



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

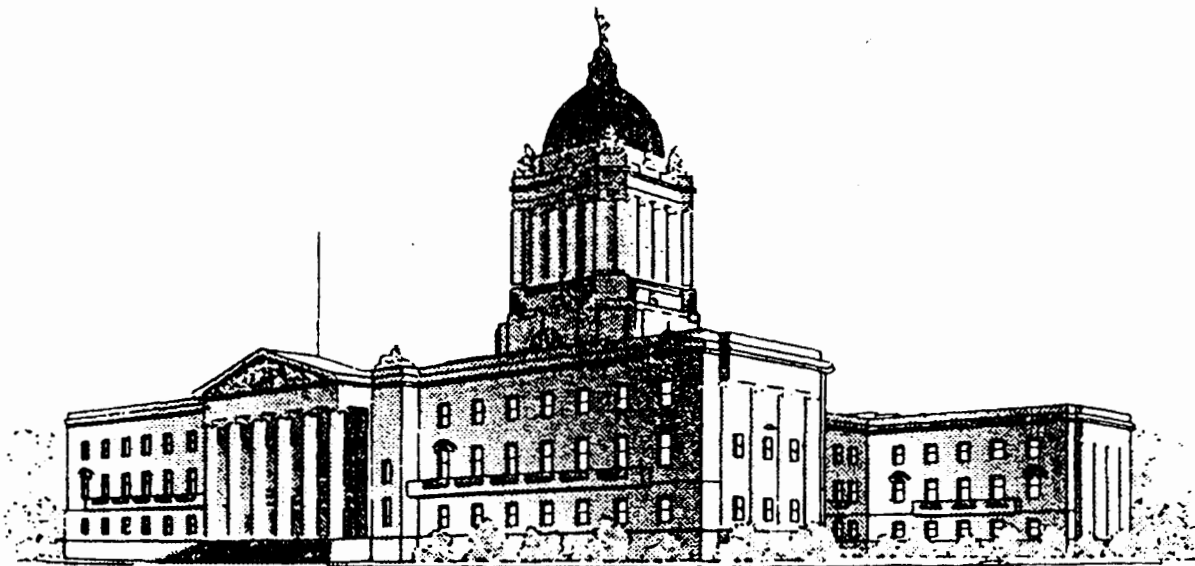
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLVIII No. 42 - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 5, 1998

ISSN 0542-5409

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
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GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
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TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mining Reserve Fund

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of A. Crocker, M. Church, K. Kawerski and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman) to consider immediately restoring the \$6 million taken from the Mining Reserve Fund.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mining Reserve Fund

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

mining operations attributable to the depletion of ore deposits; and

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

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

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

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in

from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

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

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

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

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

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

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 46—The Correctional Services Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 46, The Correctional Services Act (Loi sur les

services correctionnels), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

The Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House, and I would table the Lieutenant Governor's message.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon sixteen Grades 3 to 6 students from Royal School under the direction of Mrs. Elaine Paulson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

We also have twelve Grade 9 students from Calvin Christian School under the direction of Mr. John Buikema. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hepatitis C Compensation

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, we have been hearing all last week and again yesterday from Tory ministers, including the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), and from Tory backbenchers that the extension of compensation for victims of hepatitis C would bankrupt our health care system and plunge the entire country into a state of chaos. Tories voted against our motion last December; they voted against our motion calling for a free vote and are currently filibustering our second motion, our third motion I should say.

Madam Speaker, in light of the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) apparent change of heart yesterday—and I ask that we both put partisanship aside—I want to ask him what his position is. Will his Minister of Health return

to the bargaining table assigned with the task of negotiating the extension of hepatitis C to include all victims who acquired this illness through contaminated blood or contaminated blood products?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I just cannot believe the preamble to the question from the member for Osborne. She came to the committee last week and moved a resolution that required the federal government to pay the entire share of the compensation package. Then we asked her to clarify what the New Democratic Party's position was. She refused to answer. Then, after being challenged again, she said, well, that really is not our position; maybe the province should pay something.

So, Madam Speaker, now she comes in here while this matter is being debated in the committee where many members of this Legislature are participating in a very thorough discussion on hepatitis C, one that it is our responsibility as legislators to have, and the member now wants to cut off that debate. That is totally a misrepresentation of what is happening in committee, and we on this side would like to know what the New Democrats really think. Should the feds pay? Should the provinces pay? They put two positions on the record last week.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, in response to the question of extending compensation, yesterday the Premier said I am not ruling it out. The Premier says one thing in the hallway, one thing here, one thing one day, one thing the next day. We are trying to find out the position of this government in relationship to compensation, to extending the package for compensation for hepatitis C. Would somebody, please, the Premier—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. David Newman (Deputy Government House Leader): Point of order, Madam Speaker. We have had a second question, a follow-up question, and we have had a very extended preamble that has been going on for, as the House leader for the official opposition said in reference to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) yesterday, about three minutes while you

were standing. An exaggeration, I agree, but probably 30 seconds of extended preamble. I would appreciate it if you would bring the member to order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Point of order, Madam Speaker. There is usually more leeway in terms of lead questions, and certainly that was extended to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) with his rather extensive nonanswer which tended into debate. He was continuing debate from yesterday.

Madam Speaker, I would suggest that we follow the normal process. I think there is some greater flexibility in lead-off questions, and certainly the member for Osborne is our lead-off questioner today on this very important issue. We ask that courtesy be extended to her.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. First, for clarification for all members of the House, the latitude is allowed only to the Leaders, not to anyone else taking the first question. That has been Manitoba practice and tradition in terms of allowing latitude relative to the time lines and other guidelines.

On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Riel (Mr. Newman), the government deputy House leader indeed did have a point of order. The honourable member was recognized for a supplementary question to which no preamble is required.

* * *

* (1340)

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Premier, in view of the remarks he made outside the House yesterday, if he would please tell us if his position with regard to extending compensation has modified.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the position which I put forward yesterday and which has been widely quoted, I believe in the media, is the position that we continue to take.

I have had the opportunity even in the last 24 hours to speak to several First Ministers about the issue, and I have urged that the only way to resolve the many outstanding and confusing aspects of this issue is to have further meetings of federal and provincial ministers of Health. That, I believe, is something that will be taking place. It is my understanding that those arrangements and discussions are currently underway, and I think that it does not benefit anybody to pursue it beyond that point.

