrangement offers the greatest opportunity and the least risk for funding a new campus. So, looking at the whole project at this particular time, I know the Minister is aware that there are options downtown like Eaton's, the University of Winnipeg, Princess Street. These are options that

are available to the Red River College, and I know that with this College Expansion Initiative, this is all something that this minister will be looking at.

Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Minister: Could the Minister please outline to me and clarify—we talked at length yesterday about the post-secondary education, COPSE, and the new College Expansion Initiative. Could the Minister please clarify the function of this CEI initiative? What is the actual function as compared to what was in place previously?

Mr. Caldwell: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I will address the issue of the function of the College Expansion Initiative in its relationship with the Council on Post-Secondary Education and, in fact, the Deputy Minister's office. Maybe before doing so I will acknowledge the staff that are here with me again today: Doctor Levin, Doctor LeTourneau, Claude Fortier and Yolande Choiselet at the back of the room and thank them for coming. Also, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Mines is gracing us with their presence this afternoon as well, so I thank staff for coming. Thank you very much for being here.

With regard to the comments—

An Honourable Member: What about us?

Mr. Caldwell: Oh, I am sorry. Yes, of course. I neglected the Opposition, Madam Chairperson. I hesitate to thank the Opposition for being here, but truly we have had a good process here I think over the course of the last couple of weeks, and we do have the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) and the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), the former minister of Education, whom I have considerable respect for, and it is a pleasure to again be sitting in Estimates this afternoon. The Deputy actually would like to do this all year round.

With regard to the Red River campus, I will start there and just make a few remarks. I thank the Member for Fort Garry for putting into the record some of the reasons articulated for the Princess Street location that was outlined in the document she was reading from, the Red River College expansion document, and in broad

strokes I agree with the comments that she made earlier. Certainly the importance of fitting into the emerging information technology sector is an important one. The opportunity to liaise with business partners is certainly something that is of considerable importance, communications being adjacent to the communications industry.

* (15:10)

The communications industry is also very important. Certainly the idea of having a downtown campus is one that is of considerable importance. I note the two options that are most seriously being discussed, the educational hub on Spence Street and the Princess Street facility, are both located in the downtown core of the city of Winnipeg.

I would also note, Madam Chairperson, in terms of private-public partnerships, in Nova Scotia, the former Liberal government put into place a program of private-public partnerships for school building. I note that the Conservative government that was elected there in the not-too-distant past has cancelled that private-public partner for school buildings because of an estimated increase in costs of some 10 to 20 percent in terms of their analysis.

That is something that we are also factoring into our analysis. If, indeed, a new building is built and is determined that some new construction is required, all these factors will be analyzed. I think that the Red River community college has done a very good job, in fact, of analyzing what their vision is. It certainly is one that in the main is shared by government. We are committed, however, as I mentioned yesterday, to having a thorough review of the Red River building concept in relation to the College Expansion Initiative and undertaking some due diligence in terms of making the best use of the education dollar for education purposes. I think like the former administration, we believe very strongly in the sanctity as it were of the taxpayers dollar. We want to make sure in government that we have the best delivery, the best bang for the buck, the best delivery of education dollars.

That process is ongoing. It was recently announced in the press accurately that no

decision is imminent. We will be discussing this at the cabinet level, likely throughout the summer months. We note that there were no capital dollars budgeted last year nor are there any capital dollars this year. I think the Member commented about that in her remarks, so that any new project, whether or not it is a \$4-million-a-year lease or a \$4-million-a-year debenture depending on if it is a publicly owned building or privately owned building, certainly there are major capital dollars associated with that in any case whether it is private or public. But we are committed in government to doing due diligence to ensure that we have the best bang for the buck in term of education dollars. I believe I said yesterday, coined the phrase, that we want to put our dollars into brains and not bricks wherever we can.

With regard to the College Expansion Initiative and its relationship to the Council on Post-Secondary Education and the function of the interrelationship between the two branches of government, the College Expansion Initiative office will take the lead in working collaboratively with colleges to develop a four-year plan aimed at maximizing enrolments. It will also ensure the integration of individual college plans to achieve a co-ordinated approach to labour market development, targeting the strengths of the various colleges around the province to the sectors of the economy that they are best suited to support and will also take the lead in organizing public consultations to determine the direction being taken is consistent with the new stakeholders, primarily business and education stakeholders.

The College Expansion Initiative, as I outlined yesterday, is a major initiative of government. It aims at undertaking the most ambitious expansion of the college system in Manitoba's history. Government felt, and I think rightly, that the focus should be very much firmly on the expansion, and therefore the office was established. We felt that having a focus on the Expansion Initiative as opposed to being concerned with the other details of the college and university system was very, very important. Having said that, there is a very, very close working relationship, as indeed there should be, with the Council on Post-Secondary Education and the deputy's office so that there is a co-

ordinated approach to the college expansion and a co-ordinated approach that takes into account the evolution of programs and projects in the broader post-secondary environment, that is the university environment, and how they inter-relate.

It also should be noted that authority for programs does reside with the Council on Post-Secondary Education. It is obviously the primary body for the post-secondary level. It does look after the council. It does attend to the business of the college and university sector broadly in terms of capital, in terms of operating, in terms of programs and so forth.

However, the College Expansion Initiative office is dedicated completely to the doubling of enrolment in the college sector over the course of the mandated government and that focus is, as I said, a very, very important focus, a very, very important initiative to government, something that is very ambitious, and as I mentioned earlier, the most ambitious expansion in the college sector in terms of time lines and in terms of impact in the history of the province. If that answers the Member's question a little bit more clearly—I hope it does answer the Member's question more clearly.

Mrs. Smith: I thank the Minister for his answer. Just to go back a little bit more succinctly, I wanted to know the exact—you have given me a general overview. The Minister has given me a general overview about the College Expansion Initiative. Is there anything else, Madam Chair, that the Minister can sort of outline in bullets, the specifics of what this committee is all about? Is it generally looking at the college initiative?

I know Doctor Nordman has been brought on board with a cost of \$93,000 in salary and \$230,000 in total to open the office. I understand he does supervise two people, but to be quite honest, I would like to have—if the Minister would kindly be very succinct in the function of this committee or this College Expansion Initiative that Doctor Nordman is under.

Mr. Caldwell: As the Member noted, it is not a committee. It is a branch of the Department. The College Expansion Initiative is intended to be a catalyst for the growth and evolution of the

college system in Manitoba. As I mentioned, it is strongly supported by government which established the increase in training opportunities for all Manitobans as a priority of this mandate. The Initiative addresses the need to reverse the chronic underdevelopment of colleges which is hampering provincial prosperity and has indeed relegated Manitoba to the bottom of interprovincial training comparisons, and I know that that was a concern of the previous administration.

It was outlined in the Roblin report that was commissioned by the previous administration. I think that quite accurately the previous administration, as well as this one, has identified the colleges as being an area that requires special attention by government to start to begin the process of rectifying those numbers in terms of Manitoba's position vis-à-vis our neighbouring provinces, fellow provinces.

* (15:20)

It is expected that the College Expansion Initiative will address labour market needs by reducing important skill shortages, will pay particular attention to the needs of underserved groups, will enhance youth participation rate, will improve a student's success by concentrating on the retention of students in the college system and by enhancing graduation rates, will encourage innovative means by making the system more efficient, using prior learning assessments, information technology, different learning technologies, et cetera, and will stimulate work-based programming that improves the skills of those in the existing workforce.

The Initiative will operate under a number of assumptions, being that it will invest in cost-effective programming that will foster and maintain a comprehensive college system, that it will encourage programs and enhance the linkages between colleges, ACC, Keewatin Community College and Red River College in particular, between the colleges and the universities and between the colleges and the secondary school system in order to achieve a more co-ordinated approach to labour market development.

As I mentioned yesterday, I believe, when we were discussing the Spence Street site in our discussion on the Red River campus, we are very committed to trying to break down the artificial barriers that exist between institutions and the barriers that indeed exist between the post-secondary sector and the public school sector and, at the other end of the equation, the post-secondary sector and the workplace. So we are very much endeavouring to enhance the linkages between colleges and universities, between colleges internally and between those entering the post-secondary system and the public school system, as well as those exiting the post-secondary system into the workforce.

So it is expected that the college expansion issue, as I said, will enhance the linkages between the colleges and business and industry that have been carefully forged over the years. Again, I will acknowledge and pay tribute, frankly, to the very good work that the previous administration did on facilitating and fostering very positive relationships between the business community and our college sector. There has been a lot of work done in that regard over the last decade, and we continue in this new administration to believe that work should continue to be done in that regard.

The Initiative operates also under the assumption that, given the close connection between economic prosperity and training, the Expansion Initiative will ensure that new programming meshes with key socio-economic policy areas. This past year, an advance was made in this regard in terms of targeting nursing programs. I know at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon there is a nursing program being targeted to increase the output of nurses in the province of Manitoba. I know that the IT sector is very interested in developing new meshes with the college system, as is the education and training sector and the aerospace sector.

We also hope that the expansion initiative will build upon the strengths of the colleges through investments in new programs, refine their respective roles. By virtue of its size and location, of course, Red River will play a lead role in developing and maintaining the system's comprehensiveness. As I said in my remarks

about the Princess Street-Spence Street debate, existing infrastructure will be used as much as possible. We want to invest in brains over bricks as much as we can, understanding that infrastructure investment will have to be made, but we want to make the priority investment in humans and not in buildings.

The College Expansion Initiative will take the lead in working collaboratively with colleges to develop a four-year plan into maximizing enrolments, as I mentioned earlier. The colleges will, of course, develop programs and services that are relevant to the needs of their constituents, will create sustainable four-year rolling plans so that there can be a business plan, a vision of where we are going, and we are always looking forward in this regard and will report annually to government through the Initiative on the success in expanding enrolments.

The Council on Post-Secondary Education, in terms of their relationship, will continue to grant final approval on all program proposals, as has been established practice since the Council was formed. In terms of the College Expansion Initiative's commitment to health care and human services—I am just going to make brief mention of this because we are committed to targeting as best as we can also areas that are of importance to the economic and social health in the Province of Manitoba. This past year at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon, the licensed practical nurse program received \$940,000 from the College Expansion Initiative to secure 100 new seats for the LPN program at ACC. They also invested \$91,000 for the licensed practical nurse refresher program for pre-existing nurses that had been in the field to enhance their skills for 25 new seats in that area.

There is also the Comprehensive Health Care Aide program and Early Childhood Education program at ACC that was supported by the College Expansion Initiative to create a further 37 seats in the Health Care and Human Services sector.

At Red River community college, the College Expansion Initiative contributed funding towards the development of an Aboriginal nursing access program which anticipated the

creation of 10 new seats; as well as, the Health Care Aide program for the Winnipeg and regional centres, an investment of \$624,000 and the creation of 180 new seats; as well as, the Red River College's Nursing program to the level of \$855,000 in the creation of 90 new seats. In total, at ACC and Red River community college, 467 new seats were created in the Health Care and Human Services sector through the work of the College Expansion Initiative. I should say to date the Council on Post-Secondary Education has approved \$3.9 million for expanded and new programs at the three community colleges, ACC, Red River and Keewatin Community College, and that this investment is expected to result in 815 new seats.

So there is a great deal of work being done collaboratively between the College Expansion Initiative and the Council of Post-Secondary Education. We are endeavouring to the best of our ability to target our investment on sectors, as I said, of importance to the social and economic health of the Province of Manitoba and that sort of procedure will continue in future years as well.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I thank the Minister for that detailed answer. I just have one more question at this time, and then I am going to give the floor over to my colleague, Len Derkach. He has some questions for this committee as well for this minister.

Madam Chair, could the Minister please advise this committee: What will be the specific function of COPSE at this time now that the other initiative been introduced? Could the Minister please point out the similarities and differences?

Madam Chairperson: Could I just take this moment to remind the Member that members should be called by their constituency. I am sure it was an oversight.

Mrs. Smith: Oh, my apologies. My colleague the Member for Russell, my apologies.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, all of the statutory responsibilities of the Council on Post-Secondary Education continue to exist and will continue to be exercised. The Council on Post-

Secondary Education will be responsible for all decision-making and all advisement to government on programming, on operating, on capital. The College Expansion Initiative is given the task of focussing its energies on the College Expansion Initiative proper and gives advice to the Council on Post-Secondary Education on those areas for the Council of Post-Secondary Education to in turn make decisions to advise government.

* (15:30)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Madam Chair, I guess I would begin with a couple of remarks. As the critic for the post-secondary education side, I certainly may from time to time slip back in time to when I was privileged to have an opportunity to work in the Department, and I would ask the Minister and his staff to forgive me for slipping into that mode from time to time.

Indeed. I want to deal with the initiatives that have been undertaken by this government and to ask some questions as they relate to those initiatives. Because we are on the post-secondary side and the colleges side, I will just stay there for now, and then with the Minister's permission, we will slip back to some other post-secondary issues as well. Because we are discussing the two issues today as they relate to Red River community college, I do have some remarks and some issues that I want to deal with in that regard.

I guess I go back to 1987—even before that, 1986—when I think our community college structure was under a different organizational structure at the time. It was attached very closely to government. It did not have autonomy in any way, and, indeed, many of the decisions that were being made for the community colleges were being made by government and the Department. I was happy to be part of the initiative to separate the colleges from government and to give them their autonomy. I think, by and large, not because it was under my purview, but I think that was a move that was sort of overdue and one I think that has resulted in some positive actions on the side of colleges.

I think that as a result our colleges have been able to implement programs that are more relevant to today's society and today's economy and indeed have been more responsive on a more timely basis than they were in the past, because of the natural bureaucratic chain that one has to go through if something is attached to government. This is no reflection on the civil servants or on government. It is just the way the situation is.

I certainly cannot fault government for wanting to increase enrolment at our post-secondary institutions and to make our province one that is a leader in post-secondary education whether it is on the colleges side or the universities side, and, in principle, I would endorse that and support it.

This government has its own plan and has its own ideas on how to go about that, and, certainly, they have every right to do that, and the Minister has every right to put his stamp on the Department and on the expansion of these programs and on post-secondary education. I applaud him for that.

However, I ask these questions perhaps for clarification and because of the fact that I have not been involved in the Education portfolio now for a long time, and, certainly, the world moves on. It does not wait for us, so I am a little outdated, perhaps, and a little rusty, so I will ask the indulgence of the Minister. The new committee or council for the Expansion Initiative, is it a committee, is it a council, or is it a branch or is it a department?

Mr. Caldwell: It is an office. It is a branch of government reporting directly to the Deputy Minister. There are three staff: the Director, Curtis Nordman, and two support staff. So it is a branch in the respect that it reports directly to the Deputy.

If I might, just in response to the opening comments, I agree very much with the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) that enhancing college autonomy was I think a good decision of the previous administration. I also agree with him that I think responsiveness to industry need, in particular, but also local needs and regional needs is enhanced by having local boards who

have a far greater idea of what the pulse of the community is, in most respects, than the bureaucracy. As the Member noted, that is no slight on the bureaucracy. That is just a fact of having locally appointed boards being more responsive to their local communities.

I thank him for those remarks, and I agree with him in that regard.

Mr. Derkach: The whole thrust of this new branch is to work on expanding and, as the Minister has indicated, doubling the enrolment at specifically our community colleges and on the training side.

Now, I want to ask the Minister for some clarification in that respect. Are we talking doubling the enrolment at our community colleges or doubling the enrolment at the community college and the training side?

Mr. Caldwell: The primary doubling of enrolment is at the college side as opposed to the training. We are hoping that through prior learning assessments and co-ordination with workplaces that there can be some synergies created in terms of articulation of programs.

The program itself, the College Expansion Initiative, is a very ambitious program and targets an increase of roughly 6000 diploma and certificate students, but government is less concerned with absolute numbers than with achieving a range of objectives.

I mentioned some of those earlier in terms of the increase in the youth participation rate in colleges and increasing retention and graduation rates, specifically the need to pay particular attention to the Aboriginal community and be solidly connected with key social and economic policy areas. So it is not simply a numbers game but a serious attempt to redress historical issues and to revitalize the college sector to meet future demands.

But the program itself, the College Expansion Initiative, the objective, and a very ambitious objective it is, is an increase of approximately 6000 diploma and certificate students in the college sector, building on synergies, however, in workplaces and for prior

learning assessments. That is something that needs to evolve further yet.

As the previous government was interested in doing and the current government is interested in doing, we want to have articulations take place where they best meet the needs of individual learners and are most responsive to the needs of industry and the business community generally in terms of a sectoral approach.

Mr. Derkach: Can the Minister tell me what the enrolment at our community college campus is? I am talking about the three colleges in Manitoba. Is IUN part of that? So it is just the three community colleges.

Mr. Caldwell: Yes.

Mr. Derkach: Can the Minister tell me what the enrolment at the three community colleges was as of September 1999?

Mr. Caldwell: In 1998-99 there were 7521 students enrolled in terms of full-time equivalents in the college system.

Mr. Derkach: So the Minister's objective is to, within the mandate of this government, which is four, four and a half, or five years, to bring that enrolment up to 15 000.

Mr. Caldwell: I have just been advised that the full-time equivalents include students that are in addition to certificate and diploma students. So the more accurate number is in the 12 000 to 13 000 range, the total enrolment.

We are trying to double the certificate and diploma program students. So the number that is reflected in the 7500 that I quoted earlier is in addition. Factored into that number are students that are not in diploma or certificate programs. So an accurate number would be in the 12 000- to 13 000-student range, as opposed to the 15 000-student range. Hopefully, we will also, however, increase participation rates in students that are not taking diploma and certificate programs.

Mr. Derkach: So, in essence, the Minister is basically telling me that what he means by

doubling the enrolment at our community colleges is basically the doubling of the certificate and diploma full-time-equivalent students who number 6000-plus at the present time, I guess 6500 or so, give or take 100. We are not going to quibble about—in essence, what the goal and objective of the Department and the Minister is to double that number of students to somewhere in that range of 13 000 students.

*(15:40)

Mr. Caldwell: That is right; it is credentialled students that the target is. We are hoping for, as I mentioned in an earlier remark, and I think there is merit in the Member for Russell's comments about being less concerned with absolute numbers and achieving a range of objectives. But the 12 000-to-13 000 student figure is accurate, and it is designed in terms of our mark for success would be college and diploma students.

Mr. Derkach: Does the Minister have a plan with regard to the process of doubling the enrolment of the students? I ask that question quite seriously, and not in any facetious way or to try to pin the Minister up against the wall about anything. This is a question that I think is legitimate, because when you have an aggressive plan of that nature or a goal of that nature, lofty as it might be, you have to have a plan on how you intend to achieve that. I know that the Initiative, the Branch, will certainly be working on putting that together, I would think. But certainly the Minister has to have some idea or concept of how that can be achieved in light of the fact that Assiniboine Community College is jammed to the rafters at the present time. Red River community college, as we all know, is looking at additional space. Keewatin Community College I think is limited in terms of its ability to expand. In addition to that, there is the need for resources of teaching staff, certainly administration. There is a need for infrastructure.

So all of this requires significant capital and operating monies, and I guess I need to know from the Minister whether or not he has a progressive plan of expanding the college enrolment on a year to year basis, or is it basically a shotgun approach in the hopes that we are going to attract enough students to the

college system over the course of the four and a half years. I say this because, in all of this—and I know that Doctor Nordman is very much aware of the need of marketing our community college system if you are going to expand it.

I can tell you that right at the present time, we have droves of students who are leaving Manitoba and are attending post-secondary education outside of our province this coming fall. I come from a small community. I would have to tell you that from that community alone there is approximately a third to better students leaving our province to attend post-secondary institutions outside of the province.

Now, somehow we have to create a climate that will attract these students back into Manitoba. I hate to admit this, but it is a fact that I have two of my own children who are leaving Manitoba to attend post-secondary institutions outside of the province. I am a little embarrassed by the fact that it is a province that I have taken a great deal of pride in, one that I have tried to promote and tried to encourage people to come into. Hopefully, they will come back someday.