If our objective is to have all of the ministers of Health in Canada get together and arrive at a consensus solution, then that is what we should be working toward. We should not be attempting to find some way of putting somebody off balance or trying to embarrass somebody here in this Legislature. What we ought to be doing is working towards that conclusion because, as the member's Leader confirmed yesterday, none of us want to have a two-tiered solution to this where each province gives an offer depending on its own fiscal capacity. That would be a very, very wrong situation to incur here in this country, and I think it would lead towards a very destructive force towards medicare in Canada. I do not think that any of us should want that, so what we will do is continue to work with our colleagues across Canada to get everybody to the table to try and find a consensus solution to the matter.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I thank the Premier for his answer.

Compensation—Consultations

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I would like to ask the Premier—and it appears that he has agreed to renegotiate—if the Premier and his minister will undertake to ensure that representatives from all affected consumer groups have representation at the table and that, as well, these groups are consulted here in Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): This is a very complex issue. Even in some of my discussions with colleagues across the country yesterday, matters were brought forward such as the fact that some people who have been infected with or received tainted blood with hepatitis C have not yet even been identified because there are no symptoms or no consequences to them in

a health circumstance. Others are people who may be not in need of any particular financial support. There is one very prominent Canadian who has been identified who would be in very, very strong financial circumstances, would not need that.

It may well be that the kinds of discussions that have to take place have to do with dealing with people who have been traumatically affected in terms of their health circumstance and who also are in very difficult financial circumstances. It may well be that the solution that was arrived at for the package that was made available for the '86 to '90 victims, because of the fact that in that case there was evidence of negligence or an argument to be made for negligence because of the fact that Canada did not utilize the test that was available and in use in the United States, United Kingdom and elsewhere, there are different circumstances. It is not something that I think we can negotiate here or we can decide here. I think it is the expert advice that is required, and I think it is all of the circumstances and advice that people are listening to right now that will hopefully result in an agreement or at least a consensus among the provinces, and that is what we have to hope for.

Hepatitis C Compensation

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I want to ask some questions to the Premier, in terms of hepatitis C, and would note that there certainly seems to be a significant shift from last week. I do not just think here but I think across the country. People are asking governments, both provincial and federal, to do the right thing. I think many people in this province feel the right thing to do is to extend compensation to victims who are affected by blood that they received prior to 1986. I appreciate that the minister said yesterday he is not ruling out that extension, and I appreciate the fact that he is, in essence, saying that they will be there at any federal-provincial conference that may be called to deal with this matter.

I think rather than ask the Premier to negotiate on the floor of the Legislature, all I am asking on behalf of the victims and all our caucus is asking for is: will this minister go to any such meeting or send his Health minister, directing that Health minister to come up with

a solution that does extend the coverage to victims who received the blood prior to 1986?

* (1345)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I have indicated that we will be represented at these ongoing meetings and discussions. We will ensure that we go there with a sense of fairness and a commitment to all of the things that are important to us, preserving the medicare system in Canada, ensuring that people are treated fairly in all of those matters. We will go there with an open mind, and that is I think the best commitment I can make to this Legislature and to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Ashton: As a follow-up, Madam Speaker: will the Health minister of the Province of Manitoba, at that meeting, be going in there with a position that appears to have been taken in other provinces, that they should not only discuss this matter, but they should extend the coverage to victims who received the blood prior to 1986? Is that going to be the position of the government at that meeting?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I repeat my previous answer.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, we do not know what position the government will take. I will ask the First Minister again, because I think it is very important in this House to take that position, to indicate to victims. I want to know: what can we say to victims in this province of blood that was received prior to 1986?

Is the province going to be going to federal-provincial meetings on this matter and taking a position similar to other provinces, such as Ontario, which is going to be pushing for the extension of the coverage? Will the Premier take that position at that meeting?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I have indicated to the member opposite that we will seek to find a resolution to the issue that is one that is made in the interests of fairness, in the interests of being compassionate, in the interests of ensuring that we treat people as well as we possibly can given the circumstances that they face and we face in our collective responsibilities in all of these matters.

Fabian Torres Appeal Process

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Justice: Fabian Torres, found guilty in the killing of Beeper Spence, was given a one-year sentence to be served in the community one year ago, which this government is finally arguing on appeal today, across the street.

My question to the minister is: if the government thought this particular offender was a danger to the community, as it is arguing today, why did it not have the supports and the protocol in place to fast-track this appeal, to have the hearing within weeks, as we understand was available? Why did it take four and a half months to obtain the transcript to get the process started, when we understand from the Court of Appeal the transcript could have been available within seven days?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, generally speaking, the member is misleading the House. The Crown attorneys in this particular case were very diligent about bringing that matter to the court. There were a number of complicating factors, including the fact that it is not the Crown attorneys who determine dates, and it is not the Crown attorneys who are the only lawyers appearing. There were some very strong arguments made against the matter proceeding any quicker than it did. The Crown attorneys throughout the process, I think, had displayed an appropriate sense of urgency and conveyed that to the court on a timely basis.

* (1350)

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister acknowledge that indeed it was not just the Crown attorneys; it is the protocol, the lack of protocol, the lack of support for his Crown attorneys? Would he not agree that the lack of fast-tracking of violent offender cases like this give the defence ample opportunity to make motions on the basis of changing circumstances, and indeed here such a motion was presented seven months after the appeal process initially began?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, the Crown attorneys in this particular case moved it along as quickly as possible. The member seems to think that it is the

Crown attorney's position that wins the day in every case. Well, I can indicate to him that the defence lawyers in that particular case consistently opposed certain dates, and in fact those delays resulted in the matter being set down for today. I do not think that anything in the process or otherwise would in any way indicate that the Crowns were less than diligent of their pursuit of this particular appeal.

I do want to say as well that whenever there has been an issue of resources or an issue in terms of addressing process, we have addressed that process and we are committed to doing that. We have an interest, in terms of public safety, to ensure that these matters are dealt with as quickly as possible. But it is no secret that every delay favours an accused, and some defence lawyers in fact use that. I am not suggesting in this case that was the case, but that in fact does happen.

Crown Attorneys Caseloads

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Would the minister who says the Crowns are diligent—and we agree. They are hard-working, terribly hard-working, professional and dedicated, but will he not admit that these prosecutors need supports from this government, from this minister? Will he admit that he cannot leave his prosecutors handling up to 70 files a day, 10 files an hour, as is reported today in the papers and as Judge Garfinkel recently said, taking shortcuts because of these volumes?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, as a former prosecutor I understand the difficulties that may arise from time to time. But I can indicate that this government has consistently provided the Crowns with the resources that they require, and if there is a particular issue in a bail court—and one has to understand. I know the member for St. Johns does not understand that there is a difference between a trial and a bail hearing, but there is a significant difference. If my Crowns come to me and indicate that there is an issue with resourcing, in each and every time we have addressed that. If there is any indication that is an issue, we will address that.

Now I know the member is now trying to apologize for all the mean-spirited things he has said about Crown

attorneys, and I appreciate that in fact he is now finally recognizing what a tremendous job our Crown attorneys are doing.

Provincial Parks Camping Reservations

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Natural Resources. Last year we raised concerns about camping reservations going to the San Diego firm Destinet. The minister assured us that not only did we get improved services for our campsites, we get improved accessibility and we get more campsites listed. The service was so bad that campers signed petitions against the company that doubled reservation rates, demanded credit card payments, limited stays and double-charged campers. In a letter to camper Irene Bernard, the minister said that there were many problems with the company but that he was confident that the reservation system will be an important part of trip planning.

Can the minister explain why, when Ms. Bernard phoned to reserve a site, she was told that there were no reservation systems in place for this May long weekend?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, the reservation system is continuing in the hands of a Manitoba company that has bought the assets of Destinet. They are in the process of establishing a system that will allow for the continued implementation of a parks reservation system. I would suggest to the member for Dauphin that if he thinks that the inability of people to reserve ahead of time when they are making their travel plans is not important when they are coming to this province to visit, then he does not understand tourism.

Mr. Struthers: Can the minister explain, then, why he told Ms. Bernard that Destinet would establish a Winnipeg call centre by January 1998 that would not require credit cards, but yesterday she was told she has to pay all her camping fees up front by credit card for a camping trip she is not taking until July? Nothing has changed, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, a cheque will work just as well. The fact is that if someone wishes to have a reservation in place immediately, it does take a little while for the cheque to arrive in the mail. Some people

would wonder why is there a deposit required. There is a significant demand at a large number of sites, and at the same time we had a significant number of people who were cancelling or not showing up to accept their reservations where they made no deposit. This guarantees those who sincerely want to be in the park and take the opportunity to access our parks are guaranteed a site when they get there or that the sites are being used fully, which is one of the objectives that is obvious to the people who want to tour in this province.

* (1355)

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, the minister has to get his system together. Will he finally abandon all his crazy reservation schemes and re-establish a Manitoba campsite reservation system staffed by Manitobans which will be fair to all campers?

Mr. Cummings: This system is eminently fair. We have 12 Manitobans employed doing the job right now with a backup of another dozen to support it during the busy call-in period.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Cummings: Again, the member ignores the reality of people who want to travel any kind of a distance who want to be assured that there will in fact be a site when they arrive at the end of the trail, No. 1; No. 2, that we do not have people tying up sites and then not showing up to access them; No. 3, when we look at the present system versus the previous one, this system will access all of our parks, Madam Speaker, and further to that we will have an opportunity to make the reservations guaranteed, and that is an important aspect. When the person makes a call today, the system pays for all of the costs. Previously, the person making the call had to make a long-distance call to each of the sites. That is now absorbed in the system.

Crime Rate Winnipeg North End

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): My question is for the Minister of Justice. In the 1997 report of the

Winnipeg Police Service, it showed that overall in Winnipeg there was a 5 percent drop in crime, but in the north end of the city, District 3, there was in fact a 12 percent increase in violent crime. Will the Minister of Justice acknowledge the needs for greater resources in his Community and Youth Correctional branch, the north end of Winnipeg, and commit to putting those resources there?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you very much for the question. I know the member is concerned about this community, as every good MLA should be. I know that we as a provincial Department of Justice have been working very, very closely with the police, not only in terms of providing resources such as police officers but in fact ensuring that there is a co-ordination of activities between the various agencies. This also includes the area of community youth corrections.

I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and my colleagues in cabinet have approved more money for intensive bail supervision of people released on bail when judges decide that is an appropriate thing to do. I also know that there is, when people are released from the Manitoba Youth Centre, a very successful program carried out by probation officers to ensure adequate supervision. So we are committed to those types of safety issues, and I want to continue to work with all members in this Legislature to ensure that the problems that we face in any particular area are addressed.

Mr. Kowalski: Will the minister commit to putting additional probation officers in the north end of Winnipeg to work on preventative programs to prevent youth crime before it happens instead of supervising young offenders after they become involved?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, there are, in our position of our department, essentially three aspects. We want to deal with the suppression issue, which I thought I dealt with adequately and appropriately. The other issue is the one of prevention and also partnership. Both the issues of partnership and prevention are very important in terms of not just looking at professional social workers or probation officers in our department who are doing a good job and whom we are giving extra resources to, but to establish community partners,

groups that do not go home after their shift is over but groups that live in the community, groups that are part of the community and want to resolve these types of issues and help the youth. I know our urban sports camp has been very successful. We are looking to the introduction of more of those sports camps. As well, we are looking at other proposals, one of which is coming from the police to deal with that issue.

* (1400)

Mr. Kowalski: My final supplementary is for the Premier. Will he now listen more carefully to opposition members, as he has no members in the north end of Winnipeg, about what is needed in the north end of Winnipeg?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I think that my colleague from River East and my colleague from Rossmere would both argue that they are in the north end of Winnipeg. I think he is speaking particularly of the northwest end of Winnipeg. In fact, he may be talking about the northwest corner of Winnipeg, because I used to think that the area in which I was born and raised was the north end. Having said all of that, I thank him for his suggestions, and I assure him that I will at all times listen to his views about issues that are important to his part of the province. I think that as a government we will certainly be mindful of those needs when we address policies to address those issues in government.

Daycare Policy Education Facilities

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, in 1990 the Filmon government changed a popular and common-sense policy established by the NDP government to put daycares in every new school constructed. I would like to table a newsletter, and I quote: Mike Radcliffe's involvement was instrumental. His efforts made all the difference.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James, to pose her question.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I did not quite finish my introduction. Many schools have been built in that time since this government has taken office, and that policy has changed. In fact, one of the schools includes the one in my constituency that was opened just last year, Greenway School. This was built with no daycare even though the need is just as intense. The local daycare reports a waiting list of over one year.