The reason that many of these students are leaving is simply because we do not offer the types of programming that young people are looking for today. It is not a fault of this government. It is not a fault of anyone in particular since community colleges do have their economy, but I believe that we need to do a better job in terms of identifying the kinds of educational needs and educational aspirations that young people have out there today and the kinds of employment opportunities that these young people are going to be pursuing in the future.

I am sure that surveys by the Department have been done, but somehow it seems to me that we are missing the mark if we are losing that many students to outside colleges and outside universities. I guess, coming back to my question, is whether or not the Minister has challenged or charged his new branch or whether he has a plan on how we are going to go about doubling our enrolment in our colleges.

Mr. Caldwell: I thank the Member for his remarks. I think they are salient. The points he

makes are very salient, and certainly they are ones that the Department and myself share in terms of concerns and in terms of observations.

The College Expansion Initiative is a very ambitious initiative of government. It will be a difficult initiative to achieve. Doctor Nordman has been working with colleges and industry since assuming the office and more precisely has been spending a great deal of time on the Red River community college capital program recently, but we have a four-year horizon, four-and-a-half-year horizon, as the Member notes, in terms of this initiative. Doctor Nordman, myself and the Deputy have met quite extensively with industry in the months since forming government.

We have had numerous meetings with the colleges to best define, as the Member for Russell notes, what the expectations of industry are in particular, what the needs of industry are. Our desire is to target as best as we can resources and investment towards being responsive to industry. I mentioned earlier the health care industry, the information technology industry, aerospace industry and indeed subsidiary services to those industries, all of which have a great deal of demand and a great deal of capacity for helping in the economic and social growth of the province of Manitoba.

Indeed, this sort of approach in terms of having a strong industry-post-secondary college dialogue and consultation and indeed the targeting of investment towards industries needs, was an opinion that was strongly expressed at the economic summit that the Premier hosted some months ago. We are responding to that request of industry, to develop a program around what their medium and long term and indeed short-term needs are.

There is a four-and-a-half year horizon on this. The work has just recently begun. I think the previous administration as well as this administration have a very strong desire to articulate with the high schools of the province of Manitoba, with the Apprenticeship and Training branch of the Department and with the universities of Manitoba as best we can, to maximize the resources that are currently existing in the system. In terms of capital, the

Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) notes the capital needs that Assiniboine Community College has, that Red River College has. We are looking at options ranging from using existing capacity in the public school sector to leasing existing space in the private sector at community spaces that may exist in the community as well as the public undertaking of construction for capital infrastructure.

We are also looking at distance education and a tie to the Campus Manitoba program that the Member knows well from his days as Minister of Education, and, in fact, knows intimately well as the creator of that particular program. So the plan that government has for the College Expansion Initiative, and I mentioned it is a very ambitious plan, but it truly is one that is developing now, looking at a four- to five-year horizon, working very closely with industry to identify sectors and identify opportunities in Manitoba that the college sector can help serve and further develop, and indeed can provide jobs and real opportunity for growth for people coming out of the college sector.

*(15:50)

Incidentally, in Manitoba, I have been advised that there is a net migration of students. Manitoba imports more students than we export in the recent past, which is good news. I do not like seeing any exports. I know one of my degrees is from outside the province, myself, and I came back to the province. I know many of my friends my age from Brandon University days had a similar experience, and I hope that the Member's children come back to Manitoba as well. It is the best place in Canada to live. I think we can all agree on that here.

Some mobility is good. It gives an opportunity for young people to experience other parts of the country or other parts of the world, for that matter. My executive assistant that was brought on a couple of months ago spent three years in Montréal, two years in Amsterdam and a year Bangkok in his post-secondary education, and I am very happy to have him back in Winnipeg, and I am, in fact, quite surprised to have him back in Winnipeg after seeing those very worldly locales. Some mobility is good if it brings a fresh perspective to the province, but we

certainly do like to import more students than we export. That is, in fact, the case right now.

If I might, I hate to ask for this because it is so early, would it be possible to take a five-minute break?

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute recess? *[Agreed]*

The Committee recessed at 3:52 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:12 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Caldwell: Just quickly, I would just like to thank the Member for the break and welcome the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux) to our table.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I would like to continue in the area of the community college expansion. I guess I have some questions about whether or not it is feasible to achieve the goals that the Minister has outlined for us in the period of time that the Minister has outlined, as well. I would like to, just for reference sake, ask the Minister what the enrolment at our community colleges was in the fall of 1987?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, if it pleases the Member, I can have that information for you tomorrow. In our files here, we just go back to '96-97 right now, so we will bring that figure in.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the Minister for that. I did not expect him to have that at his fingertips, and certainly it would be very acceptable to deal with them at another sitting.

Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Minister with regard to the expansion of enrolment, now the Minister when he makes reference to the expansion of community colleges he talks about the expansion in numbers of students that are going to be attending the institutions. I would like to ask the Minister what

his plans are with regard to program expansion at the community colleges at the same time?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, it is a combination of both the new students and new programs that we are trying to achieve. In terms of the development of new programming through the Initiative, it will be done in a consultative manner. There are currently extensive discussions taking place between Doctor Nordman and the three community colleges in the province. These will be followed by discussions with other stakeholders. In fact, some of those discussions have already begun to take place. In this fashion, we hope to ensure that the investment that we are making in the college system in the province of Manitoba provides the maximum return to the people of Manitoba.

I will report, and I did previously, about two important programs that have been approved through the Initiative, both which are designed towards alleviating the pressure on the hospital system. I made mention of those two programs a little earlier in terms of the \$900,000 investment at Assiniboine College for the LPN program to be delivered throughout the province and another million dollars, which has been allocated over the next two years to create the diploma nursing program offered at Red River community college and the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

I think that the Member makes a very good point when he talks about the very real challenge that exists in doubling the number of college spaces providing for some 6000 new spaces over the course of the mandate of this government. The goals of the College Expansion Initiative will not be easy. They are very, very ambitious goals. Statistics Canada accounts college students are probably harder to account than our university students, because courses vary so much in length from six months to two years basically in the college system. So they are little bit more difficult to get statistical data on.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

But the number of 6000 has been estimated as the number that would satisfy the Expansion

Initiative. That is, as I said earlier, a very ambitious one, and I think the Member is right in recognizing that there are going to be significant challenges in achieving that objective. But is a goal; it is a lofty goal, and it is something that we are committed to striving to achieve and indeed have begun to expend resources towards in the health care sectors that I outlined a few moments ago.

Mr. Derkach: Can the Minister tell me how many high school graduates there were as of June 2000 in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Caldwell: The best estimates of numbers this year, and it will have to be that at this stage, but the estimates for graduates in the high school system, including the ALC graduates who have high school equivalencies, are in the neighbourhood of 12 000 graduates. There are approximately 15 000 students that enter into the final year of high school and approximately 12 000 who graduate, that is give or take a number.

Mr. Derkach: If the Minister is anticipating doubling the enrolment in our colleges, then what he is telling me is that 50 percent of the students who graduate from our high schools would be entering the college system in order to be able to double the enrolment at our community colleges. What programs does the Minister intend to launch to try and attract these students to the community college system?

Mr. Caldwell: It is not just the high school graduates that comprise the pool of potential Manitobans who enter the college programs. Of course, most programs are two-year programs, so even going at that, the pool would be double the 15 000. But there are also individuals in the workforce that are coming back into the college program, individuals from other provinces in Canada. Essentially the target for the increase in enrolment, frankly, is any Manitoban that is eligible who is not participating in the college sector.

So that is adult learners, high school students, those who are existing in the workforce right now who are looking to enhance and improve their skills, indeed those who are employed and whose employer wants them to

enhance their skills. So the percentage is still very high, I do acknowledge that, but it is not just drawn from that pool of high school graduates.

*(16:20)

Mr. Derkach: I understand that, Mr. Chair, but nevertheless, that is the greatest source of draw, I would say, for our community college system, unless we are going to be trying to draw students from outside the province. To me, that seems to be contrary to what we are trying to do for students in Manitoba, although we do welcome students from outside the province.

Mr. Chair, can the Minister describe for us what his projected costs for capital will be in order to accommodate the doubling of the enrolment of the community colleges?

Mr. Caldwell: I just wanted to note that the average of the college student this past year, just to confirm with Doctor LeTourneau, is 27 years old. So that illustrates that the colleges are drawing from a base that is substantially more than just high school graduates. I do acknowledge that high school graduates, of course, provide the—there is a seamlessness that takes place when high school graduates go into the community college, but the average age of a college student in Manitoba in the recent past is 27 years old. So it is broader than just the college student, although I do acknowledge that the percentage is still quite high at any rate.

In terms of the Estimates for capital expenditures for the college expansion, we are a little early in the day in that regard. The one expansion that is on the table right now, the proposed Red River community college campus, is currently going through a process of due diligence within government to ascertain the best bang for the buck, as I mentioned earlier, in terms of the education dollar. We fully expect that there will be some capital needs likely associated with all three colleges in the province, but we are determined to exhaust existing capacity and existing infrastructure where it exists. Prior to expending any capital dollars, we want to put the resources into brains and not bricks, which is becoming a tired phrase for me

right now, but it is one that illustrates our desire very accurately.

So that process of ascertaining what capital requirements are needed has just begun. It is concentrated right now on the Red River proposed expansion in the city of Winnipeg. It is a discussion that is ongoing, but it is early in the day for that at this stage.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, the Minister has to have some idea of the cost, because you do not make commitments without knowing what your potential costs could be with regard to capital. I do not know what the value of the infrastructure is for the 6000 or 7500 students that we have in the public system at the present time, but it is substantial. I would say that it will not necessarily double the capital costs, but indeed there has to be significant capital cost allocation in order to be able to accommodate those students. Now I do not care if you accommodate them in existing infrastructure or you have to build new. There is still a cost to it.

Certainly the Minister has to have some idea of what that implication would be if you are going to double the enrolment. Can the Minister shed any light on what that might be in the course of the next four years? I do not want a finite number but to give us some indication of the kind of investment that really needs to be made.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Chairperson, I think the Member touches on a point that is important. One of the major challenges of the College Expansion Initiative will be to expand programming while minimizing expenditures on infrastructure. We hope to achieve this through the innovative use of technology, the development of partnerships with other delivery agents through training in the workplace, through the use of underutilized public facilities that can assist in making the training dollars of the Initiative go farther. New capacity will be entertained; that is accurate, but only as an option after a thorough examination of other available options.

Adult learning centres, for example, in the province of Manitoba added some 6000 students to the education system with very little or no

additional capital; so, it can be achieved. That has been demonstrated through the tremendous expansion of adult learning centres. I do not think that there is going to be no cost by any means. I think there is going to have to take place some infrastructure investment. Our determination is to minimize that infrastructure expansion and maximize the human resource investment in young Manitobans and students.

I do not have a guesstimate for the Member in terms of capital infrastructure. I do know that there is a lot of existing capacities, and through the innovative use of technology and so forth, developing partnerships with other delivery agents, training in the workplace, that there is a lot of capacity that exists now without having to invest in large-scale capital expansion. The colleges, of course, as regional centres have a number of storefront facilities that exist throughout the province, but it really does depend on the programs, as well.

In terms of the nursing programs, there are some needs that the existing system may not be able to fulfil. For example, nursing students need labs while business administration students need classrooms and perhaps IT capability. So it depends on the programs, and it depends on the existing capacities for those particular programs. In the aerospace sector, the cultural sector, or indeed even the agri-food sector, there are likely existing capacities within the workplace, within the existing infrastructure of the aerospace industry, the existing infrastructure of the cultural industry, culture-theatre industry. So it does truly depend on numbers related to specific areas.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Where new programming is offered, it does also depend very much on what the analysis of the existing infrastructure in the regions is. That process is underway. I know that there is going to be some investment, but we are trying to minimize the investment in capital infrastructure.

The one item of note that is a little bit in the public eye, right now, of course, is the Red River College expansion in downtown Winnipeg, and even that process is undergoing a fairly rigorous

analysis in terms of due diligence, targetting educational dollars to educational purposes. Those deliberations are taking place right now within the Department, and cabinet will have a discussion on that in the future, but we do want to ensure, as I had mentioned earlier, the best investment in human resources, the maximum investment in human resources, the maximum investment in young Manitobans, in Manitoba learners, adult learners, as opposed to building.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, far be it for me to give advice to the Minister or to suggest things because, indeed, I am sure his staff and his colleagues will have much of that for him as well, but presently in Manitoba we do have a number of high schools that are in excellent condition that have been closed, especially here in the city of Winnipeg, almost new high schools. We also have, throughout the province, facilities that, especially if the Minister moves with the issue of redistribution of school division boundaries, there could be some redundant space coming available as a result of that. Although nobody wants to touch that, I think it is a reality.

* (16:30)

Now I go back to my days as Minister. We visited a college in Athabasca where there were no students in it at all. Although the model is not necessarily one that I would want to see duplicated in its entirety here in Manitoba, because I do believe we have some things that are probably even better than what they were offering through Athabasca, I do think that that is another possibility of attracting students to our college system.

I am wondering whether or not this branch the Minister has created is charged with the responsibility of looking at all forms of delivery of community college education, and post-secondary education for that matter. I am not just limiting it to community college and certificate and diploma programs but indeed to all post-secondary delivery through the distance delivery method.

Mr. Caldwell: Campus Manitoba will feature prominently in this endeavour. The Council on Post-Secondary Education, I know, does have a considerable capacity to advance technology-

based education in the province. I know that the College Expansion Initiative will also be looking very seriously at the innovative use of technology in the delivery of educational programming throughout the province.

It is something that considerable energy is spent on in the Department now. I know that Doctor LeTourneau is very interested in it. I know that the Campus Manitoba program that was established by the Member for Russell when he was Minister of Education is something that has proved very valuable in terms of providing quality education to remote areas of the province, and it is something that this government also places great value on.

The answer to the Member's question is that the Council on Post-Secondary Education as well as the College Expansion Initiative both have an interest in maximizing the use of information technologies in the delivery of education throughout the province of Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson, if I might just acknowledge that there has been a shift change. The Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) and the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) have replaced some of my colleagues in the committee room right now, and I welcome them. *[interjection]* Well, I try and be nice, you know.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I would like to know from the Minister: Who has the final decision with regard to the location of a campus? Is it the Department? Is it the Council on Post-Secondary Education, or is it the community college itself? I guess, I refer specifically to how the decision will be made with regard to Red River community college and where its campus will be located. Is that left to the Board of Governors of the college? Is it left to COPSE or does the Government take responsibility for that decision?

Mr. Caldwell: Like most areas of life, Madam Chairperson, it fundamentally depends upon who is paying primarily, but in terms of-

An Honourable Member: The public.

Mr. Caldwell: The public dollars. When the public is paying, it is quite obvious that the decision resides with cabinet.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, is the Minister telling me that cabinet will make the decision as to the location of the community college campus?

Mr. Caldwell: I guess, the point is that cabinet will decide whether it will invest public resources in a project or not.

Mr. Derkach: That is a different matter, Madam Chair. My question has to do with location. The investment of the dollars has to lie with Treasury Board and cabinet, we understand that, because that is done through grant allocation to either the Council on Post-Secondary Education or specifically to the Red River community college board in terms of capital funds. I am asking the question about the decision on location which is quite another matter, and I think that flows from the autonomy of colleges. I am asking who specifically will have the final decision with regard to the location of the campus, the new addition to the campus.

Mr. Caldwell: Well, there is always a consultation in this regard. I do not think government would tell any college or university that you shalt do this or you shalt not do that. We would not instruct, for example, Red River community college to build a campus in Brandon, to take a hypothetical, but I think that the point is that there is very intrinsically a relationship between the major funder of a campus or project and the potential for that project to proceed.

In terms of an institution desiring to build a campus or undertake a construction project in a location wherever it may occur in the province of Manitoba, cabinet would decide whether or not it would support by putting public dollars into such a decision. So there is a direct relationship, I think, between the funds allocated to a particular construction project and the decision of whether or not that project can proceed or not.

Mr. Derkach: So what the Minister has just told me is that cabinet will decide on the location by

either allowing or not allowing funds to flow depending on whether or not the college or campus expansion is in a location that cabinet agrees with. If cabinet does not agree with it, they would show their disagreement by not flowing the funds.

Mr. Caldwell: I recall that the previous government was quite unhappy when universities committed to own their new buildings. There was a removal of the grant in lieu of taxes and the establishment of universities being responsible for their taxation, which, I think, was a reasonable decision, frankly, because government does have the stewardship of public resources. Something that colleges and universities are not entrusted with. It is the role of duly elected provincial legislators.

The point I guess I am trying to make is that as the trustees of public funds, when a college or university makes a request of government for public funds to be used in the construction of a project, government has the responsibility as well as the right to review that request, make a determination in its best wisdom what is in the public interest and to act accordingly.

The Government can decide whether or not it would fund a project based upon its best assessment of the particular project. I think that that is how a decision in this regard would be made. The Government would decide whether or not it wants to fund, whether it is a Red River project or any project—government gets the proposal and government determines whether or not it wants to fund it and is the main resource for colleges that would either allow that project to proceed or stop that project from proceeding because, as we all know, it costs money to build the building. So, while there is autonomy in terms of the college's governance, and in terms of the decisions that the colleges make, truly there is a partnership between colleges and the provincial government, or between universities and the provincial government for that matter, and is the major funder for college infrastructure. The Government has considerable powers in determining what project succeeds or what project does not succeed.

* (16:40)

The matter involves issues that go beyond education. For example, in the Red River case, it involves the City of Winnipeg as well as the business community. Government, of course, is ensuring that all interests are considered in this particular matter, education considerations or renewal considerations and so forth. That process is right now underway in terms of the due diligence that is taking place in the assessment and analysis of Red River expansion in the city of Winnipeg. As I said previously, both today and yesterday, if there is a building to go up—and that is not determined yet; we are still analyzing existing capacity—government will determine what the best utilization of educational dollars is for educational purposes.

It is noteworthy, I think, to again state that both of the particular projects that have had media attention recently are both in the downtown area, that both have urban renewal implications, that both have educational implications. But, as the major funder, government will put its resources into the area that it determines is most appropriate, and that, in fact, by implication, will make the decision on whether or not a building goes up and, indeed, where that building would be located.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, this is quite an incredible statement by the Minister, because I do not recall since autonomy and since university autonomy where government has really directed the location of a particular building. Now, if the University of Manitoba wants to build an agriculture building or build a science building or whatever it might be, government does not dictate where that building should be placed. Brandon University, when Brandon University expanded its library or built on to facilities that it needed, government did not become involved at telling them where and how to build their buildings. Of course, they come to government with their proposals, and the Council on Post-Secondary Education, I would think, would have knowledge of what the university or the college is doing. But, in terms of directing a location of a particular part of campus, it would be somewhat unusual for government to get itself involved in directly.

So what the Minister is telling me is that he is basically taking some of the autonomy away

from the community college by not allowing them then to choose the location of their college expansion, but, indeed, government will make a decision based on government priorities, I guess.

Mr. Caldwell: Well, I think, Madam Chairperson, the salient point in this regard is that Red River community college already has a campus, University of Manitoba has a campus. If any institution wanted to build off-campus, it would be an issue with government. We would undergo a process of due diligence and determine whether or not we wanted to support that particular expansion. If Red River community college or any institution had their own resources and were not dependent on government, there would be far less of an issue here.

Since there are public dollars involved, significant public dollars involved, upwards of \$100 million over 25 years, government has a fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba to make sure that those dollars are spent in the best interests of the province of Manitoba as determined by the elected representatives of the people of Manitoba. So, if we determine in government not to invest in a specific project, because we do not think that those public dollars are being used to the best advantage, then I think that is a reasonable and responsible decision that indeed is within the purview of government to make, a decision that is within the purview of government to make.

I take the Member's points and respect those points, but I think it is clear, and I want to make it clear, that we are not interested in directing and interfering with the management of campus lands at all. Off-campus, of course, all bets are off. At the end of the day, the provincial government through the Council on Post-Secondary Education and, indeed, through Treasury Board and cabinet, controls public funds, and we are not going to relinquish control of public funds.