Can the Minister of Education explain why a school in the constituency of a cabinet minister gets a daycare while other schools in this province are rejected?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the answer is quite simple of course, and the member knows the answer. The answer is that, as we rebuild schools, schools that are being demolished and rebuilt, we try to rebuild them to the standards they had before. Montrose School in River Heights had a daycare in it; we rebuilt it with the daycare in it. Greenway School, we rebuilt with the things that were in Greenway. That is our policy and we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education and Training, to complete her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In both the instances that the member has referenced—and there have been other schools rebuilt—where a school is being demolished because it has become in such a state that to renovate would cost more than rebuilding, then the Public Schools Finance Board, which makes these decisions, will make a determination as to a rebuilding, and the rebuilding will be redone to try to meet the needs that it met prior to the demolition and reconstruction.

So, Madam Speaker, if a school has a daycare in it and it is demolished, it will be rebuilt with accommodation for a daycare so that the community still has the same services but in a new building. The Greenway School, I might add, is a beautiful new school that she should be very happy to see in her constituency. It is beautifully done.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I would like the minister to explain how the government can justify building a daycare in Montrose School, which did not have a daycare previously, and refused numerous schools that they have just built when demographics and logic says the need is there, and they said no.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I think the many parents who use the daycare at Montrose School would be very surprised to learn they were sending their children to something that did not exist, because they have been sending their children to daycare at Montrose for many, many years. It was a major concern when the school was slated for demolition, that there was no place for daycare in the area other than that school.

That school was rebuilt according to the needs that were there when the existing school was there; similarly Greenway School, which is a beautiful, beautiful building, redone in such a way that it gives greater opportunity to the people in the area. I think the member might be well advised to tour Greenway School and see the improved accommodation for the students in that area that they now have because the building was demolished and reconstructed.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, will the minister just plain—that the whole policy is a farce, because there was no room in Greenway School for a daycare because it was overcrowded. The fact is that this policy is based on who you know and the riding, rather than on need and common sense.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas.

An Honourable Member: No answer.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker—

An Honourable Member: No answer. Oh, now she wants to answer.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: The members opposite are complaining that I did not answer a question, but there was no question. The member used her opportunity for a question to make a statement. There was no question put.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If the Minister of Education does not want to answer questions, she does not have to. But when you start the third question with a phrase “can the minister explain,” you know that is a question. If the minister chooses not to answer it, let her state that on the record. Maybe she is afraid to try and justify what she has done in terms of this patronage for the River Heights constituency at the expense of other constituencies in this province.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Education, in all honesty, I did not hear a question. But I will take the matter under advisement to research Hansard and to ascertain, indeed, if a question was posed.

Fishing Industry

Fish Stock Decline—Northern Manitoba

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, our people who have traditionally made their living from fishing have over the years seen their means of making a living deteriorate to the point where they are no longer finding it feasible to fish and instead going on welfare. Fishing in the North is in a crisis situation.

My question to the Minister of Natural Resources is this. Given the serious decline of fish stocks—which I know he is aware of—over the past decade in places like Easterville and Grand Rapids, where fishing has virtually been wiped out, I want to ask the minister why his government has failed to protect those fish stocks during that period of time.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I believe that action is

underway with the support of the community to protect the fish during the brief spawning period as we speak.

Minister of Natural Resources Meeting Request

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister whether he would consider going to some northern communities, places like Grand Rapids, The Pas, Moose Lake and Pukatawagan and meet with fishermen over there, so that he can see first-hand just how serious the situation has become.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Well, Madam Speaker, I am quite interested to work with the communities in those areas and others to deal with the issue of whether or not we have appropriate protection, particularly during the spawning period. We have had some, I think, significant representation and some changes in thinking on the part of everyone about how we can best manage the stocks for the benefit of the communities. I would be more than willing to co-operate and work with the communities because, in fact, no matter what regulations we bring forward, in the end we have to work with the local communities to make sure that we manage the stocks appropriately.

Fishing Industry Federal-Provincial Assistance

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My last question to the same minister, Madam Speaker, is to ask him why his government has not gone after the federal government for a federal-provincial program that would assist fishers in the North in much the same way as the tag program in the Maritimes and on the West Coast is helping and assisting fishermen when their industry is on a downturn.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Well, there are two parts to the answer. First of all, we have on many occasions, not necessarily for the community that the member is asking about—we have however on numerous occasions talked to the federal authorities about whether or not they feel they have some responsibility to assist in the reduction of a

number of commercial quotas that are available in the various areas.

The reason there was still some uncertainty about how to deal with the fishery that the member mentions specifically is that I am getting conflicting comments from the fishermen in the area as to the worth and the efficacy of eliminating the fishery or whether we should expend our efforts in revitalizing it and use that as a method of bringing some economic improvement to the area. At the present, we are using the latter approach.

Minister of Natural Resources Meeting Request

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, together with the members for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), Flin Flon (Mr. Jennessen), The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and myself, we had an opportunity to sit in on hearings that were conducted by the Standing Committee on Oceans and Fisheries, and we heard a wide variety of problems by the fishers in northern Manitoba, the inland fishery problems. I would like to pursue the question that was raised by my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) with respect to meeting with these communities to hear first-hand on the part of this government the problems that these fishers are experiencing on northern Manitoba waters. One of the issues that was raised was the CEDF, and it appears that this is turning into a collection agency.

I would like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources if he can give us a time frame as to when he will meet fishers in Grand Rapids, Berens River, Poplar River, Bloodvein and other northern communities.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I did not directly answer the question when it was raised by the member for The Pas because the last time I responded in the positive to meet with a group, the member for Dauphin asked if that was possible within 24 hours. My doors are always open. I will, in fact, meet with any of these groups who would make a proposal for a discussion.

When I came to this office, I met with a significant number of fishermen representatives all around Lake Winnipeg and beyond, and I am certainly still open to further discussion. The concerns of the efficacy and

the profitability of some of the fishing areas is going to be an ongoing problem, and we need to work together to solve it.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, included among the problems that we were told yesterday were reduced catches, higher transportation costs and a crippling debt to CEDF. Perhaps the minister did not hear me correctly. We do not simply want the fishermen to come to the Manitoba Legislature. We would like to have the minister and perhaps the Minister responsible for Hydro go to these communities that have been affected by different circumstances with the fishery. I would like to ask the minister again if he can give us a time frame as to when he will take that opportunity to meet with these fishers in their own communities.