Frankly, it would be irresponsible to relinquish control of public funds to a non-elected body, a non-publicly elected body. So I understand the concern of the Member and indeed the concern of the College in this regard.

But I also understand and am responsive to, primarily, the taxpayer of the province of Manitoba. I guess that is where the point of the debate is. We in government are responsible for those tax dollars, and we have to apply due diligence in each and every case when tax dollars are expended. It is in the interest of the people of Manitoba that due diligence be taken on this issue, indeed, on any issue where public dollars are expended, and that is what is occurring now. Whether or not a building is built, whether or not a building is built at Princess Street, whether or not a building is built at Spence Street really will be dependent upon the analysis that is underway within the Government on how the education dollar is best spent. But there will be a rigorous process of analysis that takes place before any commitment of public dollars on this or any issue that comes before the Department.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I am not suggesting that the Government should not have any involvement in decisions of this magnitude and of this importance. However, as I recall the process, or perhaps I am not familiar enough with the process, it would seem to me that the body wanting to expand an institution would approach government first of all for funding and then would also share with government its location and rationale for the location. Government's responsibility is to discuss with, get a better understanding of and, at the end of the day, decide whether or not that investment should be made.

My question is specifically to location. I guess I have to say to the Minister that I do not believe that government should involve itself directly in where the location of a campus should be. Understandably, this is significant money, and this is a significant decision. Certainly government, through its vehicles, should have either some influence or some input into looking at alternatives. That I do not object to, and that I would expect any prudent government department and body would do. But, in terms of having the ultimate say at the end of the day, it would seem to me that if we believe in autonomy, and if we believe in the goals of education, and if we believe that people who have been elected to those positions are responsible, then, after all is said and done

through the negotiation process, certainly it should not be a case where government directs the location of a campus. I guess this is where the Minister and I disagree.

Nevertheless, I would like the Minister to explain the process that his government will undertake in order to determine at the end of the day the location of the campus for Red River, the downtown campus.

* (16:50)

Mr. Caldwell: I appreciate the remarks of the Member. I guess in a minor part that we will have to agree to disagree. I think in terms of Keewatin Community College, for example, which is a college that was established many, many years ago now. Government was involved in determining the location of that particular campus.

I fully expect that government will be involved in discussions surrounding the college or university of the North, when and if that particular project comes to fruition in terms of making the best strategic decision for the people of Manitoba, in terms of where that college or university of the North should locate, if indeed it locates in one location, if it takes wing at all.

I appreciate the remarks, though. I think, however, that there may be a difference of opinion, or indeed, there is a difference of opinion. The Province of Manitoba, as the public trustee of the taxpayers' dollar, does, I think, have a very real responsibility for ensuring that that dollar is invested in a way that best benefits the people of Manitoba. If that involves supporting or not supporting a particular location for any college expansion or, indeed, I would daresay any expansion at all where public dollars are spent in any area of government, then I think that we would be remiss in our responsibility as government in not taking that into consideration in how public dollars are expended.

I should also comment that autonomy is not an absolute concept. It has constraints, to be sure, when it involves significant public resources. While I respect autonomy and certainly the vast, vast, vast majority of decisions that are made at all of our public post-

secondary institutions are decisions that are made at the board level, from time to time, government does involve itself in those decisions both in a positive sense and in a negative sense depending on your perspective on those decisions when public dollars are expended. That has been the case historically in the Province of Manitoba, and it will be the case long after this government and succeeding governments are gone.

It would have been prudent, I believe, in the issue that we are dealing with right now in terms of the Red River expansion, it would have been prudent for Red River College to come to government, Department of Education, for approval prior to moving forward with the planning of a new building on Princess Street. It had been discussed for some time, but there was no real due diligence of a range of options presented to government. It was almost as if government was presented with a *fait accompli* with regard to Princess Street.

Certainly, when I asked for information on the due diligence that had been undertaken in the Red River building, when I asked for comments on the alternatives that were explored by Red River and Government Services with regard to the Princess Street campus, I was surprised that there had not been any extensive analysis of any other site. It was focussed all on one site, which is a very unusual thing to take place in government or, indeed, in any business. Typically, you look at a range of options and you make best judgments upon the pros and cons of those particular options. So, I was quite surprised at that.

I should also note that the first year distance education sites that were put in place around the province of Manitoba were not chosen by the universities. I note the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) is kind of giggling about that particular one, because he was hoisted on his own petard in that regard.

But there are public policy decisions that are made when public dollars are spent, based upon the best understanding of maximizing the use of resources by government. That has been the case in the past, it is the case now and it will be the case in the future. Certainly my hope is, as well

as my expectation, that we will have a project that proceeds that is responsive to people, to Manitobans, first and foremost. If that means that a building is developed at Princess Street, then so be it. If it means that a building is developed at Spence Street, then so be it. If it means that existing capacities are utilized, then so be it. But the real principle that needs to be stressed in this regard and needs to be satisfied in this regard is the principle that dollars are spent where they make the most educational impact on human beings, on Manitobans. That is certainly what we are trying to do in this case.

I certainly have my own views about the Princess promenade and, quite frankly, the extraordinary reuse of architecture on that particular site, and how it complements the Exchange District very profoundly. I have my views on the Spence Street site and how it complements our objective of trying to have increased articulation between the university and college sector on the Spence Street site. I also have a feeling about the maximum use of resource dollars and using existing capacities. All of this is going into the next analysis. However, in the final analysis, the analysis that the Province is going to undertake is how can we maximize educational resources for the benefit of Manitobans.

I guess you are going to have another laugh, the Member for Russell is going to have a laugh again, because I just got The Colleges Act from Doctor LeTourneau. It tells me the powers of the Minister under section 4, subsection 1: "The minister may . . . (c) designate where campuses, including regional campuses, of a college will be located and the range of college programs and services to be offered at a by campus of the college." So very directly the Minister and the Government are empowered to make the decisions that we are talking about here today.

Of course, though, it always is a partnership between institutions and the Government and the business community. Frankly, as we move towards greater integration between all sectors of the province in this regard, which, I think, as I mentioned earlier, the previous government also believed in this and this current government also has a very strong interest in. So, as we move forth, this debate will continue long after we are

gone here. I hope that the staff have not jeopardized future employment by their helpfulness to this minister, their minister here today. Thank you for that.

Mr. Derkach: We can get into a toss here because, if the Minister would also check with staff, he would know that the FYDE program was in its infancy at that time. It was the first initial thrust that FYDE—there were locations chosen in the province. I will admit any day, any time that it was trying to distribute university education throughout the province in some fashion. Whether it was correct or not certainly can be subject of some debate.

But this is a different matter because we are talking about college autonomy. Yes, the Act does stipulate that indeed the Minister may have the choice at the end of the day as to the location of a campus. I think that that refers to a government deciding whether or not there should be a campus in northern Manitoba or in a remote region of the province to try and accommodate the needs of people in those regions. But I do not think that it refers specifically to choosing between one location and another in a given geographic area, whether it should be on main street in Thompson or on a side street in Thompson.

* (17:00)

I do not think that is the intent of the legislation or the Act. In this case, clearly the Minister has said that there is a difference of opinion between the community college, Red River College, and his government and that indeed the partnership is one which sees the advantages of two locations, each of a different perspective.

All I am trying to get from the Minister is what prevails at the end of the day. Is it going to be the Government's decision or the Minister's decision, or is, in fact, there going to be a true and meaningful analysis done through the community colleges who have autonomy, who have responsibility for delivering programs, and then it is up to them to sell the Government on why they have chosen one location over another?

Having said that, I also recognize the importance of articulation between our universities and our community colleges. I am sure that his staff will also ascertain that that was one of the issues that we dealt with fairly directly back when I was in government. I am sure we can always pull something out of that chapter of this provincial history and say, well, you did this and you did that.

An Honourable Member: Misspelled signs.

Mr. Derkach: But that was not the Minister's responsibility.

I have to tell you that, yes, there were issues like that that we had to make decisions on. At that time, we did not have such a thing called college autonomy. Colleges were tied very directly to government and that had many drawbacks to it as well. So, yes, government was involved even too directly in many of those decisions.

I guess what I am asking the Minister is whether or not he is prepared to give some latitude in this decision so that indeed the college can make its case as to why they have chosen that particular location. If they have not considered another location, then the Minister is very justified in saying have you looked at other locations and have you looked at the advantages of other locations. At the end of the day, I am hoping that the decision will be one that is reached through consensus or through a lot of discussion rather than government directing the location of the college.

Mr. Caldwell: In responding, just an acknowledgement, I think the five location choices were good ones for—[interjection] Well, no, I think they were. I think the decisions in terms of the locations were responsive to the regions of the province, and I think the Member as minister made good recommendations to his cabinet colleagues in that regard.

We are also trying to achieve good decisions with this particular issue. We are trying to achieve the best result for the people of the province of Manitoba. I know that the Member talks about remote regions, the difference between locating a college in a remote region,

whether it is The Pas or Thompson or elsewhere in the province, vis-à-vis locating a college in the downtown of the city of Winnipeg.

I know, coming from rural Manitoba, that many of my constituents, and I am sure the Member's constituents, consider the core area of the city of Winnipeg a pretty remote location when you are living outside of the city of Winnipeg. In fact, I would daresay that some people living in the city of Winnipeg consider the downtown of Winnipeg a remote region of the city.

An Honourable Member: More so than to rural Manitobans.

Mr. Caldwell: More so than rural Manitobans in many cases, the Member adds, and I agree with that. The college locations that are before the media right now in terms of the Spence Street hub and the Princess Street project are both in the downtown area of the city of Winnipeg. They both have advantages and disadvantages vis-à-vis educational benefits and vis-à-vis access to the business community vis-à-vis urban renewal and so forth in varying degrees.

While one may be stronger in the educational component in terms of easy access to an existing institution, that being the Spence Street proposal, perhaps the Princess Street proposal has an advantage in terms of greater access to the business community downtown, particularly City Hall and the training needs that the City of Winnipeg has. So they do have varying benefits. Each one has strengths, and each one has weaknesses, as they relate to education, as they relate to urban renewal, as they relate to access to business communities, as they relate to access to the IT sector, the communications sector. Spence Street, of course, is right adjacent to the University of Winnipeg and its wide-band IT capacity; it is right adjacent to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and its capacity for the telecommunications sector, communications sector, creative communications, and so forth.

The Princess Street project has advantages as it relates to some of the IT business sector in the Exchange District, and future expectations of growth in that particular area of the city of

Winnipeg. Whether or not those expectations will come to pass is anybody's guess at this stage. I am hopeful that it will come to pass. I particularly like that section of Winnipeg myself, being a heritage buff and being someone that enjoys turn-of-the-century neighbourhoods. The Exchange District in the city of Winnipeg, in my view, is the most attractive historic neighbourhood in Canada. I certainly enjoy spending time down there, and I certainly recognize that the redevelopment of that block, or the façade redevelopment, or the reutilization of the façades on Princess avenue would be a tremendous boost to the heritage aspect of the Exchange District in the city of Winnipeg.

But, at the end of the day, as the analysis moves forward, the analysis will take into consideration primarily the educational merits, but not the exclusion of urban renewal merits and so forth, other areas that the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) raises. At the end of the day, when the analysis is complete—and the Member will note that there has been a postponement of any cabinet discussion on this matter until sometime later in August. I made that decision at the request of the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg, as well as the BIZ district in the Exchange District, so that they could participate fully in making known to government the advantages of the Princess Street location as they see it.

Certainly, I am very interested in having a full and frank discussion on this matter with the colleges, with the business community, with the City of Winnipeg. Indeed, I spent the better part of the morning in Friday with the chair of the City's Historic Resources Committee, Councillor Gerbasi, on Princess Street, wandering around the Princess façades so that Councillor Gerbasi could apprise me of her perspective on this particular issue. That, I think, is a healthy thing, as I know the Member will agree, to have a very broad and open discussion in an atmosphere of frankness, in an atmosphere of openness on the relative merits of both of these particular sites that are under discussion. As we are discussing, I fully expect that there will be other options presented by other members of the community because of the two-month postponement of this decision.

So we are interested, very sincerely, in having a full discussion on the matter of Red River community college's move to have a new building in the city of Winnipeg. We are very interested in analyzing existing capacities, as the Member noted earlier, about schools that exist in the public system that may be made available to help expand capacity for the college system. Really all avenues in this regard, I think, are open to discussion right now.

So I do believe that we are undertaking to be open in this decision-making process. I certainly believe, if in any way, shape or form, I or government was intent on making an iron-fisted decision on this matter, we would have made a decision two weeks ago when the RFP timeline was up. I did not think that it was appropriate to do that, in the absence of having full dialogue with the city, with the BIZ district in the Core Area and with some of the businesses in the Exchange District, the Core Area of the City of Winnipeg. That decision was postponed. I think that shows very good faith in this government to have a full dialogue in this matter. Certainly, that is out intent, and I think that should be acknowledged.

*(17:10)

It was not an easy decision to make. I am certain that there will be criticisms put forth about that, although there has not been to this date. In fact, most people are quite pleased. Certainly, the Mayor and the powers that be in the Exchange District are quite pleased that more time is allowed for them to make their case in this matter. I think that is fair. Indeed, it also provides more time for the University of Winnipeg and people around Spence Street to further bolster their arguments, as well, both pro and con.

At the end of the day, a decision will be made based upon the information that is gathered through this process of consultation. Education will be the primary deciding factor, the educational merits, educational benefits, being primary in the decision. But issues of urban renewal will certainly be factored into that and will have a place in that decision making.

As for the Government's role as the major funder, we will have significant impact on certainly the public dollars that are designated for whatever project emerges, whether it is no building and using existing capacity, whether it is the Exchange District or whether it is the Spence Street hub or indeed whether it is something else that may emerge over the course of the next couple of months. But, at the end of the day, the powers of the Minister are very clear in this regard, that the Minister can designate where campuses, including regional campuses of a college, will be located and the range of college programs and services to be offered at a campus of the college.

I think the point that autonomy is not an absolute concept is one that is well taken. It has constraints when involving significant public resources. That has been the case in the province of Manitoba, historically, and it will be the case again long after we are gone from this room in this office. Indeed, that is the way it should be.

Just to end this, the Government is committed to a broad discussion with stakeholders on this matter, in good faith. That is why a decision was deferred. Had a decision been made two weeks ago, I think that it would have been doing a disservice to some of the advocates for both sides, quite frankly, and also it would be doing a disservice, I believe, to the taxpayer of the province of Manitoba, who expects value for the tax dollar.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the Minister for that response. As I say, we have to agree to disagree at some point in time, and there is not much to be gained by pursuing something when we keep going around and round. So I want to move on and ask the Minister some related questions to community college education.

One of the questions has to do with an institution in Thompson, or I would guess it would be Thompson. I know that during the time of the Pawley administration the Member for Thompson, the MLA for Thompson, did make a fairly significant plea to the government of the day to put what was termed a polytechnic, I believe, at that time, in Thompson.

Now, the day has gone by for those institutions, but I think there is an emergence of a new style of institution, one that merges perhaps distance education for northern students or for students in general from that geographic area, and also university programs. I am wondering whether the Minister, in his college expansion role, is also looking at the development of an institution in the Thompson area.

Mr. Caldwell: There is a committee that is working on presenting to government, a proposal for a university college of the north—UCN. Mr. Lorne Keeper, I believe, is chairing that particular committee. It has representation from Keewatin Community College, as well as a number of interested parties in establishing a university college in the north. At this point, there has been no work done directly by the Minister's office on this proposal. I am awaiting from Mr. Keeper's committee their report. There are a lot of very energetic individuals in northern Manitoba that desire such investment to be made in the North. I think their aspirations are legitimate.

Like in the Red River case, however, we have to operate on the best educational interests of the people of Manitoba, with a strong eye on the tax dollar, the public dollars that are to be allocated. At present, there are absolutely no plans in government to build a campus anywhere in the North. Keewatin Community College serves that region out of The Pas right now. Having said that, subject to receiving the report from Mr. Keeper's committee, that may have implications on government's thinking. I am awaiting that report, which is due sometime in the coming year, either this fall or over the winter months. I expect it will be a very interesting report to read and place into context of the College Expansion Initiative, but at this time the steering committee has not provided me with anything, although we will give due consideration to the concept once the paper is made available to government. But at this time, there are no plans or no budgeted amounts in the Department geared at building anything in the North beyond the Keewatin Community College's normal ongoing operating and so forth.

Mr. Derkach: The Minister indicated that the report will be due some time this year. Is there a deadline as to when the report is to be handed in to the Minister?

Mr. Caldwell: There is not a deadline, Madam Chairperson. There is a target for October and that is why I say this fall or early winter, as the member knows that sometimes these things take longer than they are originally expected to take. There is a target for this autumn, in October, for the University College of the North steering committee to make a report to government.

I should maybe just outline, the group doing the analysis is comprised of the MKO-KCC Keewatin Tribal Council, the Council on Post-Secondary Education, COPUM, and the Department of Northern Affairs. The steering committee is comprised of representatives from independent First Nations, tribal councils, the Manitoba Métis Federation, northern school superintendents, the urban industrial communities, the Council on Post-Secondary Education, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and the Council of Presidents of Universities in Manitoba, COPUM, as well as the federal government.

As I mentioned, the chair of the group is Mr. Lorne Keeper. It is important to note, however, that no commitments have been made by government to fund or develop a new institution. The intent is to develop a proposal for consideration by the provincial and federal governments and place it into a context that best meets the educational aspirations of northerners, the educational needs of Manitobans, and is within the context of the resources available to the Department of Education.

It is an exciting proposal in that the federal government is a participant. As the Member knows, having a federal partner in projects is an advantage, fiscally, sometimes and a disadvantage other times. But, it is not often from the inception of a project that you have federal participation. In this regard, because of the First Nations interest in this particular proposal, there is a fairly strong federal presence, which it is hoped will bring with it considerable resources. But, again, that will await the report being given to government this autumn, early winter.

* (17:20)

Mr. Derkach: Will the report be one that can be shared with the public when it is tabled with the Minister?

Mr. Caldwell: The report will be presented to the Council on Post-Secondary Education. Once the paper is finalized, COPSE will develop a cabinet submission. But, the paper itself, without doubt, will be shared with the public.

Mr. Derkach: Will the Minister be holding some public meetings to disclose the results of the study that is being undertaken at the present time?

Mr. Caldwell: The group comprising the steering committee has had significant public discussion in the North. Once the paper is submitted to government, there is no doubt that, if it indeed is to move forward, there will be more public discussion on this particular matter. There is no doubt at all that there is a lot of expectation in the North, with the election of this government. There are aspirations that date back to the '80s, as the Member for Russell indicated in earlier remarks, so I know that there are a lot of public pressures to move forward on this particular issue. As I mentioned earlier, it does have to take place in the context of what best meets the educational needs of northern Manitobans, Manitobans generally, and is placed within the context of the resources available to the Department.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the Minister for that response. With regard to the report, it is certainly one that I think there will be a lot of interest in from all members of the Legislature as well.

Madam Chair, to the Minister, with regard to the expansion of the college program, is he looking at apportioning some of that expansion in the three other colleges, that is Assiniboine, Keewatin and St. Boniface College? Can he share with us what he sees as a proportionate sharing of expansion in those institutions?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, I think, in terms of the resources that have been expended this past year, there were resources expended at Assiniboine Community College with the LPN

program, Red River in the health care and youth services sector, and also some resources invested at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. I think it is acknowledged that, as the major player in the college sector, Red River College will no doubt get a significant degree of investment from the College Expansion Initiative, but all colleges in the province will receive resources.

How those resources would be allocated will be more a factor of what programs best meet the needs of the local community, that is the regional community, and how they dovetail with the needs of stakeholders, that is the colleges themselves and the business industrial community that is requesting further development of those sectors of the economy. It will not necessarily be a proportional investment. It will be more driven by the needs of students and employers, and it will be targeted to four-year plans as the colleges develop four-year plans for rollout.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, are the colleges responsible for putting before the Minister a plan on how they will double their enrolment in each college?

Mr. Caldwell: No, they are not. The colleges, in terms of providing advice on what their regions' needs are or the colleges' expectations of what the regions' needs are, will work in partnership with the expansion initiative to develop a four-year plan for the entire sector, the college sector, that will involve both colleges' needs for new programming as well as business and industry's needs for graduates.

We mentioned earlier about the sectors that are of particular interest in this area: the IT sector, the aerospace sector, the health care sector, the culture sector, the agri-food sector, individual trades, and so on. The colleges will need to first discuss their plans for new programming and any other plans for expansion with the College Expansion Initiative. A formal intent will not be needed in this regard, although the Initiative and the colleges will discuss similar points with the idea to have the greatest synergies take place.

The object, of course, of this change is to establish an interactive and collaborative process

between the Initiative and the colleges to develop the College Expansion Initiative that is not project-to-project oriented but rather long-term oriented and well developed in an alignment with many sectors in the education system.

Once the Initiative and the colleges come to an agreement about which college expansion proposals are appropriate, the colleges will then develop a comprehensive program proposal and then the proposal will be sent to COPSE for review and approval.

Mr. Jim Rondeau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, on the College Expansion Initiative, I apologize to the Minister for taking so much time on this, but I think that this is a significant element in terms of the future of college education in Manitoba. So I am just trying to become a little better informed as to all of these areas.

In the area of grants and transfer payments to the colleges, we have \$4,856,000 that will be allocated for transfer payments and grants for the fiscal year 2000-2001. Could the Minister share with us the basis of the grants to the various community colleges, since this is all a brand-new initiative, and on what basis colleges would be able to apply for funding, or is this distributed on a per capita basis?

Mr. Caldwell: The current situation with regard to monies to be expended in the grants and transfer payments for the 2000-2001 school year, the process that will be undertaken, the colleges will need to discuss their plans for new programming with the College Expansion Initiative. A formal statement of intent in this regard is not going to be needed, but the Initiative and the College will discuss similar points that are raised in the standard statement of intent. The object of the change, in terms of the development of new programming, is to establish an interactive and collaborative approach between the Initiative and the colleges and to develop college expansion plans that are not project-by-project oriented but rather long-term oriented and in alignment with other sectors in the education system.

So the transfers in grants that are budgeted for in the 2000-2001 academic year involve discussion between the College Expansion Initiative and the individual college for new programming. Once the Initiative in the college has come to an agreement about which expansion proposals are appropriate and targeted towards the sectors that we spoke of earlier, colleges will then develop a comprehensive program proposal. The program proposal, in turn, will be sent to COPSE for review and ratification.

I can give some details with regard to this, Mr. Chair. The programs have just been improved through the College Expansion Initiative and COPSE—one is very recently approved. It says July here, July 6, last week. Business administration diploma program by distance, which I know that the Member is interested in, approval for 25 full-time equivalents, prior learning assessment and early childhood education by distance; again, a program by distance which allows uncertified individuals in the field to receive credentials. There was 15 full-time equivalents approved in that for ACC. Comprehensive health care aide, licensed practical nursing program and the LPN refresher program which are expansions to the existing certificate program, 147 new seats in that for a total full-time equivalent enrolment at ACC expansion this year of 187 seats.

* (17:30)

At KCC, there is support added to the regional centres at Flin Flon and Churchill, as well as Thompson and The Pas, and a tuition subsidy for general studies in The Pas for providing intern support to students studying at The Pas while KCC seeks alternative funding models for adult learning centres, as well as a general studies program for the newly reorganized umbrella program, which includes upgrading in college preparation for adult learners at ACC—and I assume some non-adult learners, as well, but primarily adult—for a total full-time equivalent of 350 students. These programs were all just approved in July.

I should also just touch on Red River, since I have touched on the other two. The Red River community college has had programs approved

by the Council on Post-Secondary Education for Aboriginal nursing access program, 10 full-time equivalents, a post diploma program that will support information technology network operations, advanced network and program at Red River community college; again, targeting towards the IT sector, 16 full-time equivalents. There is the aerospace manufacturing program that has been expanded. An expansion of the existing certificate program for 32 new full-time equivalents, automotive technician expansion of the existing program for 15 full-time equivalents, health care aide, conversion of the existing certificate program of 120 new full-time equivalents, regional health care aide, conversion again of the existing certificate program of 60 new full-time equivalents, a new diploma program in nursing, which you have all heard a lot about recently of 90 more full-time equivalents, and family support worker new certificate program of 25 full-time equivalents for a total of 378 full-time equivalents.

So in the 2000-2001 year, there is a total commitment for 915 new full-time equivalents, which involves a total commitment of College Expansion Initiative funds for 2000-2001 of \$3,945,000 or 81 percent of their allotment for the 2000-2001 year. There is a \$910,000 amount still remaining for other proposals, as they may come forth throughout the academic year.

Mr. Derkach: I note from the list that the Minister read, a lot of the programs are, in fact, ongoing programs that are being offered in various centres, and certainly there has always been a shortage of money for the expansion of those programs in many of these centres. I would like to ask the Minister whether or not his expansion program includes the expansion of delivery of programs in remote areas. I guess I ask the question because there is a community college off-site location in my community where it has been a struggle to attract enough dollars to attract enough students. It is almost a catch-22, if you like. Certainly, the program has not operated as well as it could operate, and largely I think it has not been anything but perhaps a shortage of marketing dollars and a shortage of dollars for programs.

One of the areas that seems to be of interest to people is the area of health care. A lot of rural

people, specifically women, look at the health care field as an opportunity for employment because these are small service communities, and between education and health care, those are the two areas that have the greatest potential for employment. Again, in health care, it appears that there seems to be a shortage of health care workers, and it has always been thus.

There were programs for LPNs and upgrading of registered nurses, and even, I guess, entry-type nursing programs in these centres, but they seem to be offered intermittently and not on a continuing basis. I am wondering whether or not these centres are going to be given the opportunity to access, I would say, a larger share of money than what they would actually be warranted through a per capita basis because of the fact that they are remote, and secondly because I think there is a need in these areas for those programs.

Mr. Caldwell: The short answer is yes, Mr. Chair. The off-campus sites that exist throughout the province of Manitoba, it is hoped and I would have the expectation that the community colleges themselves would place them into proposals that they would be putting forth to the College Expansion Initiative. I certainly would encourage the Member to relay that to his home community. The proposals that would be presented to the College Expansion Initiative will be developed by a partnership with the colleges and the College Expansion Initiative office.

I think that it is the responsibility of the colleges themselves to have a good assessment of what the needs are in their own system. Certainly, there is no intent or no desire to limit opportunities to post-secondary education by Manitobans. Indeed, quite the contrary. We want to broaden the opportunities for Manitobans to attend community colleges in the province. There is an expectation that there will be more distance education offered through this program. We will work with Campus Manitoba sites in this regard, but certainly projects that colleges put together, proposals that colleges put together for consideration by the College Expansion Initiative I truly hope will involve a lot more than just the communities of Winnipeg, Brandon and The Pas.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the Minister for that response. I want to focus a little bit of time on Brandon. I know this is home town for the Minister and certainly it is near and dear to his heart, and it should be.

But it is also near and dear to my heart, because it is the city that is closest to my region and one that serves the needs of people from my constituency, and one where Assiniboine Community College, I believe, plays an important role in providing the needs of many of the students and adults in the region. In recent years, through efforts of government and business, there has been significant expansion in the business sector in Brandon, in the industrial sector in Brandon and in the processing side.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair.

I am wondering whether or not Assiniboine Community College is looking at expansion of their campus, since their enrolment as I understand it is at maximum, and they have no more capacity to expand their enrolment because of space constrictions. I am wondering whether or not the college has approached, whether it is COPSE or CEI, with regard to their needs as it relates to space and as it relates to expansion potential.

* (17:40)

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, the Department of Government Services is having some discussions with Assiniboine Community College vis-à-vis the infrastructure needs of the college. I know that I have met with Brent Mills, the President of the College, and had an opportunity to discuss this matter with him. There is some interest in having expansion take place at Assiniboine Community College. Certainly, Mr. Mills is very interested in having expansion take place. There is some existing capacity in Government Services-managed property in Brandon with the closure of the Brandon Mental Health Centre. I know that in the community of Brandon itself and in the region, there is some public interest in having Assiniboine Community College have some presence at the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site. I am not sure how far along those discussion are, but I am aware that there are some ambitions at Assiniboine Community

College with regard to increasing the capacity through infrastructural development at ACC.

There is also some interest, as I indicated, with the opportunity that presents itself at the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site in getting a higher profile for the college in terms of being more visible in the broader community using heritage buildings and so forth. How far along those discussions are, I am not certain of right now, but I know that they are underway.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I guess in terms of the expansion initiative, certainly Assiniboine Community College has to figure fairly prominently in the mind of the Minister in terms of expanding its capability. I know over the course of years, Assiniboine has always provided a fairly respectable off-campus or distance education or distance delivery program. They have also done a lot of work with our Aboriginal First Nations peoples on reserves where they provide programs, I guess, at a recoverable rate, because they are under federal responsibility. But that, to me, seems to be an area, if we are going to look at expansion, that is one that is worthy to pursue.

Now, I know Red River offers programs to Aboriginal people, but on the western side of the province, in southern Manitoba, if you like, we have a significant number of small and medium-sized reserves which certainly lack in training and educational opportunities beyond high school because I guess it has not been pursued significantly enough, and opportunities for employment have not been identified for the people who live in those areas. I am wondering whether or not the Minister has decided on any emphasis with regard to that area for the Assiniboine Community College because of its significance.

Mr. Caldwell: I think the Member rightly recognizes that there is tremendous opportunity in the First Nations communities in western Manitoba and tremendous need, I daresay, in the First Nations communities throughout the province for enhanced participation at the college level in the province. Certainly I know that it is something that government is very interested in. In terms of the Adult Learning Centre, the Assiniboine Community College and

the Brandon School Division are in partnership with the Adult Learning Centre on Rosser Avenue in Brandon, something that has been taken very positive advantage of, I might add, by the community.

Assiniboine Community College continues to provide supports to Aboriginal students and to encourage cultural activities on campus, Aboriginal cultural activities on campus. There is an Aboriginal student adviser who provides academic and personal advisory services to Aboriginal students and co-ordinates services for Aboriginal students. He serves on the chair of the elders committee and advises the Native students' organization at Assiniboine Community College.

I know I participated in the convocation ceremonies at ACC about a month ago now, maybe a little bit less, and was very pleased that Aldin Foy, who is a constituent of mine in Brandon East and an elder at Assiniboine Community College, was on the platform party. In fact, I hesitate to say "entertainment" but the cultural performance that took place as part of the convocation ceremony at Assiniboine College was all from First Nations people.

So Assiniboine also provides Aboriginal students with a resource centre which serves as a place to study, hold meetings and so forth. A current project involves focusing more on the resource aspect by stocking the centre with current information such as scholar and bursary information, announcements of events and so forth.

The Native students' association at Assiniboine Community College works independently as well as in conjunction with the ACC students' association to sponsor activities and so forth. The elders program at ACC brings in visiting elders to provide cultural and spiritual guidance as well as conduct sharing circles and ceremonies and to serve as consultants for instructors at ACC.

Assiniboine Community College offers the Community Social Development Certificate program and the Aboriginal Community Development Program. Both these programs

prepare students to work with Native communities in community development and focus on social development and economic development issues.

At the Parkland campus, ACC implemented an Early Childhood Education program this year with an Aboriginal focus to better serve the needs of surrounding Aboriginal communities.

I take the Member's point that although there is much work being undertaken and, frankly, being in government for nine months, it is very little credit can this government take for these programs. They were primarily undertaken under the watch of the previous administration and very positively at that. I think we are, in government, trying to build upon the good work that the previous administration did and certainly will be encouraging all our colleges to take a more active role in entering into educational partnerships and marketing, I daresay, of educational opportunities in the First Nations communities that exist in western Manitoba and indeed throughout the province as a whole.

Mr. Derkach: I want to get a little more specific than we have been in the course of the last few questions. We talk about programs at Assiniboine Community College, at the campus site, and we talk about college programs at the Red River campus and Keewatin campus.

As the Member knows and understands full well, Aboriginal people do not readily pick up and move from the reserve to a campus site and adapt easily. Because of years of inattention, these people have grown close to home and received their services close to home and are reluctant to move away from home to receive their educational and their training needs. Having worked with these people directly, I can see that. We pay some attention to their culture by bringing them in to do performances and entertainment for us, and we try to showcase their culture in that way. However, we do very little for them in a practical way when it comes to providing for training needs so that they can get meaningful employment.

When I talk about meaningful employment, I am talking about much more than the social employment that we have engaged them in over

years. They have trained as social service providers, consultants, even educators, but there has not been a lot of training done in terms of the health care field, specifically nursing.

* (17:50)

We attempted to do that. I believe, when the current Minister of Conservation was the chief of the Opaskwayak band in The Pas. We did implement a BN program at Keewatin Community College, and I do not know the status of that program or whether it even exists today. The intent was to customize a program where we could deliver the program to students who were from various points in the North and do it in almost an apprenticeship kind of way where time could be spent in local communities and sort of a co-operative education model, if you like, was developed.

I think we need to look at alternative delivery mechanisms as well if we want to expand the attendance of this group of people into our education system, not necessarily ours but the education system, so that they can become productive not just on reserve, but so they can seek employment and compete for employment off reserves, as well, and I think that is a very important element.

If you talk to some of the chiefs in my area, they will tell you that employment opportunities on reserves are very, very limited. These people have to seek employment if they are going to become self-sustaining wherever employment can be found. In some cases it will be on reserve; in many instances it will be off reserve. In order to get to that goal, we have to be able to provide for learning opportunities for them on reserve first or near a reserve where they do not have to travel great distances. I do not think there is objection to them getting an education, for example, if there is a facility near the reserve that is available. There is no objection to that, and certainly there is no objection to having non-Aboriginal students attend the programs on reserve either. I think that should be made available as well, so it is not just isolated to those students.

So I am wondering whether the Minister and his department have broached this issue with

regard to the Expansion Initiative, and whether or not they are looking as part of the expansion or a component of the expansion program, building on the needs of people on reserves. I specifically am talking about western Manitoba, because there are significant numbers of reserves in western Manitoba where there is very little of that type of training going on at the present time. Not a fault of the Department; not a fault of any government. I think it is a blend of responsibilities that have not been taken seriously by both federal and perhaps provincial governments over a course of time.

Mr. Caldwell: I thank the Member for his remarks. I think that he touches upon some very important issues here. Like the Member—we both come from western Manitoba—I have had the privilege of teaching, from time-to-time, at Sioux Valley myself and understand some of the shortfalls, particularly at the post-secondary level, that the Province of Manitoba and the federal government, frankly, have helped perpetuate by not focussing more attention on Aboriginal communities and delivering education in Aboriginal communities with easy access of Aboriginal communities. Certainly, they have a good public school system at Sioux Valley, but there is a 40-kilometre drive to Brandon if someone from Sioux Valley wants to participate in post-secondary education. So I do thank the Member for those remarks, and I share his views on that particular matter.

With regard to providing more real opportunity to First Nations people, Aboriginal people in the province of Manitoba, not just for areas of social services or teaching, I share his views on that as well. I think, in a real sense, not symbolically, although symbolically is part of it in terms of his presence, but in a very real sense having Don Robertson appointed as chair of the Council on Post-Secondary Education indicated our commitment to having a knowledgeable voice at the table when decisions are being made in this regard. Mr. Robertson was at the centre of the establishment of the Brandon University's Native teachers north program a number of years ago.

I made mention earlier about my attendance at the Assiniboine Community College graduation. There were many First Nations

graduates, both at ACC and Brandon University, many of whom took the opportunity, as they were passing the platform party to get their diplomas or degrees, to come over to Doctor Robertson and shake his hand and acknowledge his mentorship in their lives in terms of their success in achieving diplomas or degrees from ACC or Brandon University.

With regard to having better access to the college system for Aboriginal students, I agree with the Member. Part of the College Expansion Initiative allocation this year, it is at Red River College, but it is the Aboriginal nursing access program that was just funded to provide for a new admission route for Aboriginal students into the joint Bachelor of Nursing program. As well, the university colleges of the North's purpose is to be able to respond with on-site programs more appropriate of First Nations communities in northern Manitoba. In the south, I acknowledge that the dialogue is less well developed; however, Yellowquill College wants to partner with the province to specifically respond to Aboriginal needs. The Deputy advises me that he was recently in discussions with the Opaskwayak First Nation in The Pas surrounding the area of providing technical education on the Opaskwayak First Nation reserve in The Pas.

So there is a great deal of work to be done. A lot of that work was begun by the previous administration, and I think this government is carrying on where the previous government left off in trying to attend to the needs that the Member alludes to. I appreciate his remarks in that regard, and hopefully we will carry on the path that was begun.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I would like to wrap up my questioning on community colleges. There might be a question or two that I may want to ask at the next sitting, but I would just like to ask the Member whether or not the BN program at Keewatin Community College is still a factor. Is it going?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, the BN program is continuing as before.

Mr. Derkach: How many Aboriginal students are there in the program?

Mr. Caldwell: Doctor LeTourneau advises me that there is still the Norway House site which is purely Aboriginal for the BN program. He does not have a number for the KCC site, but we may be able to provide that if we can get hold of Doctor Bos and get some information on it.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the Minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 87 of the Estimates book. Resolution 21.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$558,100. Shall this item pass?

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): I would like to speak a little bit specifically about the health care needs for one of the communities in my constituency, the town of Niverville. For the benefit of other committee members, I would say, by way of background, that Niverville is one of the fast-growing communities in my region and, I believe, all of Manitoba. In fact, the town of Niverville's population has increased 15 percent over the period of 1987 to '96. However, with a population of over 1900, the town of Niverville has no personal hospital or personal care home within the community. Currently they have the services, I believe, of an itinerant physician clinic provided by a neighbouring municipality.

What has been identified as being needed in Niverville, and something I believe my predecessor, Mr. Driedger, was a bit of a proponent of and working towards, is a primary health care centre which would provide in one facility the services of a family physician, primary health nurse, home care co-ordinator, as well as a variety of other services and programs. I should also note that it would not only benefit Niverville and its residents but also a number of

other communities such as St. Pierre, Ste. Agathe, Ile des Chênes, and St. Adolphe, communities in my colleague from Morris's area, as well as the Member for La Verendrye's (Mr. Lemieux).

I believe that a proposal for funding and approval was submitted to the office of the new minister when he became the Minister. I am wondering if the Minister could advise the Committee of the progress.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): As the Member knows, these issues are worked out at the regional level, in terms of the regional health authorities putting together plans, submitting plans, which is the process that has always been followed since regionalization. The plans go into the regional health authority which then prioritizes the plans and then forwards them to the Department of Health for analysis. With respect to the specific question of a primary health care centre for Niverville, I do not have the appropriate staff here with respect to capital in that particular area, but I will endeavour to find out that information and report back to the Member.

Mr. Jim Penner: I appreciate that we will be able to find out what stage this development is at. I know that every time I go to Niverville, I am besieged with concerns from the constituents who really feel left hanging in nowhere.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister then a question on dialysis service in the southeast part of Manitoba. Currently a number of the residents of my constituency are forced to make an almost daily trek to Winnipeg and more recently to Morden, which can be a two-hour drive one way for many of them to receive the dialysis treatment they require. This is because the southeast part of Manitoba does not have a dialysis unit. I understand that the issue, as it stands in Manitoba today, is not as much about capacity, because there seems to be inadequate levels, but about one of location and convenience. I am also advised that the numbers of residents requiring this service in my area is rising and would be near that or will soon be near that to require consideration for a dialysis unit. Could the Minister or his staff indicate

what plans they may have for a dialysis unit in the southeastern part of the province?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the Member is correct. Dialysis is an expanding and a growing need. We had discussions in respect to this in general previously. The dialysis program is centrally run. As I recall, in fact, the previous government in terms of how it dealt with dialysis put it under a central authority in order to do it province-wide. I will also take under notice the Member's question and determine what the status is of dialysis in the South Eastman region.