Mr. Cummings: Certainly. Whenever we can arrange a meeting. I saw some of these areas last summer, Madam Speaker, and I am quite prepared to meet with the groups. I think there are some ongoing issues that, with all parties at the table, we can probably do a lot. We have a tremendous sports fishery that has developed in a number of lakes across the North, and if we apply some of the same thinking to some of our other areas that are under pressure right now, Manitoba will be able to maintain its standard as one of the best fishing areas in Canada.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Economic Growth

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I have risen often in this Legislature to extol the economic success stories that have occurred and continue to occur in the constituency of Pembina. Recently in Rural Manitoba Development, a publication of Manitoba Rural Development, no less than eight businesses from Pembina were highlighted. Thanks to a variety of government programs, including the Rural Entrepreneur Assistance program, Grow Bonds and Community Works Loan Programs, these businesses have succeeded beyond their wildest expectations. They continue to provide quality employment opportunities to the people of Pembina and rural Manitoba.

I would therefore like to congratulate Ron Giesbrecht of Ronnie's Jumbo Seeds; Ralph and John Fehr of Elias Woodworking and Manufacturing Limited; Alvin Thiessen of Winkler Meats; John Borland of Acrylon Plastics; Tina Friesen of Pembina Valley Job Finding Club; Peter Wiebe of Geriatric Education and Consultative Services and Charlene Morrow of CJ's Massage Clinic.

Our government recognized the potential of these individuals and their businesses. Rural Manitobans are succeeding; the rural economy is succeeding, and more rural Manitobans are finding new and exciting career possibilities. I am confident that we will hear a great deal more from all these companies in the future as they continue developing their markets and their clientele. My congratulations go out to these people and their companies. Thank you.

* (1420)

Provincial Parks—Camping Reservations

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, in 1996 this government made it perfectly clear that park use would no longer be accessible to all Manitobans. It systematically raised user fees, introduced new fees for seniors and discouraged tourism by issuing parking tickets and removing park gate attendants.

One of the most questionable things this government did was to contract out our parks reservation system to a San Diego-based company. This was done with a fanfare of better service and more jobs for Manitobans. One of the hitches to privatization was of course the doubling of fees for reservations. It was not long before the Department of Natural Resources had to assign a staffperson to accept the hundreds of complaints that poured in over Destinet. By the end of the summer, a group of campers got together to sign a petition against the new system which had ruined the camping experience that some had enjoyed for 30 years.

No jobs came, and instead Manitobans had to phone San Diego to reserve a site. Manitobans trying to get a camping spot within an hour's drive from where they lived heard San Diego operators saying things like: where is Manitoba or what is a white shell?

Complaints about the system included being required to pay by credit card four days in advance of camping, double booking and overcharging. When the minister responded to the campers in October of last year, he acknowledged that re-routing calls created new problems and those policies were incorrectly administered by Destinet, but he promised the Destinet system would be improved. In February, Destinet Reservation went bankrupt. Given the service they provided to Manitobans, this comes as no surprise. Because of the bungling of yet another privatization scheme, there is today no reservation service in place for the May long weekend.

The worst part of this exercise has been the government still fails to recognize that good service in our parks makes good economic sense. Our parks provide recreation for citizens, wonderful opportunities for tourism and used to provide employment for our students. Once again, in its efforts to privatize services, this government has let its ideology overshadow what is best for the province of Manitoba.

Environmental Programs

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the important link that exists between education and the environment. As we all know, children are our future, and the environment in which we live is their future. Therefore, it is encouraging that two schools in my constituency of La Verendrye have taken a leadership role in preserving and enhancing our environment. With \$5,000 in funding provided under the provincial Special Conservation and Endangered Species Fund, Richer School will improve the natural habitat in part of their schoolyard and provide all students with an opportunity to learn about the environment.

Lorette Collegiate has received a \$2,000 grant to transform a large wheat field, which is currently completely devoid of trees, into an outdoor classroom. Under the project, the school will establish a permanent outdoor learning resource by planting trees and native grasses to restore again a part of the schoolyard to its original prairie and woodland habitat.

Over the years, the Special Conservation and Endangered Species Fund has helped organizations in

our communities and across the province improve our surroundings. I have every confidence that these most recent projects in my constituency will provide lasting benefits to the current student population and students to come.

So, on behalf of all honourable members, I congratulate the students and the staff at Richer and Lorette Collegiate for their efforts and wish them all the best as they create their own lasting legacy. Thank you.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): In November of 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was released and promptly forgotten by the federal and provincial governments. The plight of aboriginal victims at residential schools run by or authorized by the federal government was a major component of the report. These paternalistic schools were run with a deliberate goal of assimilation. Children were forced to stay in them 24 hours a day for 10 months a year or more. Speaking in their own language was prohibited, abuse was common and education often an afterthought.

Finally, this past January the federal government issued a response to the commission called: Gathering Strength. Not included in that response was a commitment or a policy on settling outstanding claims against the federal government by victims of residential schools.

Currently there are more than 1,000 lawsuits against the federal government from these victims with many more expected in the near future. We are told that the federal government is now considering settling with victims rather than forcing them to pay through individual court costs. This is the obvious solution to the very valid concerns of these victims, and we urge the federal government to do the right thing and settle them now.

The federal government should make it clear that none of these funds will be taken from the previously announced healing fund which goes towards communities, not individuals. Settling the claims of victims would be a positive step forward. The federal government should also act on the other economic and

social priorities identified in the report, and we also continue to wait for the province to make its response to the report. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hepatitis C—Compensation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I want to just say a few words with respect to the hepatitis C issue.

Madam Speaker, this is an issue in which what I would like to be able to see is some leadership coming from the government in dealing in a more tangible way with a very important issue that is facing the province of Manitoba. The minister, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), talked earlier today in Question Period with reference to, well, its concern is having double standards, one in Manitoba, something else happening in B.C. and something else may be happening in Ontario and other provinces. To a certain degree, that already exists today in terms of the way in which health care is delivered. You can find many different examples.

What we are really talking about is trying to look at individuals that were infected prior to 1986 and acknowledging that there is a need, there are special circumstances surrounding this particular case to justify some form of compensation. We would appeal to the Premier to take a position on it. What the Premier seems to be doing is leading towards, well, we will wait and see what happens in Ottawa. That is in part what the resolution is currently being debated in health care, which causes concern.

Madam Speaker, I do believe that the province has not only a role, it also has a responsibility here. I would like to see the government of the day live up to that responsibility and to indicate to individuals that have been infected prior to 1986 in particular that there will be something, and that something will be hopefully determined in the not-too-distant future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. David Newman (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the

House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply will be meeting in Room 254. We will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 9.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 53 of the Estimates book. Shall that item pass?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): We were not getting very far yesterday on the conflict of interest, because the minister has one line and only one line. I suppose she has been advised to stick to that one line and not deviate, so she does not really want to answer my questions. She just wants to repeat her answer over and over again, which I have had a chance to read in Hansard, and it is fairly obvious that she is following a line that she has chosen to take. But I am not going to give up on this. I would like to continue to ask the minister some questions on this topic and see if she understands why the public as well as myself are concerned about this conflict of interest.

First of all, I guess I should make clear that I actually have been in meetings with Mr. Doug Sexsmith in the past and always found him to be very helpful. In fact, he briefed me on some O/Cs a couple of years ago. I had met him at public meetings in the past, and I am not in any way blaming this individual for what I see is a violation of The Conflict of Interest Act of Manitoba. My concern is with this minister who should be familiar with the act and should know what the prohibitions are, namely, communication with the department for a year after leaving the employ of the government. So I am in no way interested in criticizing or punishing this individual but rather the person who is still in government, namely, this minister who should know

better and should not have got Mr. Sexsmith into this predicament of being caught in the middle, because ultimately she is responsible for him being invited to meetings after he left government.

* (1440)

So I am wondering if the minister understands that not only is there a perception in the public that there was a violation of The Conflict of Interest Act, but that there could be a perception on the part of other companies who bid on this contract who did not get it that there may have been favouritism involved here because it went to a company who hired an employee who used to be the assistant deputy minister. Can the minister see how other companies may feel that they did not get a fair deal here?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Chairperson, I know that my honourable friend in his comments would like to paint a picture that, in some way, I have done something that is inappropriate. But again I want to go back to the facts of this case, because what my honourable friend seems to be missing is the fact that the Civil Service Commission certainly indicated to Doug Sexsmith that there were certain parameters that needed to be followed to ensure that he did not contravene the conflict of interest guidelines that have been laid down. So anything that Mr. Doug Sexsmith did was, indeed, as a result of the information and the discussions with the Civil Service Commission that clearly spelled out what he could and he could not do for the year period after his departure from the Department of Family Services.

I know that my honourable friend might be a little hung up on this issue and trying to create an issue where no issue exists, but my sense or my feeling is that it is a personal agenda of his, probably a very personal agenda because he does not agree with the direction that our government has taken in amalgamating the City of Winnipeg's welfare caseload with the provincial caseload. I know he voted against the legislation, and I know that from time to time he has taken the side of the bureaucrats in the City of Winnipeg and has made it very clear that he does not believe that the bureaucrats that work for the Province of Manitoba are as competent as those that work for the City of

Winnipeg. I believe that is on record in last year in Hansard. It might have something to do with his frustration around the direction that government is taking in amalgamating welfare in the city of Winnipeg.

I want to indicate to my honourable friend that we are government and we make decisions based on discussions and consultation with the general public and the people of Manitoba that have told us very clearly that they want to see government delivered efficiently and effectively with the least cost to the taxpayer and that there is a significant overlap and duplication that can be involved in two different levels of government doing the same job.

We have some 2,000 people on our welfare caseloads on a year-to-year basis that move back and forth between municipal caseloads and provincial caseloads. Quite frankly, I do not think it is fair to those individuals to have them bounced around from one system to the other. So I think in the instance of the amalgamation of our welfare caseloads in Winnipeg to one tier that those people will be better served and will receive the fair and appropriate service that they deserve in a much more meaningful way.

So I think that there might be very much a difference of opinion and philosophy between my honourable friend's party and the party that happens to be in government right now. I know that my honourable friend opposes the amalgamation, and I hate to impute motives, but I somehow think that maybe my honourable friend, because he does not like the direction this government is taking, is taking it out on a person that has served our province, I would say, in a very positive way as a public servant and has tried to meet the needs of those people that he has served in the bureaucracy for many, many years, as I indicated yesterday, under different administrations.

So I want to say that I understand the frustration my honourable friend feels when he, so to speak, is not in the driver's seat. I know, because I sat in opposition for a couple of years too, and sometimes it is extremely frustrating when you have a very definite belief or philosophy, a belief that you are elected to move in a certain direction and the government of the day chooses to take a different direction, bring in legislation that might not be the kind of legislation that you would

bring in should you be in government and making the decisions. So I sense his frustration and I sense that he is using this issue to somehow—well, I guess I could go a little further and indicate that I think my honourable friend and his party might not think that the private sector in some instances might have some value or some contribution to make to the workings of government. We believe quite differently.

So all I want to indicate, Mr. Chairperson, is that my honourable friend seems to be quite frustrated and he seems to be quite hung up on this issue and he seems to be wanting to mar the name of Doug Sexsmith, and he can use whatever means he might want to to try to implicate me in his comments, but I want to say again that I think it is a difference of opinion on the direction we are taking as a government as opposed to what he might do should he be the Minister of Family Services and have some responsibility, not only to the people that serve our province so admirably as civil servants, but to the taxpayers of Manitoba, who I know do support the direction that we are taking.

So I will repeat again that I believe his motives are completely different from what he is stating on the record, and I will continue to indicate that the Civil Service Commission, who is responsible for interpreting the conflict of interest guidelines, certainly did give advice and that advice was followed. If my honourable friend has something that is concrete or some allegation that he would like to make that Mr. Doug Sexsmith contravened the guidelines, I would like him to indicate that to me or we can continue to debate this for a considerable length of time. I am prepared to stand by the legal counsel and Civil Service Commission that indicated that Mr. Doug Sexsmith has done nothing inappropriate.

Mr. Martindale: The minister did not answer my question, so I will pose it again. I am wondering if she understands that the reason for conflict of interest legislation that prohibits contact after employment with government is to preclude the perception on the part of other bidders that there may have been favouritism involved, that they did not get a fair deal because an assistant deputy minister went to work for the company that got the successful contract.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, I want to indicate to my honourable friend that there were certain directions that

were given to Mr. Sexsmith. He followed those directions that were given by the Civil Service Commission. There was nothing inappropriate, and I stand by that. The contract for the business case was entered into before Mr. Sexsmith left government.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister understand that what we are dealing with here is a problem that affects all elected people, regardless of political party or regardless of what province we are talking about and that if the government has employees who negotiate contracts whether we are talking about Mike Bessey or someone else who is an employee of this government, and then leaves government with a sweetheart deal with a company that they helped negotiate with, that reflects badly on all elected people, not just the government of the day but on all of us who are elected, and that the public is going to say this is just the same old gang looking after the same old gang?

Is that not concern enough for this minister to be cautious, even overly cautious, so that the public does not have that perception? The way to do that would be to not invite someone to meetings during the one-year so-called cooling-off period which is what the act says: no communication with the government for a period of one year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just want to go back over the employment history of Doug Sexsmith and put on the record the facts. I know that the people of Manitoba will judge me and judge our government based on fact, not on innuendo and the kind of tack my honourable friend has taken over the last couple of days around this issue.