Mr. Jim Penner: My question to the Health Minister, then, is related to the per capita funding for regional health authorities. I have been in constant consultation with the health authority for southeast. I understand that the per capital for health care for the South Eastman region is in the order of \$660 per individual based on a population of about \$53,000. I also understand that the provincial average of per capita funding is about \$1,100, with some regions as high as \$1,600 per capita. In some manner, I think it is notable that the region I represent is a cost-effective one for the Province; however, concern does arise on the long term with this disparity in funding about deterioration of service. Can the Minister tell the Committee and my constituents if our region can expect a significant increase in per capita funding?

Mr. Chomiak: The issue of funding has been one that we have attempted to address in our period of time in office with respect to the budgets, and we try to be as comprehensive coming halfway into our fiscal year basically in terms of the process. We did a couple of things different in terms that we tried to capture the deficits in the base in terms of the actual funding levels. I am advised that that particular region has some inequities, but at the same time that region fortunately is one of the healthier per capita regions, I am advised by my staff. I do not have the specific details in terms of the outstanding issues. We are looking at all of the questions of funding with respect to the various regions, obviously going for a population needs-based funding model. In general, we have continued the similar funding that was in place under the previous administration, with the exception of trying to take in account the issues

of deficit and other related particular matters. Those kinds of matters are under constant review and consideration by the Department.

Mr. Jim Penner: I would like to read into the record a few remarks by the Honourable Minister for Consumer and Corporate Affairs, whose constituency is part of this area. When he became aware of these discrepancies, he said that he was reminded during the meeting held Tuesday in Lorette that the Regional Health Authority serving southeastern Manitoba receives base funding from the Province of only \$655 per person, the lowest in the province. By contrast, other regional health authorities, primarily in southwestern and central Manitoba, receive over \$1,000 per person. Then he said those discrepancies "hit you in the face like a pail of cold water." That was what the Minister for Consumer and Corporate Affairs said on February 20, 2000. He offered assurances that he will address the issue with the Health Minister as soon as possible, and he also said that the Minister of Health is extremely accessible. So, we are really hoping that this issue will be carried forward.

My constituents are saying to me that there is a penalty for being efficient. The more efficient you are, the less money, Mr. Chairman, that you can get, and now the southeast health authority is facing a deficit of somewhere between \$700,000 and \$1 million because they are not that efficient and they just really, really need some help in this area. So thank you for that answer, Mr. Minister, and I would like to ask another question.

Mr. Chair, the fact is that my RHA of southeast regional health authority is facing a huge deficit on operations for the current year. This, despite the fact that the RHA is run very well and quite effectively. I wonder if the Minister can tell the Committee what plans his department has to address the deficits that are being experienced in the southeast due to underfunding.

* (14:50)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we are continuing to dialogue and meet with, and we are meeting with the CEOs of the various

regions to discuss these issues in general and will continue to do so.

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Chair, I wonder if the Minister would commit today to ensuring the southeast regional health authority's per capita funding will be equal to the provincial average within three years?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we are doing everything we can in order to deal with the health care situation across the province and attempting to meet all of the various needs and requirements of residents all across the province, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Jim Penner: The south Eastman region is also unique in that I believe we have a higher per capita number of children than in other parts of Manitoba. This creates some unique consideration in terms of health care, and I believe the RHA in my region has developed some innovative proposals to help improve the health of children. Initiatives related to readiness to learn, immunization and asthma education are important areas I would encourage the Department to look at, not only for the southeast but for all of Manitoba for the benefit of our children.

I would however like to ask about a proposal for an early childhood development and parenting centre in the region. Specifically, the RHA has identified a need for such a centre and would like to see it operate in conjunction with the primary health care centre in Piney. The concept is intended to improve parental knowledge and parenting practices, bringing a number of current programs under one roof, which would provide both short and long-term benefits for the children and parents of the southeast. I understand that this centre would be located in the constituency of my colleague for Emerson but I would like to ask generally about the Province's opinion of such centres and maybe for my own interests and the status of the Piney proposal.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, a lot of the work done by that particular region has been some of the best in the province with respect to needs-based assessment and some of the work that they have undertaken. It is very clear. It is

also very clear that the movement towards a primary health care model is something that has been recognized and talked about and frankly it is time to move along that line. It is certainly our continuing discussions and I do not mean to, I am not trying to redirect it, but I am telling members that the discussions, for example, with the federal government on the funding model, the proposed funding model on a national basis would see assistance on primary care funding, all of the areas that we are supposed to move through in health care.

One of the things we are trying to build in—I do not know if we are going to be successful—the federal model and we know there will be assistance at some point, is some kind of recognition of a movement towards that. There are a variety of excellent proposals across the province with respect to primary care models and related matters and we are taking a look at all of them.

I have to tell the Member, in terms of this particular budget, when we approached this particular budget from a situation of trying to deal with a pre-existing situation in dealing with major areas that required assistance, we could not overnight turn the whole approach in terms of moving toward primary care, community-based health care, around in a nine-month period of time. Indeed it may take a decade or more to turn that whole system around, which is something that I think everyone in this Chamber advocates. To actually do it in fact is a process that takes time.

We have seen some excellent proposals with respect to primary care and various other models. Some of the information that has come from that particular region has been reviewed by the Department of Health. There will be initiatives in this area in the future, I can assure members of that, and we will be moving towards that.

Mr. Jim Penner: We were not looking for someone to turn the health care system around. We would like to see the progress continue, the same progress that we have had in recent years. We are just making the Minister aware of the projects that we have been trying to proceed on that we did not get done in the last nine or eleven

years. So we are hopeful that the progress will continue as it has in the past. I will defer now to the Member for Emerson.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Much of the area that has been discussed in the past few minutes is within my constituency of the R.M. of La Broquerie, the R.M. of Piney, the R.M. of Stuartburn, the R.M. of Franklin, and indeed the R.M. of Montcalm and Rhineland, some of which are in central region, some of which are in southeast region. But the southeast region is of particular interest because of the sparse population and the many small, little communities that are situated in the southeast region. The R.M. of La Broquerie, which of course houses the central region office now, but virtually no other facilities, being located relatively close to Steinbach, has relatively easy access to some fairly decent health facilities. The R.M. of Piney is a totally different situation. Communities such as Woodridge, Vassar, Piney, Middlebro, and many of the other even smaller little hamlets and communities have to travel up to an hour and a half, sometimes two and a half hours, to get to health care services.

Some of the services, as the Minister is aware, and what the Department certainly needs to be commended for, is that they were allowed to get their services at Roseau, Minnesota. Consequently, most of the births in the southeast region, southeast corner of the province, have been American births. So most of the young people are citizens of the United States instead of Canada. However, they are residents in the area. Some of them work in the United States. Some of them do not. Some of them work locally.

We worked very long and very hard with the community to establish at least a primary health care centre in the town of Sprague, and I am wondering whether the Minister is knowledgeable about the planning that has been done in that southeast area by the borderland primary health care unit and the centre, and some of the expansion that is being proposed as a phase 1 and a phase 2 proposal. I wonder if the Minister might want to give us some indication as to what the Department's plans are for that region to bring a greater degree of permanency to the

physician service as well as to the nursing service in that area.

Mr. Chomiak: Just by way of background, this is not criticism; I think, from now on, maybe if we could just get a heads up who might be asking questions, I might be able to do a little more preparatory work for particular regions so that I will not have to keep taking stuff as notice.

I do not have the capital staff here at this juncture who are more familiar with the plans. The plans apparently have come in from that region. We will take a look at them, and I will advise the Member forthwith as to what the circumstances are.

Mr. Jack Penner: The other question, Mr. Chairman, that I have of the Minister: Ambulance services are another significant concern in that southeast corner of the province. So, Woodridge again, Vassar, Sprague, Middleboro have to wait for an ambulance to come either out of Sprague or Steinbach to be served by ambulance. Many people, especially in cases of heart attacks, have died before they were able to acquire any kind of services at all in that area. It takes at least 45 minutes for an ambulance to arrive from Sprague into Middleboro, and it takes at least an hour and probably an hour and a half for an ambulance from Steinbach to arrive.

There is another option. That is of course the ambulance service out of Roseau, but that is almost as expensive now as it is for the ambulance service out of Steinbach. I understand that ambulance service out of Steinbach to Middleboro back to Steinbach is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$700 now. The services out of Roseau, Minnesota, are very similar, around \$700 Canadian to come out of Roseau, pick a patient up and take them back to Roseau, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$700 Canadian.

I am wondering whether the Minister is considering similar type of assistance to those people in that part of the province that he offered to the people in northern Manitoba, where he cancelled the \$50 trip by air ambulance to those regions. Are we going to give equal treatment to

the people that live in sparsely populated areas other than northern Manitoba?

* (15:00)

Mr. Chomiak: I am familiar with the distances in that particular area. One of the clear difficulties experienced over the past decade has been the underfunding and the difficulty in emergency transport and emergency services throughout Manitoba, which is why several reports were commissioned by the previous administration to review this particular area. Indeed, when we assumed office, we received a report that had been done. A task force had been set up by the previous government that made somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 or 21 recommendations for improving access and improving ambulance services.

Clearly, insofar as the system had been underresourced and underfunded, admittedly by all, everyone admitted it, there was a problem. One of the good measures in this particular budget is literally a doubling of funding to ambulance services outside of Winnipeg. That is the largest increase in a decade that has gone. Now, is that enough or does it cover all? No.

Clearly, the need to augment and support emergency services, particularly outside of Winnipeg, is something that will have to be built in over the next few years. There is no doubt that the resources required are significant. We made a first step in this budget, again through doubling of resources. Is it enough? No. Can you overcome a situation that has been a problem for a long period of time in one budget? No. Are we making an attempt? Yes. Are we putting our resources where we think is necessary? Yes. Are we attempting to deal with the situation? Yes. Are we going to face it across the board? Yes, we will.

There is a whole series of issues that we discussed previously with respect to emergency services that require to be addressed. I have made mention of this situation prior in the Estimates. It is an interesting policy that the ambulance services have not been covered under the universal medicare scheme, which is a point the former minister used to make to me all the time. It is interesting, as we evolve into a

different kind of health care system, as we evolve to a more community-based primary care system, there might be need to look at that differently.

At the present time, we are doing probably more than has been done in a long period of time. This is not a political statement. It is straight fact of reality. We took that report, we took the major recommendations, and we put funding into some of them. It will augment emergency services across the province. If I recall correctly, doubling the number of ambulances—is it doubling? I believe it is doubling the number of ambulances that our RHAs can buy over a year. As I recall, we have gone to 40 overall, doubling what was previous, which was they allowed for 20, and we are allowing for 40 this year, an expansion right across the board in terms of services offered. So we think we have taken a step forward. There are clearly difficulties and problems, and we all have to work together to try to overcome them.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, it is very obvious that the Minister is trying to put on record some questionable information. He is putting on the record information that most of us know, that the additional funding that he talks about, virtually every cent of it went to northern Manitoba, and none of it ended up in the southern communities of Manitoba as far as ambulance services.

I asked the Minister last week. He says no. I asked the Minister last week to set up a meeting date for us to talk about ambulance services, and so did Mr. Pitura; the Member for Morris asked for that similar type of meeting. He indicated to me it would take two days to set up a meeting. Then, later on, he said it will take a bit longer. I would dearly hope that we could have that meeting relatively soon because those people are telling us that they received no additional funding. The only difference they are seeing is that their fee increases are almost doubling. From Altona to Winnipeg, their ambulance fee services are almost doubling this year. If the Minister had provided the kind of fund that he says to ambulance services, then they would not be doubling.

I only say to the Minister be very careful what you put on the record because it will come

to bite you because it is not correct. The interesting thing is that the southeast area of this province has not had an ambulance, still does not have an ambulance today, will not have an ambulance even under the increased funding. Those people will still wait three-quarters of an hour to an hour and a half before an ambulance arrives, from the time that they call, at their door. That is the nature of that part of the province that I represent. I think it is absolutely deplorable that we allow those people to die waiting for an ambulance.

I am not blaming this minister; I am blaming the system. The biggest problem is that we had said that some people up north, when they get the air ambulance services much faster than our people do in the southeast region, should at least contribute something, but, no, he cancels the fees up north entirely and doubles the fee increases to our members down south. Maybe we can afford it better; maybe that is the reason. Maybe we do have a two-tiered health care system.

All I am saying to the Minister is be very careful what you allow and what you do not allow the regions to do with ambulance services because the cost that you will incur, the doubling of the cost, the tripling of the cost and even the quadrupling of the ambulance services to this province, will happen. You will pay for every ambulance assistant and driver that you have got in this province, which was virtually for nothing before because they were all volunteers. You are very quickly, Mr. Minister, moving to non-voluntary ambulance services, and you cannot afford it. Your system cannot afford it. You cannot put enough money into the ambulance services to keep paid ambulance drivers and expect the same kind of service that was before provided by volunteers.

So all I am saying is make sure your communications process that you develop stays as it was and allows ambulance operators and firemen to talk to each other while they are attending an accident on a highway and bringing the jaws of life into play. Let them communicate with each other where the needs are required. Let us bring some ambulance services to the southeast corner of the province that our people do not die on the way to the hospital or die

before an ambulance can serve. Maybe that is one way of fixing the hallway medicine. I do not know that, but maybe that is one way.

The other issue that I am very concerned about is there is strong indication that the hospital of Vita will lose its hospital status because of the criteria that the Minister and his department is demanding of the various hospitals. Having a requirement for four physicians in Vita is unreasonable. Why can we not serve that community with two or three physicians? There are three good physicians operating out of there now, and it appears that if they do not have four they might lose their hospital status. Why? It is a great little hospital. It works well, and it serves the people. It is not three hours away from another hospital. It does not take three hours to get to the Vita Hospital. It only takes an hour out of Middleboro and similarly at Emerson.

This previous government had indicated that we would start construction on a new facility at Emerson this spring. That was clearly indicated at an announcement that the previous government did in Emerson, and that is almost a year ago when we did that announcement. We told them clearly that the schedule was that we would start construction in the spring of 2000.

Now I ask the Minister: What is the status of the Emerson facility as it sits today?

* (15:10)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the Member put so many, I think, contradictory statements on the record that it is a challenge to try to actually go through them and respond to without turning the Estimates process into a long discussion that I am not sure will change anyone's mind. The Member blames the system, and the Member incorrectly states that all the funding for ambulance service is going up north. I am advised otherwise by my staff. So maybe the Member knows something that I am not advised of, but I think that is inaccurate.

The Member then suggests that removing the \$50 fee that was imposed by members opposite as a user fee is somehow discriminatory, because a user fee that was

imposed several years ago has now been taken off. People in the North pay for ambulance transport like people in the south pay for ambulance transport. This was a \$50 fee that was put on people to fly, Mr. Chairperson, put on people to fly for transport.

Now you know I do not want to play off one region against the other. I do not think that is what a government should do, and I do not think the Member should actually play one region off against another. That was not the purpose of regionalization, and that is not purpose of a health care system that is trying to provide needs for all Manitobans in many different situations and suffering from many different variations in health and health standards. What we should be trying to do is improve the status of health of all Manitobans, no matter where they live, no matter what the situation is.

So, for the Member, the information that is provided to me—and I think it is fairly clear, that we provided—the Member says we cannot provide enough funding into the ambulance system, so do not provide any funding, which was what the Government did for the past decade. That is what the Government did for the past decade where we were the lowest per capita funded ambulance services in the country.

Now members commissioned a report that recommended that we increase funding all across in a variety of areas. We sent that report out to municipalities and to RHAs and to other communities, and they recommended changes. We put in place some of the recommendations of a report commissioned by the Member's government, perhaps commencing when the Member was in cabinet because the process started a long time ago. My impression was members opposite were—well, I will not say what my impression was. I stated it publicly before when I was in opposition.

So what we are trying to do is improve the health status of all individuals and all Manitobans whatever their need and requirement. The Member knows that, as regards the capital plan for Emerson hospital, one of the problems we had with the capital plan is it was a capital plan that was not based on actual funding being available.

An Honourable Member: Sure it was.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member says sure it was. It was a pre-election capital fund that was announced, and I can demonstrate that over and over and over again to the Member, recommendations across the board. That is not to detract from the Member's point about Emerson Hospital, I am not saying that. I am saying that capital plan that was announced before the last election had some serious flaws in it. It was not based on a rational—

An Honourable Member: That is not what your department is telling me.

Mr. Chomiak: Would the Member allow me to finish my statements? I said we were going to disagree.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member has his chance and the forum is on the Minister's table.

Mr. Chomiak: As I said, I did not want to go down this road because, you know, everything I say, the Member is going to counter. We will be announcing the capital plan soon. We are reviewing it. We are looking at it systematically, and we hope to have a doable capital plan that serves the needs of Manitobans under our particular structure and under the conditions that we face.

I think issues of transport are significant, particularly in light of the fact that we have new ability to deal with patients in terms of their needs and requirements through providing paramedic service. I think that we can make strides in that area. Many comments I have heard from municipalities about the issue of volunteerism and to maintain and retain a volunteerism, and I note the Member's comments in that regard.

With respect to the meeting, I did indicate to the Member that we would try to meet in a couple of days. Subsequently, Mr. Pitura also made inquiries of me, and we hope to arrange a meeting as soon as possible in order to discuss those issues.

With respect to the funding under this budget: Operational funding \$1,500,000; fleet

vehicle program \$800,000; MTCC operations \$400,000; interfacility transport \$900,000; City of Winnipeg EMS \$750,000; City of Winnipeg EMS \$300,000; the Main Street Project, roughly \$500,000. Those are generally the funding that has gone overall to the EMS program.

There are negotiations going on with respect to some of this. So some of this in terms of direct allocation may change, but generally that was the general pattern that we put into this year's budget in addition to all the funding that was in place previously.

Mr. Jack Penner: Clearly, there is the indication by the Central Regional Health Authority that there is going to be a substantive increase in ambulance service fees. There are going to be substantive increases for waiting time. There are going to be substantive increases for assistance travelling in ambulances and all kinds of fees.

It is estimated that the average trip for an ambulance to the individual requiring an ambulance out of Altona to Winnipeg will be roughly about \$500. That is the information I received from the Central Region, from a Central Region board member as of last week, because they had passed a resolution of new fee structure.

If that is the case, that is a very substantive increase in ambulance service fees for that area. I would ask the Minister if he in fact provided the substantive increases in support, then where did the money go and what is it being used for if these kinds of increased fees are required to maintain an ambulance services for southern Manitobans?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, since we are in the general area, still under the administration area, I do not have the appropriate individual here. I will take the question as notice.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the time that the honourable critic has allowed me. I will reserve some of the other questions regarding ambulance services to the time that we will meet with the Minister. I await the Minister's date that he will set for a meeting with Mr. Pitura, Mr. Rocan, myself, Mr. Faurschou and the honourable critic for Health when we

meet regarding ambulance fee services and ambulance services in its entirety for central region. I would suspect that that will give us some reasonable overview as to what we might expect in some of the other regions. With that, Mr. Chairman, I turn the questioning back to the honourable critic:

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Just one comment, I think, on ambulance billing. Having been in a very serious car accident myself a few years back where, had I not been wearing my seat belt, I probably would have been killed; I was hit by a hit-and-run driver who had just stolen a vehicle; I had a fractured sternum and chest wall injuries and was out of commission for two months, and it was interesting that my ambulance bill arrived probably two days after the accident. I just wondered if there could not be—and I do not even know who sends out the billing and I have never even really pursued that at the time, but it is something over these last number of years that continues to bother me in terms of the insensitivity. I mean had I been killed and my husband would have got this ambulance bill, it makes you wonder about the sensitivity of the timing of ambulance billings.

I do not know if the Minister wants to comment. I am not asking for anything, just a comment I wish to make. I do not know who actually does the billing and whether it is something that we can even pursue in terms of a time frame. I am sure that when somebody gets this bill, and I am assuming it could be very soon after people have gone through a traumatic experience, it just does not seem very sensitive of a health care system.

* (15:20)

Mr. Chomiak: There are obviously different ways that it is handled through the various regions, depending on the type of service that is provided, but I note the Member's comments.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister has any further information to table that he had taken on to table. I know there were a number of pieces of information that he was going to look for to table, as well as a provision of the Wade-Bell report.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not know if we have the Wade-Bell report yet. We may have it by the end of this Estimates period.