* (1450)

Doug Sexsmith was hired in government in March of 1976. I am trying to remember now what party was in power in 1976. I think that was a New Democratic government under Ed Schreyer that was the government in power when he was hired at the entry level into the government of Manitoba and continued through till 1980 when he took a bit of time off to go back to university and upgrade and was hired back into the civil service in July of 1982. If I remember correctly, it might have been Howard Pawley's government that was in power at the time he came back

into government. He has continued an exemplary service to the public and the people of Manitoba since that time and up till December of 1996 when he chose to pursue a career in the private sector, which I think happens from time to time. People do choose to change career paths and look for new challenges and opportunities, more often today than they have done in the past when people started at one job and retired at the end of their working years in that same job. So I do not take that away from anyone that is looking for new opportunities and new challenges.

So here we have an individual, Mr. Chairperson, who has been a long-time career civil servant. He certainly was not a political appointment in any way, but someone who worked his way up through the civil service, upgraded himself by taking some time to go to university and, quite frankly, has done a great service for the province and the people of Manitoba. So I hate to see my honourable friend painting him into a corner that sort of—and he is intimating that there was some political involvement in trying to pay Mr. Sexsmith off. I mean, I had no involvement in any way in giving any advice to Mr. Sexsmith—about what he should or should not do in his own personal career choices and options—except to say to him that he had done an exemplary job on behalf of the people of Manitoba while he served in the public service. I knew that he could continue to do a good job in whatever career path he chose.

I know that my honourable friend is trying to paint some other picture into this process. It is completely unfounded, and, again, I am extremely disappointed in the tack that my honourable friend would take in trying to in some way indicate that Mr. Sexsmith has done something inappropriate.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the political part of this is the minister's lack of good political judgment.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$491,400—pass. (2) Other expenditures.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if I could ask the minister at this time to provide handouts that will be relevant later on in the Estimates: namely, Financial Assistance and External Agencies on page 53, the list of grants and

agencies; also, Maintenance of Children and External Agencies on page 65, including the Family Support Innovations Fund. If the minister could provide those in advance which she usually does every year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, we will get those and have them available very shortly.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$80,700—pass. 9.1(c) Children's Advocate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, several years ago, the Children's Advocate asked the province to publicly release recommendations made by the Chief Medical Examiner when children die in the care of a child welfare agency. We have heard various comments by the minister. I am going by memory, but I believe the minister said that it is something that she would consider. I am wondering if we have any progress here and whether the minister is prepared to start releasing these reports or recommendations but still keeping confidential any information that needs to be kept confidential.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There have been a lot of little issues that have to be sorted out with the release of this. I want to indicate to my honourable friend that the next report of the Chief Medical Examiner will have that information in it. The reason, again, it took so long was because we needed to know whether there was an amendment required for The Fatality Inquiries Act or The Child and Family Services Act. We have determined that no amendment is needed and that the Chief Medical Examiner can release that information on a yearly report, and it will happen in his next annual report.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me approximately when we can expect that report?

Mr. Chairperson: It has just been brought to my attention that maybe the minister would please introduce the staff that has joined us at the table, now before you answer in your next response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Besides the two staff that were introduced yesterday, David Langtry has joined us at

the table. He is the ADM for Child and Family Services.

I do want to indicate that the Chief Medical Examiner falls under the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews). I would imagine his report comes out probably at the same time every year, and I would have to check to see when that is. I am thinking it might be fall, but I would not want to make any commitment until I know what the pattern of release of his reports has been. So I will check and provide that to my honourable friend.

* (1500)

Mr. Martindale: I would like to deal with some issues, Mr. Chairperson, that come out of the Fourth Annual Report of the Children's Advocate. The Advocate has expressed frustration experienced by complainants who felt that the Children's Advocate should have a broader mandate, particularly to investigate educational issues and custody and access.

He points out that parents and children have virtually no rights and limited avenues of appeal in these areas, and I am wondering if the minister is in favour of broadening the mandate for investigating what, I guess, would be the concerns of children in other government departments.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know that we went through an extensive process. I know my honourable friend was a part of that process when we reviewed the Office of the Children's Advocate and held public hearings throughout Manitoba last year. As a result, we received a majority report, and then subsequently a minority report from my honourable friend's caucus on the majority report that did not quite agree with what was being recommended.

I think the recommendation of the majority report was that the Children's Advocate report directly to the Legislature rather than the minister, that in fact the mandate stay the same and that there be some other minor changes like—maybe not so minor, and that is time limits to the appointment of the Child Advocate. So we have accepted the majority report, and the legislative changes that have been brought in to be passed this session reflect that majority report—that is, to maintain the mandate of the Child Advocate to

service for children under The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister plan to keep the existing Children's Advocate after the amendment is passed, or will he be invited to apply for the time-limited position? What are the minister's plans?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Once the act is passed, it will be entirely up to the Legislature, which will be an all-party process, to determine what the action would be. I would presume that, given its new piece of legislation and a different reporting structure, there would be some sort of competitive process, and the present Advocate would be entitled to apply for that job and be assessed through that competitive process.

Mr. Martindale: Under the existing mandate or even after the amendments are passed, is it possible for the Advocate to produce special reports on any area, and, if not, is that something the minister would consider adding to the Advocate's responsibilities?

Mrs. Mitchelson: At this point in time, and I guess even with the amendments or the change, his mandate is to investigate under The Child and Family Services Act, and that is what would continue to happen, even though the report is to the Legislature.

Mr. Martindale: The most telling comments, I think, in the Advocate's Fourth Annual Report are on the last page, on page 17, where he says, and I quote: "Sole reliance on the good will and philanthropy of neighbours, social agencies, and communities is not enough as we prepare for the next millennium. The needs of children and families involved in the Child and Family Services system cannot be isolated from the broader social problems of poverty, unemployment, family violence, et cetera." I am wondering if this minister understands what the advocate is saying, and if so, if she thinks that is reflected in the policies of her government.