The Member wanted to know about the summer surgery slate schedules. I am advised that Health Sciences Centre is operating the same summer slate as last year except providing 7 percent more OR time than last year. St. Boniface Hospital is operating the same summer slate as last year; Grace Hospital is offering the same summer slate as last year; Misericordia Health Centre is offering the same slate as last year; Victoria Hospital is offering the same slate as last year. Seven Oaks Hospital is offering 21 more slates available this year than last year; Concordia Hospital is operating the same slate as last year.

The Member asked about information about Mr. Hikel. Ron Hikel is a management consultant. He has been retained through his firm as acting deputy to initiate a number of key changes in organizational structure and processes at the Department of Health. This year he is working closely with the RHAs to further improve health care delivery. In addition to these responsibilities, he is performing all the regular duties of the Deputy Minister. This is a temporary assignment which will be completed within some months. The assignment includes assisting the Government with a national search to recruit a permanent head who is expected to be in the job early next year. I put that in parenthesis because I know how these things work. That is not always the case, but that is the plan. The arrangement with Mr. Hikel is similar to the one in place for the approximately 10 consulting assignments he completed for the previous government since he moved from Winnipeg to Ontario in early 1991. There is, however, one major difference. Mr. Hikel is being paid the equivalent of a standard deputy minister's salary, not consulting rates, which are six to eight times higher.

For example, in 1995, Mr. Hikel was retained as Chief Operating Officer with the Manitoba Telephone System to work on issues related to privatization. This was a full-time position lasting seven months and required him to travel weekly from Toronto. He also did this

for projects with the departments of Health, Education, Family Services, as well as with the Public Insurance Corporation and the Liquor Control Commission.

He was retained by the previous government up until September 1999. He receives an apartment allowance of \$1,000 a month but no meal allowance. Mr. Hikel has an apartment in Winnipeg and does, on some weekends, return to his home and family in Ontario. When he can, he uses his own upgrade certificates to fly business class, which costs the government an economy class ticket. When this is not possible, he flies business class, as the policy for deputy ministers demands. There is a policy which is dated April 20, 1994, from Donald Leitch, Clerk of the Executive Council.

The Member asked the number of full-time and part-time nurses, LPNs and health care aides in Manitoba. According to last year's registration data, the number of active practising registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and registered psychiatric nurses are as follows: For RNs, full-time 4483; part-time 4899; casual 1164; not in nursing 266. For RPNs, full-time 691; part-time 314; casual 28; not in nursing 23. For LPNs, 616 full-time; 1223 part-time; 277 casual; not in nursing 61.

According to a survey for the period ending March 31, 2000, health authorities report they employ 8084 health care aides. Of these, 2900 work on a casual basis.

The Member asked for a four-year schedule by regional health authorities for specialized and other equipment. In 1997-98, the total was \$21,506,035; in 1998-99, \$27,088,733; in 1999-2000, \$27,469,295; in 2000-2001, \$32,483,961.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me when he is going to table his capital project plan. I understood, and I am not sure if my understanding is correct, that it normally was done during the Estimates process.

Mr. Chomiak: It varies. It varies in the process. During my tenure as critic, I have seen it done before, during and after the capital process. What we are doing with the capital plan is we are going through the capital plan in terms of a

project-by-project assessment and reviewing the criteria and reviewing the entire capital process.

I have felt for some time, and I have stated it publicly, that the capital process that was previously carried out by the Province five, six years ago was a better form of capital process than the one that we saw the last several years. Part of the difficulty we found with the capital process is capital projects, for example, some that were entered into or that were suggested during last year's capital plan have now increased in cost by 10 percent, 20 percent and 30 percent. Making the commitment at the front end of a proposal is not a prudent and a manageable way of dealing with the capital process. We wanted to change the capital process to reflect something that, as I recall, used to be done in the province in terms of the capital proposals that come forward, et cetera. So we are reviewing the entire capital process.

I do not know how long the Estimates are going to go. I do not know. I cannot definitively tell the Member whether or not the capital plan will be out before the Estimates are concluded.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether it will be a five-year plan? I understand that he was pretty keen to see that while he was in opposition.

Mr. Chomiak: When I was in opposition, the reference to the five-year plan was more a reference to the process, the way the process allowed for first year, second year, third year, et cetera, down the road, to know what status the projects were at, instead of sort of announcing all of the projects in a one-year plan and saying they are all a go. So I think we are moving towards a plan that would see a different approach to announcements of projects in terms of the planning and in terms of the financial information that is available.

* (15:30)

Mrs. Driedger: I would assume that it would be kind of difficult to make a five-year plan with any degree of credibility because of rising costs. It would be almost imprudent, I would think, to do that, because things change so much year to year.

I have no further questions in this section.

Mr. Chairperson: Are we ready to pass this item?

Item 21.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$558,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$154,900—pass.

Item 21.1. (c) Finance and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,370,100. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister the number and nature of FIPPA requests since forming government. He does not have to get into the whole thing right now. If he would prefer to table it, I am amenable to that.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we will provide that information to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could explain for me, because I do not know what it is, what is the Healthy Communities Development Fund? Is that something that has been there before, and is it a continuation or is it new?

Mr. Chomiak: The Healthy Communities Development Fund was a process that was put in place three, four years ago. It provided allocated funds for transition and basically was put in place to provide funding for projects that were not necessarily ongoing but that were—it was actually, as I recall, intended to be transitory and developmental and pilot kind of projects in that fund.

It has not always functioned like that. What has happened is that a lot of projects that do not fit anywhere else ended up getting put under the Healthy Communities fund. For example, midwifery was funded under Healthy Communities fund last year and this year, but we are going to have to move it out of Healthy Communities and into actually a line item to actually appropriate. The Healthy Communities fund is a regular fund that just rolls over every year that deals with some projects that are ongoing. But it is mostly a developmental fund for innovative—that was the intention, to be innovative and creative and to do things in the

health care system that may have not fit in other bailiwicks.

Mrs. Driedger: Is there a dollar figure attached to that fund, like a certain amount of money that is always to be in there, or does it vary?

Mr. Chomiak: Actually it is interesting, because there was a transitory fund that was in place about four or five years ago that was actually \$30 million. That was downplayed into a fund that is \$10 million, and this year, I believe, it is \$8 million.

Mrs. Driedger: Here is another one I enter into with some trepidation, but I guess I have to ask. I am wondering if the Minister would table the new arrangement that pertains to the Urban Shared Services Corporation, the lines of authority, the business plan and the agreements made with the urban hospitals.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I will try to provide the Member with any information that we have that can be provided in this area.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister of Health, I just have one question I guess on regionalization at this point and the rest I have left for further on in Estimates, but I am wondering if the Minister of Health would be prepared, like B.C. is doing after having three years of experience with regionalization, to undertake a comprehensive third-party evaluation of the structure, governance, management operations and results of regionalization.

Mr. Gregory Dewar, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, that is a voice I was not expecting. I think that is an interesting suggestion. There is no doubt that the form and style of regionalization that was entered into in Manitoba is still an evolving process. The policy decision we made on assuming office was that we were going to deal with the existing structure and the existing authorities because we did not want to cause more dislocation in the system. The suggestion of an overall review of results is an interesting one. We are taking a look at the organizational structure, financial accountability, et cetera. We

are doing that internally with the regional health authorities in terms of a review.

There are other initiatives we are undertaking in terms of regionalization. I would not want at this point to commit to any one particular tract in this regard. We still are generally holding to the general principle that at this point we are working with the regional health authorities under the present, existing structure, legislatively and otherwise, and working our way through the process to see what works best, what can be improved, and what needs to be changed. That is, of course, with a varying degree of success.

If we were to order an overall operational review right now of regional health authorities—I am not precluding it, it is an interesting suggestion—I am not sure in terms of philosophy if it would not result in a whole chaos in the system at this point, being a relatively new government and just being into our first budget. I am not sure if operationally and structurally the timing may not be—the easiest thing for a new government to do is to order a complete operational review and then wait for the results. In the meantime, the system chugs along, fearing the ramifications of that.

I am thinking out loud basically with response to the Member's question. It is an interesting question. It has crossed our minds. At this point we are internally working with the structures and doing reviews. One of the things that we really want to get under control right off the bat is the whole financial accountability structure related to the RHAs because it is a new era and things have changed dramatically. When I say a new era, the move to regionalization is a complete, fundamental shift in approach. There are some places and some areas where it is working more effectively and some places where it is not working effectively. Generally my sense is we will move towards going through this process and then if it is warranted perhaps make another move, but it is an interesting suggestion.

Mrs. Driedger: I do not recall the date of when we started here, but I know B.C. is looking at doing this evaluation after three years. I am not sure what other provinces have undertaken, but I know it would probably be very useful to do it

from a third party perspective where you do have a consultant that is actually addressing it, because then he does not have anything at stake and there can be total objectivity.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I think it would also be very helpful to talk to the people that are affected most by it in a direct way, and that is people working within the system itself, whether it is people within hospitals, the bedside nurses, the managers in hospitals, the CEOs of hospitals, as well all of those in the community that are under the control of a regional health authority, because certainly I think their perspective is going to be an interesting one. Unless we ask them the questions and get their input it is hard to have the full picture.

* (15:40)

One other question in this area, other operating, under Other Expenses went up roughly \$20,000, and I am wondering if the Minister has any indication of why?

Mr. Chomiak: We will endeavour to provide the Member with that information. It is a \$20,000 increase under other operating, under Other Expenditures, under 21.1(c) of the Estimates book.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.1.(c) Finance and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,370,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$933,600—pass.

Item 21.1.(d) Human Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$963,600. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I note in doing some of my research that the Government had indicated it wanted to reduce bureaucracy. I am wondering if the Minister could then explain for me the 150 permanent and temporary employees that will be recruited to fill vacant positions?

Mr. Chomiak: I would think that the balance of the 150 permanent and temporary employees that would fill vacant positions are positions that are on-line and delivery, are not bureaucratic

positions. The vast majority of positions at the Department of Health overall are actually people who deliver services. The Member might be aware that we are responsible for all the employees, for example, at the Selkirk Mental Institution that is run by the Province. So that is not necessarily a reflection. It deals with issues of northern nurses. It deals with issues of medical health officers. It deals with public health functions. It deals with lab functions, and it deals with the issue of Selkirk Mental Health. Generally, the policy entered into by the Government with respect to filling vacant positions are those that are, generally, if it is a caregiving or if it is a position that offers a service, it is generally put through. If it is an administrative or bureaucratic position, it goes under scrutiny in terms of the administration of the Government.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that. I wonder if he could indicate to me why it is necessary to reclassify the 120 positions it identifies in the supplementary book.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that this is part of an ongoing and regular process at the Department of Health and all government departments. For example, last year at the Department of Health, during the last Estimates, 150 positions were reclassified. This year, it is 120. It could be up or down in terms of the status. Last year, there was 190 permanent and temporary employees to fill vacant positions. This year it is 150. So it is part of the ongoing human resource function of the Department.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.1. Administration and Finance (d) Human Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$963,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$169,400—pass.

21.1.(e) Corporate Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could explain to me what happened to the manager in Corporate Services.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that the position at the Corporate Services was moved to another ADM position and that there

was not a manager in that position. Is that correct? *[interjection]* Not for Corporate Services. It was managed by the ADM.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.1.(e) Corporate Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,313,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$544,900—pass.

Item 21.2. Program Support Services (a) Insured Benefits Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$6,739,500. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, under Activity Identification, it indicates an item, evaluate new drug products as they are submitted to the Manitoba Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee for inclusion as a Pharmacare benefit. I am wondering if the Minister might be prepared to table a list of who sits on that particular committee.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I will provide that probably when we next meet.

Mrs. Driedger: I find it interesting because I sat on a pharmacy and therapeutics committee for a number of years with a number of physicians. It was interesting how the discussions proceeded when we had people that wanted to get new drugs into the hospital for use. So I do have a little bit of understanding of how a therapeutics committee works. It certainly has some interesting dynamics from time to time.

I am wondering how many additions the Committee approved in the past year.

* (15:50)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we will provide that information to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to thank the Minister for that. I am wondering if he could tell me under Other Operating, I see that it has gone up \$64,300. I wonder if he might have an indication of what is included in that rise?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, while that is being tracked down specifically, I do note there is a sub-note 3 under that one. If I am looking

correctly, it indicates Desktop Management Initiative incremental support costs in that area.

Just returning to the previous question while that is further, the MDSTC committee, an independent committee, is comprised of three physicians, three pharmacists, supervised by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Manitoba Medical Association, the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association and the University of Manitoba. We will provide the Member with a list of those members.

In '99-2000, the Committee met seven times, 239 drug additions to the Pharmacare benefit list were provided, which was a 10.6% increase over the 216 drug additions approved in '98-99.

Now, we are just determining the issue of the Other Operating. I am looking at page 35 in the Member's book under the increase from \$515,000 to \$579,000. I am advised that most of those funds were transfers from other appropriations in and out of the Department of Health related to activities by other branches within Manitoba Health, but within other branches and activities of the Department.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.2.(a) Insured Benefits Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$6,739,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,366,400—pass.

Item 21.2.(b) Financial Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,151,300.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister (Mr. Chomiak) could indicate for me, I notice that the managerial raise seems to be fairly significant, and I am wondering what accounts for that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the staff believe that it is a reclassification and/or incremental increase. I do note as I look back into the Executive, into the Supplementary Estimates, that it was in 1998-99 it was 67.1. It then dropped to 61.3 and now it is up to 74.6. If it is otherwise than an incremental and reclass, we will try to determine if it is otherwise than that. But that is what the Department believes is the probable reason.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder when the Minister is checking into that if he might also look into

whether or not this is a new person, who is in the job, or if it is just a raise for somebody that is already in there.

I notice that one of the Activity Identification items under Financial Services is to determine funding allocations to the regional health authorities and other external agencies. I am wondering if the Minister could explain to me whether he feels there are funding inequities amongst the RHAs.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I think that this issue came up with respect to issues that were raised by the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) previously with respect to the funding arrangements. Obviously, it has been an interesting process, as I recall, and it probably is the single biggest issue related to regional health authorities.

The funding arrangements and the funding pattern that we adopted was the same funding pattern that was in place by the previous administration with some variations in terms of trying to recognize deficits and some other related matters that required to be funded. The particular process is actually an evolving process. It is an interesting discussion whether or not the base funding is sufficient, whether or not base funding ever is sufficient in terms of how it works out and how it is determined. But the model of the funding has been a continued funding model on the basis of what was offered prior by the previous administration. That is not to say that, clearly, as we move into our second budgetary year and into an examination of the operations around the province, we are going to change some of the approaches where inequities can be seen and where they would have to be addressed.

Obviously it is a crucial issue. It was interesting because the Member was representing his area south Eastman in suggesting that the per capita funding is low there vis-à-vis other areas. This is the area where you get into some very interesting debates concerning funding. Clearly we must move toward a funding model that is equitable and meets the health needs, and that is where we are supposed to be moving in health care. It meets the health needs of the region.

* (16:00)

The original model, as I recall, was based on a needs assessment that was done by the east Regional Health Authority upon their creation three years ago. They put together a needs assessment, and the funding model is based on that needs assessment. That was three years ago, and I remember debates about that particular application.

This is the first fundamental shift towards regionalization. I do not think people recognize how fundamental that shift really was. It means probably that that initial, that there are gaps, and there are issues that have to be dealt with. Internally in the Department we are cognizant of that, and we are working to deal with the process in as reasoned and as fair a fashion as possible.

Having said that, we did not have the luxury again of developing a budget that we were developing halfway through a fiscal year of going in and perhaps doing as much an assessment. I think, over the one- or two-year period, through the term of this mandate, we will have a chance to look at the appropriate funding issues.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.2. Program Support Services (b) Financial Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,151,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$159,500—pass.

Item 21.2.(c) Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,852,100.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could just give me a bit of information. I notice under Other Operating that it has gone up substantially, and I understand it is from the roll out of the DPIN into emergency rooms. I am wondering if he could just give me a little bit more information about that.

Mr. Chomiak: This was the process. If the Member recalls DPINs, as I recall, there were the original pilot projects. With respect to DPIN, there were two or three sites that have now been rolled out to, if memory serves me correctly, eleven or twelve sites. So I am just looking for

this DPIN. I believe it is an additional thirteen sites. The specifics of that I will provide to the Member in terms of the additional, but the balance of that funding is for the rollout of DPIN from the original pilot sites to the twelve or thirteen or more additional sites that DPIN was rolled out to. I will provide the specifics to the Member, if not later today, the next time we meet.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me, because it is being rolled out, I would assume that there is a degree of success to this, and I wonder if he could just comment on the evaluation component of that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we will provide the Member with specific information in terms of the evaluation. As I recall with respect to that process it was determined that it would be useful and that the pilots had proved to be successful in terms of providing the information at the ER sites, and we acted accordingly. I will get the specifics back to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: I am prepared to move.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.2. Program Support Services (c) Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,852,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$5,731,700—pass; (3) External Agencies \$33,800—pass.

Item 21.2.(d) Capital Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me what he is planning to do about the community contribution policy. As I recall in my two years in government, I have had heard him comment on this numerous times, and I am wondering what his intent is with it now.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we undertook when we came to office to review the capital contribution policy. We made public statements, and I made very public statements after assuming office that we will be reviewing the capital funding policy. The Member might be aware that resolutions were passed at one of the conventions of the Manitoba association of municipalities asking that we maintain the capital contribution as it exists.

Notwithstanding that resolution and the input, we are consulting with the RHAs. We have not yet finished our conclusions with respect to the capital contribution policy. What we have told organizations is that like other areas, until we deem otherwise, the existing policy will be in effect.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I would not have anything bad to say if the Minister decided to leave it. I think it is probably a fair one in Canada when you hear what some other provinces are doing, and it seems the process here in Manitoba is a fair one.

I have one other question I could ask in this area, or maybe two. I am not sure whether the Minister would be prepared to tell me at this point. I just have one question in terms of capital construction, so I am going to attempt to ask it anyway. I am wondering if the Minister would provide for me the information as to whether or not he intends to proceed with the construction plans that had been planned for the Misericordia Health Centre, the two big towers.

Mr. Chomiak: I think to maintain the integrity of the capital process, I had better not deal with specific projects within the capital project. I am not saying that from the Member, but that will then open us up to queries in a whole bunch of other areas from other people as to what about this project and this project and this project. So, at this point, I prefer to not comment on any particular proposal until the capital plan is announced.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, I thought I would try anyway. I am wondering if the Minister could tell me, because I have not been involved to any great extent with the internal workings of government—I understand that there is such a thing as untendered contracts. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate for me—and it may not be in this area, it may be throughout other areas—what the status is of untendered contracts, and if they can be tabled.

* (16:10)

Mr. Chomiak: As I understand it, the process that has always been in place, there is a certain financial threshold with respect to untendered

contracts under Treasury Board that requires specific approval if they are untendered. I do not know what the process is. As I recall, they are generally released, and I do not know if it is done through Finance, et cetera, through that vehicle, but we will ascertain what the process is for the release. I am sure they are made public at some point and through some means on a regular basis. It is the same policy that was in place under the previous government. I know that they come through generally and require Treasury Board approval at a certain threshold, if they are untendered—\$25,000 or more, they require special approval, and they go to Treasury Board. I know there is a general government policy that is the same, that was in place previously, and I will determine whether or not or how that information is provided. I think it is provided, publicly released, I do not think by departments. I think it is publicly released, perhaps by Finance, and I will try to determine what that process is.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.2. Program Support Services (d) Capital Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$774,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$237,200—pass.

Item 21.2.(e) Evaluation, Monitoring and Appeals (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$519,800.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister would be prepared to table a listing of the evaluation projects and appeals carried out during the past year.

Mr. Chomiak: Sorry, what were you asking me for?

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister would be prepared to table a listing of the evaluation projects and appeals carried out by this section.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we will provide that, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to thank the Minister for that, and I have no further questions in this section.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.2.(e) Evaluation, Monitoring and Appeals (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$519,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$385,000—pass; (3) External Agencies \$88,000—pass.

2.(f) Health Labour Relations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,043,000. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, on page 49 of the green book I see that the total amount for expenditures for salaries is up by about \$42,300. I wonder if the Minister could indicate the reasoning for that.

Mr. Chomiak: Generally there are two areas. It is the normal realignment in and out of financial costs across various areas in this appropriation and the increments and reclassifications.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me what the category External Agencies in this section is comprised of.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will endeavour to determine that for the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: When the Minister is providing me with that information, I understand that the increase from last year to this year in the Budget, as it indicates here, is the annualization and expansion of grants. I am wondering if the Minister could provide me with the specifics in terms of expansion of which grants, whether there have been any new grants provided that were not in there before.

Mr. Chomiak: We will get the specifics. I have noted this often in Estimates. The reference to grants may not be the actual appropriate reference. I just looked back in the previous Estimates book. It has gone up from 182 to 342 last year and up to 692. I believe it is funding with respect to the arbitrations, the significant arbitrations we have been involved in and related to labour. I will get the specifics back. I do not believe, but I will confirm it is not grants to agencies per se. I think it is more related to cost, related to arbitrations and labour-related activities in that regard.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, and I look forward to receiving the information.

I am wondering if the Minister could tell me—there is a rumour floating around out there that the nurses want their contract reopened. I am wondering if there is any negotiation going on in that regard.

* (16:20)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, obviously many organizations and groups would like to see contracts reopened in some way or another, but we are not involved in those negotiations.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to go back to a few questions on the \$7-million Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund. We had not quite, I think, finished the questions on that the other day, and I wonder if the Minister could just give me an overview in terms of what is happening with that particular fund, how much has been spent, whether there has been a top-up and if he could explain how the—now I believe he indicated there was \$3 million more added towards funding to regional health authorities for continuing education and staff development in their regions. I am wondering if he could just give me sort of an update, I guess, on where that fund is at.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that, as I indicated, funding for relocation expenses of up to \$5,000 for nurses relocating to Manitoba from outside of the province; 166 have been relocated to date. That is the most recent information.

The fund provided the financial support of 80 percent of course costs up to \$2,000 per individual, provided the nurses were taking refresher training to assist them to re-enter the nursing profession workforce. Mr. Chairperson, 66 RNs, 21 LPNs and 3 RPNs have taken advantage of that.

There was funding for an additional intensive care nursing course for 45 full graduates at a cost of \$300,000. Twenty students completed this program in May, and there is additional funding that will carry over to assist with the course costs for the next ICU course scheduled to begin in September 2000.

Funding was provided for the delivery of a neonatal pediatric critical care course. Funding was provided for an intensive care nursing course in the Brandon Regional Health Authority. Funding was provided for pre-operative nursing through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Brandon Regional Health Authority. Funding was provided to support provision of a primary care skills course for nurses in designated northern nursing stations. Funding was provided at the University of Manitoba and the university of Brandon to facilitate licensed practical nursing bridging to enable LPNs to further their education and obtain registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse status.

Funding was provided at the universities of Manitoba and Brandon for forgivable loans to students who enrolled in the nursing summer terms. Support has been provided in principle for an emergency nursing certification program by distance education. Funding of \$3 million was provided to support continuing education of RNs, LPNs, and RPNs on a provincial basis. This funding was allocated to the RHAs based on their nursing population.

Other activities supported by the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund included: display booths and handouts to support representation at local and national job fairs, advertising in local, national, international newspapers and journals featuring the come home to Manitoba campaign, Web site access with links to the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund averaging 5500 hits per month. A nursing recruitment and retention fund line was established and received over 2400 inquiries. Over 1200 relocation information packages were distributed in responses to inquiries regarding nursing opportunities with regular distribution and posting on the Web site of the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund update. Five mail-outs were completed with a thousand copies distributed with each mail-out, and continuous meetings have been held with various underemployed associations such as the underemployed Filipino nurses of Manitoba and the professional associations. The Government has topped up the fund in the amount of \$1.5 million in this fiscal year. As the Member knows, the fund is administered in an arm's

length way from the Government by a committee whose members I apprised the Member of previously.

Mrs. Driedger: Of the \$7 million that was initially put into this, how much is left?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, \$2.7 million.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it the Minister's intention to keep this fund going once the money has run out? Is he going to continue to replenish it to some degree in order to meet some of these initiatives that this committee has been successful at achieving?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we will do that as required. As the Member knows, the original funding of \$7 million came from the '98-99 Estimates. There was no funding in last year's budget for the fund, but we have now put an additional \$1.5 million into the fund and we hope, as required, to provide to continue the process.

Mrs. Driedger: It is good to hear the successes that the Committee is having and some of the initiatives that have been brought forth through this committee. I think that is very positive for nursing. The other thing I guess I am pleased to see is that a lot of those initiatives were started under our government, if not all of them, pretty close to all of them, and I am glad to see that they are having the successes that they are having. With the \$3 million that was given to the regional health authorities for continuing education and staff development, is that over and above? I understand in the last nursing contract that nurses were given \$200 per nurse for continuing education. Is this over and above?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, this is over and above the contractual amount that was entered into. This initiative was put in on the insistence—well, as I have indicated on many occasions, the numbers one and two issues the nurses kept talking to us about were diploma nurses' program and funding for educational opportunities. This was our initiative in terms of addition to help and it was based on the sense of retaining nurses, on the argument that nurses were saying: We do not have the same opportunity to professionally upgrade ourselves and our skills and we have to, in fact, incur

financial losses, take time off work, et cetera, in order to upgrade our skills. Consequently, that was the rationale and the reason behind that.

Mrs. Driedger: The 80 percent of funding that is given for refresher training up to \$2,000, which was part of the \$7 million proposal, is that included in the \$3 million?

I noticed in this past year that a second ICU course had been added because I know we were short of ICU nurses. Are we in a better situation now in terms of numbers of ICU nurses?

Mr. Chomiak: I hesitate to say that we are in a better position anywhere in terms of nurses, but apparently we are, and we have put the funding in for an additional course in September to be offered.

Mrs. Driedger: So are we going to begin to see two courses a year for ICU nursing, or will we kind of go along as on a per-need basis?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I think what will continue to happen will be done on an as-needed basis or as required.

Mrs. Driedger: I know that last August the Committee had received 39 submissions from nurse stakeholders offering ideas on recruitment and retention initiatives. Are the stakeholders still being given an opportunity for this same involvement?

* (16:30)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised at this time that we are not soliciting additional, although any advice that would be offered would be useful. What we have done is we have put nurses on the individual committees in every single region dealing with the re-education and the assistance issues.

Mrs. Driedger: Of those 39 submissions that came forward, how many of them were acted upon?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we will provide that. It is just subject to it—I am only thinking out loud. There might be some—we will get to the Member what we can. There might be

individuals who made recommendations, and they may not want it widely circulated. So subject to that discretion, we will attempt to find that information for the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, I do think the process of having grassroots nurses and the stakeholders of health care like that have an opportunity to be involved in looking at some of the answers is an excellent way to address some of the problems. I have always strongly felt that a lot of the good answers and suggestions have always come from nurses who work right at the bedside. I am a great believer in utilizing those nurses to add their suggestions. I do know that having worked in a hospital over the years too, that some of the suggestions may be not that easy to work with. But certainly, it is always good to hear what people have to say whether or not their suggestions can be used or not.

Now I think I understood the Minister to say that the perioperative nursing through the WHA and the Brandon Regional Health Authority has been acted on. I know that we had indicated that there would be funding for that program, I believe, back in September of '99. Could the Minister just clarify for me exactly where this perioperative nursing course may be at?

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, it has been offered. I will just determine the status of it in terms of completed, et cetera, for the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: If the Minister could just tell me. I know that we had supported the development, back in September again of 1999, the primary care skills course for nurses in designated northern nursing stations. I believe it was approved in principle. Again, I wonder if the Minister could give me the exact status on that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, that has been approved and is ready to go. It is subject, unfortunately, to the perennial difficulty of nurses having the opportunity to take the time in order to do that. We are working with them to try to work out some kind of way of delivering it, and still it is the chicken and the egg argument

that we see right across the health care spectrum. That has been approved, it has been funded. It will proceed just as soon as we can work out the logistics.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me where the meetings with the underemployed Filipino nurses of Manitoba association of RNs has got to. Is there a resolution to what they are seeking?

Mr. Chomiak: We are continuing to meet with them on an ongoing basis. A number are going to be taking a refresher course at Red River community college. All of them have now been evaluated on an individual basis, and we are working on them on an individual and a group basis. As recently as last week, there was a meeting with them to continue the process.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me how many nurses are involved in this.

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that we reviewed approximately a hundred. There are 30 to 33 that are in actual processing stages, in some form of upgrading or some other form of licencing.

Mrs. Driedger: Does that mean that two-thirds of them might not be able to proceed in this program?

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that it is a mixed group. Some are in a stage of not wanting to proceed, some are proceeding but perhaps on an LPN track, and some are proceeding some other health care professional track. So out of that, the remainder, we are still working with them on various opportunities.

Mrs. Driedger: Just a couple more questions in this particular area. The Provincial Nominee Program, I understand under it Manitoba is eligible to recruit 100 nurses. Is that the number we are targetting?

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that we are looking at 100.

Mrs. Driedger: Is there any possibility that that particular program could be looked at to include 200 nurses if we so desperately needed them?

Mr. Chomiak: The answer is, yes, if we are successful on this stage of the process.

Mrs. Driedger: If the Minister could clarify for me, I had heard a rumour and I had never believed rumours until I checked information out. I had heard that the Minister had planned to cut the program in half. I wonder if he would care to comment on that?

Mr. Chomiak: No, Mr. Acting Chairperson. We are pursuing that number, and I might guess where that rumour might have come from. No, we are pursuing that. We are pursuing the track of moving down at least a hundred nurses.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could indicate for me where in the Budget I might find, although it is less than \$7 million now, where that figure might be kept within the Budget.

* (16:40)

Mr. Chomiak: I would assume that the \$7 million per se does not occur as an expenditure item in this budget. What will occur in this budget is \$1.5 million top up that we have in this budget, and I am just endeavouring to determine, because the \$7 million was basically moved out to operate under a separate fund and was not an ongoing expenditure. Rather, it was a fund, the replenishment of the \$1.5 million in another area of the Budget, which, I am advised, is under Acute Care Services, Acute Care under the fund because of the fact it is administered under the WRHA. That is where actually the accounting of it is done.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister would have any objection to taking a five-minute break.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the Committee to break for five minutes? *[Agreed]*

The Committee recessed at 4:41 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:50 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): The Committee will reconvene.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess we are calling in staff, and while we are calling in staff, I will just inform the Member about one of the questions that she had asked previously.

It also makes the point that I hope that we can revise the Estimates book a little bit to actually reflect, because sometimes it has grown up under historical anachronisms; for example, your question about grants in the Health Labour Relations area. In fact, the increases consist of \$200,000 that goes to the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Manitoba for Clinical Practice Guidelines; \$100,800 to the College of Physicians and Surgeons for the Manitoba Quality Assurance Program; and, \$20,000 for the College of Physicians and Surgeons to the Transfusion Medicine Program. That is captioned under that particular appropriation.

So it is a grant, and it goes under Health Labour Relations, and there is a whole series of things in the Supplementary Estimates books that really do not reflect the reality of the situation. I hope, actually, if the Member has any advice—because I had lots of advice as to how it should change, and I have changed a few things, but I have not had the opportunity to change some of the designations, because it really does not reflect the activity.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that information, and I appreciate him getting back to me on that explanation. It certainly is much clearer now to have a better understanding of why the changes happened in there, and they are quite self-explanatory.

I would now like to ask some questions about the Provincial Nursing Resource task force that has been set up a few years ago. I am wondering if that particular committee is still meeting.

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that the task force is basically the creation of the rural health authorities and that it is still continuing to meet.

Mrs. Driedger: Prior to going on with further questions in this area, I wonder if the Minister would be amenable to my colleague from Portage asking a few questions on nurses' training, I believe of LPNs specific to his area.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): In respect to the ongoing shortage of staff for bedside detention in our hospital and health care facilities, health care dollars were expended in support of educational institutions providing the training programs. Is it the Minister's intention to continue to support the expenditure of health care dollars in this regard?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we do tend to get preoccupied with nurses alone, and it is a whole variety. It is not just nurses where we have a significant shortage of human resource. It is right across the spectrum, health care aides, technologists, technicians, radiologists, radio-therapists, physicians, et cetera.

On the issue of nurses per se, it is our intention to continue to expand the training in all areas, and I know the Member has provided me with some very useful comments with respect to various options and ideas with respect to training which I have passed on to the appropriate officials in the Department for review and advice.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate, and that is why my question was very generic, that there is just not the bedside matter that needs attention or personnel for that responsibility. With the program that was initiated in support of the LPN training, there has been an overwhelming response to that program providing training in the rural areas because shortages exist there as well.

My question to the Minister is: Is he looking at extending support so that training can effectively be initiated and provided by the colleges in rural areas on other fronts and the LPN training which the Minister of Health had supported? Is he looking to providing resources to the colleges to provide training in the rural areas of Manitoba in other capacities?

Mr. Chomiak: We are continuing the efforts, particularly through Assiniboine Community College with respect to LPNs. The Member might note that we also provided an additional 25 spots for LPN training in Selkirk and the Interlake region. We are expanding the ability to

train health care aides and other professionals. We are also looking at the possibility of expanded training in northern and rural Manitoba as a next step, and that is part of the process that we are engaged in now.

Mr. Faurshou: I appreciate the Minister's statement. As we can all appreciate, the cost of second residency is paramount to a lot of individuals in the rural area to garner this type of training. I believe that the LPN program is in fact indicative of the educational opportunities in the health care field. I believe the Minister is probably aware that there are six or seven applications for every spot available in the LPN training program. I encourage the Minister to consider that perhaps that program may yet be expanded not only to two rotating sites, the permanent one in Selkirk, but perhaps the permanent one in Portage la Prairie and still continue with the two rotating sites. Could I ask the Minister, is he aware of the actual responses to the advertisement for these training spots and the numbers of individuals that applied?

* (17:00)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am aware of both the enthusiastic response to it as well as the effort undertaken by Assiniboine College. It was one of those not so rare occasions when the program was announced by the previous government would be that the then opposition health critic acknowledged it and welcomed it wholeheartedly.

Mr. Faurshou: Also, I would like to encourage the Minister that there are opportunities, as well, as I have expressed, and this is for the record in regard to the psychiatric nursing and the increased demand because of the nature of our aging population and the occurrence of dementia, conditions being exhibited by a far greater number in our population, and the explosive demand for persons that have training in the psychiatric field. I wonder if the Minister has any further update as to the requirement in that particular area.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member very correctly assesses another need and a major requirement. In fact, we have met with the RPN Association and are continuing to meet with them in regard

to identifying need and requirements. There is no question, particularly if we want to as a province move aggressively to the community-based mental health system that we all desire, that the need and requirement, particularly for RPNs, is going to increase. That has been noted. We are aware of that. That is one of the areas the Member correctly identifies where we have to have increased activity.

Mr. Faurshou: On that basis, there was an initiative started involving the Minister of Family Services in recognizing that we have right now two institutions that effectively work with persons that have incapacities mentally and of which we recognize ailments involving dementia are similar. There was a proposal and actually parameters of reference for a committee to study the usage or greater utilization of the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage la Prairie who are perhaps handling the individuals that other facilities are ill equipped to do.

I cite specifically the more than \$400,000 of expenditure that took place last year involving the Lion's Prairie Manor to handle a small number of persons that are afflicted with severe dementia that the facility was not prepared or equipped to handle. On that premise, there was a commencement of study that perhaps would offer a greater service, more fully utilizing the facilities at the Manitoba Developmental Centre. I wondered whether the Minister was undertaking collaboration with the Minister of Family Services to perhaps more fully, not perhaps develop, but at least examine the possibilities in this area.

Mr. Chomiak: I have had discussions with the Minister of Family Services. We will continue to have discussions. It does get us into a significant area of discussion in terms of the community, in terms of involvement, in terms of the type of patient. I appreciate the Member's comments. I can indicate there are discussions. The entire area is broad. There will be some initiatives. It will require a fair amount of tolerance by people all across the system, all within the system and without the system, to try to move us along to what is the most appropriate service and where the service should be offered and how it should be offered to particular individuals.

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate the Minister's response and indeed I appreciate the dilemma that one is faced with in this regard, as is the distinct difference in administration between the Family Services responsibility for MDC and the other health care facilities under the regional health authority. I encourage the Minister to evaluate extensively the opportunities and not to fail to bring on board other groups that have a vested interest, such as the Lions and the Rotarians, that have in past provided for a very valued service to communities in the rural, and in the city of Winnipeg as well, to this segment of our population here in Manitoba. So, having said that, if the Minister has any further comment to that, I would certainly appreciate it. I really encourage the Minister to work collaboratively and to extend the resources necessary to get the best evaluation of this.

Mr. Chomiak: I appreciate the Member's comments and the sincerity and the advice. This has always been an area of health where it has almost been a tradition of non-partisanship in this area because of the depth of the issue and the difficulty of the issue, and I appreciate the Member's comments and advice. I will take that advice to heart.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to now resume my line of questioning on the provincial nursing resource task force, of which I was a member of up until the beginning of this year when I guess they discovered that there had been a change in government, and I stopped receiving invitations. Go figure. I did get minutes for a while, though. I am wondering if the Minister is aware of any committee changes that have been made.

Mr. Chomiak: Insofar as the RHA is responsible for committee membership, I am advised that we are not responsible for committee membership of that committee, so I am not aware directly of any changes.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me if he meets with the chairman of that committee on a regular basis.

Mr. Chomiak: I understand the Department has met with the chairperson.

Mrs. Driedger: I think the Department is on the Committee. The Committee, in November of 1999, was addressing health care aide standardized training. I know that this a fairly substantial challenge before us, and I am wondering what the progress has been in terms of moving towards the standardization of that training.

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Department of Education, has come up with a core basis of competencies that will guide the development of curriculum.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand previously that there was going to be consultation with public and private providers who were going to look at the development of the core competencies. My question is: who has been involved in the development of those competencies?

* (17:10)

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that all of the private and public trainers, as well as employers, have been involved in that development process through the Council on Post-Secondary Education. I am also aware of the fact that part of a bill had been previously introduced in this chamber. In its draft form, it had had a regulation and standardization involved in this, but that was pulled from the draft of the Bill prior to coming into this chamber last year. But that is an aside, and I am just doing that from memory. In any event, that is the response to the Member's question.

Mrs. Driedger: How quickly does the Government intend to move in moving this process along in terms of the development of a standardized training program? Is that something that we are going to see in the near future? Who are going to actually be the ones providing the training?

Mr. Chomiak: The strategy is that it will not be necessarily one standardized curriculum. There will be a competency component to it. There will be some curriculum and some standardized training available in perhaps a variety of settings, and that has not been determined at this point.

Mrs. Driedger: Are we going to be moving towards seeing health care aides need to come from a specific training program out of a college or from a private provider, or are we still going to allow hospitals to provide a two-week training program and you end up after your two weeks being a health care aide?

Mr. Chomiak: At this point, the thinking is that the advantage of competency-based training is that it allows people who are currently employed to receive the additional training or the upgrades at particular institutions and/or at various educational sites. So the plan is to have a flexible approach that is based on competency-based training as well as institutional training.

Mrs. Driedger: Were there any health care aides involved in the development of these competencies? I recall from sitting on this particular task force, hearing the health care aides there indicate that they felt very, very strongly that they do not want others coming in telling them what their profession, how they should be trained. They wanted to have a significant amount of input.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as a matter of fact, I met with them as recently as several weeks ago where they made that very same point to me. It certainly makes some sense for them to be involved.

Mrs. Driedger: Has the Minister been aware of any discussion amongst this group about forming its own union or regulatory body?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not think there is an organization or group that I have not heard of wanting to form their own regulatory body, frankly, over the past nine months since I have been minister. It has certainly been discussions at all. Most organizations and most groups that do not have regulatory authority have discussed that notion.

Mrs. Driedger: In November of 1999, this particular group was also continuing to address the image of nursing, and they were looking at initiatives and strategies that they could put forward so that they could make the public much more aware of what a good profession the nursing profession was. Is the Minister aware of

any initiatives in this area that the Committee has come up with to address the whole area of informing the public really about what nursing is all about?

Mr. Chomiak: Those specific recommendations I have not seen directly, but I can advise the Member that as part of our five-point nursing plan there were initiatives to actually do that. I also know that the University of Manitoba undertook with funding that came from the MNES nursing strategy to undertake a program of that kind. I am aware of other nursing organizations that are in fact undertaking that.

I think it is a very important issue. I think it is something that will be very, very helpful.

Mrs. Driedger: Certainly several years ago, when I was actively practising in nursing, it was my opinion at the time that a lot of the advertising being done by the Manitoba Nurses' Union was very harmful to the profession of nursing, in some instances, made the profession look incompetent and very unattractive. I was feeling that as a nurse, so were a lot of grassroots nurses.

Once I got into politics, I have certainly heard the same from grassroots nurses who are too afraid to say anything to the union, although now I certainly have not heard very much coming from them in the last little while. I do think and I would just like to make a statement on it, I do not necessarily expect the Minister to respond unless he wishes to, but I think that the union has a role to play here also.

Yes, they have their job to perform as a nursing union and be there to work for their nurses, but on the other hand, I think they also have a responsibility to the profession and to a lot of people in the province to maybe start to undo some of the damage I think they did in how they described the whole profession of nursing over the last number of years. Certainly their ads lately were very nice. Nursing has always been very demanding, highly stressful, sometimes unrewarding, but has always been a great, great profession. I am certainly proud to be one, but I think everybody out there has a responsibility to play right now in trying to address the issue of

the nursing shortage. I think the union has a strong role to play too.

I am not sure if the Minister wants to comment on that or not.

Mr. Chomiak: I will resist the temptation to go down a number of roads and paths that we have travelled before during the course of these Estimates. I think the last ad campaign by the Manitoba Nurses' Union was very useful. I have also felt that the advice with respect to nurses, with respect to the diploma program and with respect to the need for re-education, as well a lot of the advice has been very helpful. We are encouraged by dealing with nurses at all levels and in all facets and open to their advice and to their suggestions. I think that they have a job to do, the Nurses' Union that is has a job to do, and I think that they undertake their job seriously and with the best interests of nurses in mind.

Mrs. Driedger: I am surprised right now I guess not to be hearing a little bit more from them with the nursing shortage still remaining, because I am sure their concerns have not disappeared. I have been really glad to see over the last couple of years that all of the regulatory bodies have been getting together. The union has been represented on it. The employer has been represented on it. I think what we have seen over the last few years in nursing has actually been what I think is a pretty positive movement by the profession itself to try to look at some of the issues.

I have been pleased to see that they are all sitting at the same table, hopefully working towards a common goal of addressing a very challenging situation before us. I do not know if the Minister wants to comment on that. I was going to move to a different question.

* (17:20)

Mr. Chomiak: Let us move on because otherwise we will get locked into a discourse.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me if there are any plans or work being done to look at the development of standard workload measurement tools throughout the province.

No two hospitals seem to be using the same tools. It is hard to determine how many nurses you need to recruit and train, what are the staffing levels that we need, until we actually have something very, very concrete and standard that actually indicates patient acuity levels and what that workload measurement means and the kind of staffing that is then needed.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just reflecting on the previous comments of the Member, I think that one of the things that I think has been fairly positively received by nurses in general is a general open attitude to their suggestions, the fact that we have included additional funding for their retraining and education and the fact that we have listened to nurses in terms of returning to a diploma RN program.

With respect to the issue that the Member raises in terms of staffing patterns and the like, as I indicated during our discussion through personal care homes, we hope to be in a position to deal with the acuity and some of the other levels. There are some of our technological rollouts in the personal care home sector, and one would hope that in terms of a technological sense we could have some kind of—there are other jurisdictions that have standard practices that go across all levels of care from personal care to chronic care to acute care that have sort of standard measurements and standard designations and accordingly standard staffing patterns to relate to that.

The Member is right. As we indicated during our discussion of the SmartHealth initiative, we are quite far behind in terms of our technological ability to do so, and hopefully we can start the process of moving towards that, notwithstanding that the issue of staffing patterns and staffing guidelines and the move towards particular staffing guidelines and patterns that prevailed in this jurisdiction for the past few years are being looked at. The issue, for example, of whether or not LPNs should be in acute care facilities is something that we have addressed positively, that in fact we think nurses who are LPNs should be working up to their level and not underutilized as they are in many cases. This is a larger issue that relates to a variety of factors.

One of the issues that we wanted to deal with was providing the resources the best we could and start to provide the resources to various facilities in order that they could have the staffing patterns that are necessary. That is a process that is going to work through our mandate. We cannot do it all at once. It is one thing to mandate particular staffing levels; it is another thing to fund and to accommodate that, and therein lies the rub.

Mrs. Driedger: I think what would be very useful in determining—you know, for instance, in looking at LPNs moving into acute care facilities, if we had standard workload measurement tools that were the same across the province—for instance, St. Boniface used a system called Medicus for a number of years, and I think Grace Hospital had a system maybe called GRASP [*phonetic*] or some similar name to that, and then some hospitals I think probably did not have anything. What these particular tools did is they gave you levels of care and acuity and could indicate for you whether you are looking at a Level 4 patient or a Level 1 patient and the language would be the same right across the province. So if you knew your hospital was full of Level 4 patients and Level 3 patients, then you would legitimately maybe be able to say, well, you have to have RNs.

I am not sure where Medicus is at. I understood that it might not have been Y2K compatible. I am not sure. So I do not even know if St. B is into the whole Medicus system. But I worked in that system there and it was part of the training effort for years and years. We use it to staff the hospital. I know there is no simple way of looking at this, because I am not even sure other jurisdictions in the country have come up with anything useful. But I am wondering, are we moving in any direction to look at some of those tools which could then predict what you need in terms of staffing?

Mr. Chomiak: In fact, there are other jurisdictions that do utilize various tools along those lines. I do not want to stray too far into the technological. I have been impressed with several tools that I have seen utilized in other jurisdictions that do precisely what the Member is talking about. I have also had presentation from any number of entities that wish to employ

that kind of service as well as pleas and enquiries from various institutions who want to pilot or to try to utilize different kinds of tools.

I think the Member is correct. We should move towards a system like that. There should be grassroots and employee participation in that process. It should preferably be compatible throughout the system. We are not unfortunately close to that at this point, but I dare say that we are going to try to move towards that through—it is foremost and uppermost in our minds as we try to grapple with the technological needs and requirements across this.

I have seen some excellent approaches that if I, as a layperson in this area, and I am a layperson in this area, I would buy off the shelf in a minute that I thought were very effective tools to do this across the system.

The issue is a little bit more complicated than simply I as Minister of Health seeing a tool that is effective there. It is subject to a review by institutions and by various individuals who are expert in this field to provide government with recommendations as to how best to rule out this project.

I should say at this point that it looks like the MDS system that was piloted last year at four personal care homes has the potential to do much of what the Member is talking about. It certainly has been well received. I think it was piloted both in Manitoba personal care homes and I think it was piloted in Saskatchewan in the acute care sector. It is all wrapped up in federal-provincial negotiations and review and the like. But the Member is correct in terms of I think general direction. It is recognized across the system that there is a need and gap in that area.

Mrs. Driedger: This particular task force was going to predict a three- to five-year demand and supply for nurses by May of this year. I wonder if that had been accomplished.

Mr. Chomiak: Which task force, the nursing?

Mrs. Driedger: This nursing, the provincial nursing resource task force.

Mr. Chomiak: If they have completed that, it has not come directly to our attention.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could verify the latest numbers that are floating around out there in terms of nursing vacancies. The MNU was quoted in the paper as saying 1110. Wayne Byron, around that same time, indicated 475. I am wondering if the Minister could actually provide us with what might be an accurate number?

* (17:30)

Mr. Chomiak: I am not trying to be evasive, but I think I will get the Member these statistics when we next meet, because both as critic and as Minister I have tried to use consistent numbers. I use the government-provided numbers and, when we came to office, I tried to maintain the same method and approach so that I was not inconsistent with what I said in opposition in terms of the numbers. So I just want to verify the process because it is a never-ending source of varied information. I do have numbers here, but I just want to verify the consistency, and I will provide that to the Member next time when we meet.

Mrs. Driedger: That is fine. I do not mind receiving the information that way. Just a little point of clarification, because I know I probably asked that question in Question Period one day. The Minister had indicated that the number was partly influenced by casual staff, and casual staff have never been part of that formula.

In fact, what is making a difference, I think, maybe, is term positions being factored into that number. Part-times always have been, casuals never have, and I understand that term positions perhaps are what might be a reason for this, whether it is a discrepancy or not, but certainly with the MNU talking about over a thousand nurses, it is making it seem like within nine months we have doubled our nursing shortage, and I am not sure that that is accurate.

Mr. Chomiak: Against my better judgment, I am advised that we always use permanent positions that are vacant, and the number of 1100 that is quoted includes vacancies for leave of absence, replacements and term positions.

So that is a factor. The other factor, I think, that one has to take into consideration is the fact that there have been literally hundreds of more beds, personal care home beds opened up that require staff as well as expansion of numerous programs. So, if anything, the pool has grown larger, because it expanded need and expanded resources that have been put across the field in terms of offering different opportunities and new opportunities to nurses.

But I still will get back the specific numbers to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the Minister aware of any union contract clause which might state that a 100% agreement is needed on a ward before a ward can change their staffing patterns from part-times to full-times or change their pattern at all?

Mr. Chomiak: I am not specifically aware of that particular clause or provision.

Mrs. Driedger: That certainly could be affecting the ability of hospitals to change from the part-time numbers to full-time numbers, if indeed there is a requirement in the contract that would say you need 100% agreement. Perhaps I am asking the wrong person, but to me that is certainly something that maybe needs to be looked into a little bit to determine if there is a way of relaxing that a little bit which might help move along the number of part-time to full-time nurses.

I am wondering if the Minister has any numbers in terms of I guess dollars spent on overtime within the last year and if that has been factored into this budget in terms of projecting overtime dollars in this next year.

Mr. Chomiak: I attempted to establish that figure both when I was opposition critic and as minister and I have been unable to ascertain those particular numbers. The information that came back to me in terms of overtime I do not think actually reflected the overtime numbers. It was the same numbers I had been provided as critic, and I think it is because of the methodology—two reasons actually: the regionalized structure of the system, and secondly the fact that our technology is not even

close to a state where we can actually garner or gather that kind of information. It has been a long-standing desire of mine, both as critic and now as minister to try to ascertain that, and I can say that it has at this point proved unsuccessful.

Mrs. Driedger: It is interesting now because I think the Minister did not believe us when we told him we were not able to access that information, and I knew we could not because, believe me, as a nurse too, coming into government, I was curious and I had been one of the people responsible for proving a lot of overtime, and I knew I could go into the books at St. Boniface Hospital and come up with some figures, but you are right; a lot was manual. There was no easy way to monitor it so that certainly is a challenge. Is there a percentage that the Minister is aware of, such as 20 percent to 30 percent of shifts are covered by extra shifts or overtime. Has that ever been tossed out there?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have heard that figure of that kind bandied about, but I do not have any direct knowledge of that.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the trend up or down in use of term positions to replace staff on LOAs?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised we do not have that figure. We do not have that trend analysis.

Mrs. Driedger: I have a few questions on the two-year diploma program. I am wondering if the Minister would be amenable to them being asked now or whether he would prefer that I waited until the appropriate line? Do them now? Okay.

Is it still the intent for this program to start in the fall?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me if the curriculum has been developed and approved by MARN and COPSE.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I understand the first year curriculum is in the process of being provided to MARN shortly.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it the Minister's understanding that MARN will address this prior to—I guess, not only address it. They have to approve it, and I understand COPSE has to approve it as well. Is it his understanding that that could happen prior to the fall start date?

* (17:40)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we expect that the first year curriculum will be approved by both bodies prior to September, and the second year will follow.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me what would happen if they decided not to, because I understand at the last MARN annual meeting there was passage of a resolution that stated that it was BN as entry to practice and they reaffirmed their position on that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that MARN is committed to giving a fair and full review of the program.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister verify for me? I have heard it mentioned as a 23-month course, but then I understand there is some clinical experience attached to that, and it could be a 26-month course. I wonder if he could tell me what it is.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we still anticipate it to be a 23-month program. There is a clinical portion to be integrated into the program, which is being worked on.

Mrs. Driedger: Is there any consultation done with the RHAs or the hospitals to determine whether or not they could handle the extra students in the system?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have been advised that Red River did take into account those clinical needs and the requirements.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me if they have hired teachers for the program.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, Red River, which is responsible for delivering the program,

has given us every indication that those processes are in place.

Mrs. Driedger: Has it been developed? Has this particular program been developed so that LPNs could be given credit for their LPN experience and then take a certain part of this course, not the 23 months, but a lesser amount of time, knowing that the experience they already bring accounts for something?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, that consideration has been given. We may not be in a position this fall, with respect to the program, to offer that capacity, as is offered under the BN program at the University of Manitoba. That is our intention to move in that direction.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could indicate for me, I understand this particular course or program has a funding price tag of \$2.5 million. He may wish to verify that for me. Also, in the budget, I see that the funding for nursing education has remained the same as last year with no change at all to the funding allocation. I am wondering if he could tell me where the funding for this program would be found.

Mr. Chomiak: I believe the funding that the Member is referring to in the Supplementary Estimates deals with the nurses education agreement. With respect to where the Member is referring to, that has an increase, it is part of the, I believe, five-year agreement that the Member is looking at, so that is why it is static. With respect to the diploma program that the \$2.6 million over three years that is allocated for the program. The funding is through COPSE and through Education and Training.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me what the cost of this program will be for a student. Is it identical, comparable, more, less than what a university student would pay in terms of tuition and books?

Mr. Chomiak: We will provide the Member with that information, keeping in mind that the course itself is over a less period of time in terms of the year, but is as lengthy in a lot of respects as to the present course's offering because it is a ten-month course. So there is comparison of

apples and oranges. It is a bit of a different comparison with the university, but we will provide the information.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister could tell me whether or not there is a recruitment and retention fund for physicians.

Mr. Chomiak: If the Member could be a little more specific, there are a variety of funds and a variety of recruitment and retention initiatives. We do have a significant recruitment intention initiative encapsulated in this particular budget. The announcement with the details are still forthcoming with respect to the process. There are other funds that are available through various other authorities with respect to recruitment and retention. Specifically, I am thinking of the WRHA and their fund that was structured last year with respect to recruitment and retention, particularly focussing on specialists.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I would be interested in learning about all of these. I understand there was a physician resource plan discussed or indicated that would be put into place during the election, and it had a \$15-million price tag attached to it. Some of the pieces from that were salary arrangements for family doctors, where appropriate; rural residency program; rural practice establishment grants; support for practice opportunities in rural and northern areas; regional practice association to create groups of on-call physicians to fill in when community physicians need time off; opportunities for foreign-trained Canadian doctors and residency positions for Canadian doctors who have trained and practised in other countries and who have passed the evaluation exam; contracts for these physicians to practise in underserved areas following their residency after fulfilling full practice requirements according to existing policies; offer full licences to these physicians on their return to underserved areas.

I pulled that information off probably a news release that went out at the time of the election. I am wondering if this physician resource plan has been enacted in all or in part.

* (17:50)

Mr. Chomiak: There are provisions in this budget for a significant rural recruitment and retention strategy, and there are significant resources that are also going to be put into an IMG strategy, which will be announced and the details of which will be forthcoming.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the Minister prepared at this time to share with me any of the rural recruitment and retention strategy?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe two Estimates ago I outlined for the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) the broad components of the program, a variety of programs. Most of the items the Member mentioned in her discussion are included, and, as I have indicated, we are still finalizing the details of that approach, and there will be a significant move and announcement in this area.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that a suggestion came forward from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce that recommended forgivable loans be offered to students graduating from Grade 12 from the rural part of Manitoba to entice them to come into medicine and then make a commitment to go back and work in the rural area afterwards.

From my discussion with them, they indicate that this has received some positive recognition. I am wondering if there is any movement in that area to offer that.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member might be aware that there was a rural retention and recruitment strategy committee that met and canvassed opinion and advice. We are finalizing a variety of recommendations that will precisely do a lot of the things that are required in terms of retaining, in terms of training and in terms of maintaining rural physicians in Manitoba. All of those specifics will be announced in due course.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me how many physicians we are short of in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: I will endeavour to determine that information and try to provide it to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: In looking at enticements for physicians to come to Manitoba, is it common practice to look at financial incentives in terms of enhanced salaries, bonuses? My understanding is that that is a practice that has occurred. If you are really short and you need the best, certain things need to be offered. Is that the direction the Minister will operate under?

Mr. Chomiak: I have expressed, we have expressed two viewpoints in this regard, firstly, that when a province like Manitoba starts competing with other larger, other jurisdictions, it is something we discuss at the federal-provincial level. We go to New Brunswick and steal a physician from New Brunswick. Ontario comes to Manitoba and takes a physician from here. We are all dealing with the same pool and some less. It creates a real difficulty. In terms of principle, it is a real problem that we at a national level, not just on the physician level, but all human resource levels, have to deal with. We have had these discussions at federal-provincial levels. I feel for some northern jurisdictions and some of the Maritime jurisdictions, where some of us have taken some of their professionals, and some of our professionals have been taken from other jurisdictions.

So, in terms of principle, it is something that I have been expressing the viewpoint that we have to be very careful in this situation lest we end up in a situation where only, say, the Ontarios and the Albertas and maybe the B.C.s will have all of the professionals, and the other jurisdictions will have none. That is the one side. On the other side is the reality. The reality is we have to be competitive. We have to do what we can at all levels of the professions to be competitive, so between those conflicting and those two principles, basically, those are the two guiding principles at this point.

We are flexible and competitive, and we have been and we will continue to be. At the same time we have to be cognizant of the danger and the difficulty we will get in, in all jurisdictions if we get into a process. I expressed that to a reporter, and it ended up as a headline. It was a more philosophical point, that it becomes a lot like NHL salaries. We have to be very, very cautious and prudent on that side across this federal state where responsibility for

health care is under provincial jurisdictions, and some are in a better position than others, and at certain times, offer certain incentives, et cetera. At the same time, we in Manitoba have done not a bad job of being competitive, and we will continue to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess it is one thing to not want to go to another province and try to entice their people, but a lot of provinces do not seem to be buying into that. They are taking care of their own, and they are offering huge bonuses, fabulous incentives. If we do not have the same attitude, how do we stay competitive? It is very difficult to be competitive. I understand, probably in the area of physicians, that is certainly where we see more financial rewards being offered in terms of competitiveness than we do with technologists, therapists, nurses. I am wondering if the Minister is aware of any huge salary offers to any specialists coming into Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: We are being realistic. I am not so naive, having expressed the principle that I am not unaware and we are not unaware of what the environment is, and we are well aware of what our needs are. We are prepared to do what we can to ensure that we maintain our situation and have the adequate resources in place. This is longer term, but really one of the priorities has to be on an increased retention of our professionals here in Manitoba. I have cited again with the

Member for Russell the fact that in Saskatchewan we are advised that 70 percent of their physicians they keep in Saskatchewan and we are in the neighbourhood of 30 percent to 40 percent here in Manitoba. That has been the subject of ongoing talks and initiatives and discussions and collaboration with various groups in order to try to change that outflow.

So we are realists on this, and I am not so naive as to think that it is not happening and that there is less. But, at the end of the day, if we continue to raid and raid and raid, we are all going to lose. But, having said that, we will do what we can to maintain and attract people to Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: I have two seconds. I am not sure where I should go when I have two seconds. Wait for the countdown. I will remain on the physician area.

Mr. Chairperson: Time being 6 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 11, 2000

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