We know that we have had an environmental scan or review of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, and we have heard in that report and in many other reports to government that poverty is one of the contributing factors to a high rate of children in care—not the only one, but it is one. I think the advocate is pointing out

that you cannot operate the Child and Family Services agencies separate from other departments of government, and in fact, in this case Employment and Income Assistance is part of the same department in this province. So I am wondering if the minister understands these very good observations of the advocate and what she is prepared to do about it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Absolutely. I think we all understand the need and the reality that statistics have told us for many, many years that children that are born to adolescent parents, single parents in many instances, have greater needs. Very often they do live lives of poverty if they are on their own and dependent on welfare as their only source of income. Statistics have told us that they are six times more likely to need the services of a child welfare system. We all know that life on welfare is a commitment to a life in poverty, and it is all interrelated and all of the research that has been done by the Fraser Mustards and many others throughout our communities have indicated that we need to look at better ways to invest in our children and especially children at risk.

Our government is very aware, and as a consequence, many of the things that have been announced and will continue to be announced as we have resources freed up as a result of a commitment to the National Child Benefit, we will see those very intensive supports going into children with high needs, families with high needs and children at risk. Everything is interrelated; I have never denied that. I have never denied the fact that—and I know my honourable friend quotes the statistics about the number of unacceptably high number of children that we have in care per capita as compared to other provinces across the country. It seems that we are taking more children into care rather than doing the up-front work, even working with families wherever possible to keep families together and put supports into those families.

I want to make it very clear that if there is an issue of abuse and neglect, we are not going to leave children in those circumstances, but if we can work and ensure that the tools are in the hands of parents that need a little bit of support in order to make that family healthier, we are focusing our energies and efforts in that direction.

So I want to indicate that I am very cognizant and very aware, and the comments that the Child Advocate

makes are comments that I think we all know and we all understand. The only thing is that we have got to channel our resources in different directions, and we are doing exactly that with the announcements that have been made to date around BabyFirst and Earlystart; some things that will be announced in the very near future around adolescent pregnancy and nutrition programs; the increase in child care support for low-income working families; and the tying of some of our programs for early intervention into the child care system, tying of some of our early intervention programs into the public health system.

The whole issue, and the first step that we announced around fetal alcohol syndrome, just last week I think it was, is all an indication of our wanting to work with the community and ensure that wherever possible we have families that need support connected into something that will have a positive impact, not only on them and their ability to parent but most significantly on the children that are going to be our next generation and those children that we will need working as productive members of society so they can pay for us to be in nursing homes when we need that kind of support.

Mr. Martindale: This government made cuts in social assistance and foster care rates and eliminated funding for friendship centres in Manitoba and numerous other cuts. Now, in the runup to an election, we are hearing a whole bunch of good-news preelection announcements.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.1.(c) Children's Advocate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$233,800—pass; 1.(c) (2) Other Expenditures \$82,200—pass;

9.1.(d) Social Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I have a very interesting letter which was addressed to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and copied to this minister from the Village of Winnipegosis dated January 12, 1998, and it is a very disturbing letter, and I am going to quote from it. It says: This letter is to express our deep concern over a ruling by the Social Services Appeal Board which we feel has far-reaching implications for the administration of social assistance throughout Manitoba. In this case, the appeal board allowed assistance to an applicant, in spite of the fact that the

family net, after-tax income was over \$36,000 and the family's gross income was in excess of \$50,000. This is someone who is employed seasonally. This appeal was successful, in spite of the fact that this family was advised in 1996 to plan their income, and they failed to do so. The municipality also pointed out that they have the ability to access short-term funding.

* (1510)

I would like to quote again from a letter which says: it is generally understood in society that, when a person, family or business has a temporary cash flow problem, they look to their own resources, including the ability to borrow money from banks, in order to cover these periods. The municipality says it would appear that, if the family chooses to ignore the appeal board regarding planning their finances, they could, again, obtain assistance in spite of a very large family income.

The municipality points out that this is the same situation—seasonal employment—that Manitoba's farmers experience. During some times of the year they have no cash flow. They go on to say there are people on fixed incomes throughout Manitoba who manage to pay property taxes and provide for themselves. It is most inappropriate that their tax dollars support social assistance applications in such cases.

I am wondering if the minister took any action as a result of this letter or whether she has some sort of explanation of why this appeal was allowed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know that the Social Services Advisory Committee heard the appeal, and they followed guidelines and procedures when people come forward and do not have any money and are not earning any income. In fact, there is a responsibility to provide support if that family is in need. So they followed the guidelines and the procedures that are set down and allowed the appeal.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we continue, would the minister like to introduce the staff that is present today?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes. Thanks. Joining us at the table is Isabel Furtado from the Social Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. Martindale: The municipality pointed out that there are other people in—well, we are talking about the village of Winnipegosis—employed in the same industry, employed in the same seasonal business, who did not apply for income assistance and whose income may be the same or similar.

So I am wondering why the decision was made in this circumstance, and does it not open the door for other people who may want to take advantage of this precedent?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The Social Services Advisory Committee deals with each appeal on an individual basis. They do not go out and recruit people to come before the appeal board, and they do not go out and recruit people to apply for welfare. They are the appeal process if someone feels they have been unjustly treated by the welfare system. So anyone who is a citizen of Manitoba can apply for access to the welfare system. They are assessed on an individual, case-by-case basis, and if it is felt that it is warranted, they receive assistance or they may be denied. If in fact they are denied, there is an appeal process that is set up, and that is the Social Services Advisory Committee. They look at each appeal on an individual basis and make that assessment on an individual basis, but they do not set policy for municipalities or for other levels of government.

Mr. Chairperson: For the benefit of the committee, the page here present now is going to be floating back and forth to the committees. So, if there is any wish of the committee to use the service of the page while the page is present, please take advantage of that now, rather than wait until she is not here.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, could the minister tell me what percentage of appeals was successful for clients enrolled under The Employment and Income Assistance Act in the previous year, whichever year that is that the minister has information for?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Right, this is for the fiscal year 1997-98, ending in February of 1998. There were a total of 993 appeals filed; 52 were allowed; 265 were withdrawn because they were resolved to the satisfaction of the client. What happens is that they file an appeal, there is further discussion with the depart-

ment, and the issue is resolved without it having to go to appeal.

Mr. Chairman, 319 were dismissed; 93 did not appear; 33 were outside the jurisdiction of the appeal body because they were not filed in time or whatever; 98 are still in process; and there were 133 that were withdrawn without resolution. That might be because they just abandoned the process.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what percent were successful of municipal assistance clients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I cannot remember what the question was. There were 488 municipal assistance appeals. Was that the question?

Mr. Martindale: How many were successful?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairman, 18 were allowed; 186 dismissed; 157 withdrawn; 80 did not appear; 18 are outside of jurisdiction; and 29 pending.

Mr. Martindale: If the figures are correct, that there were 488 appeals and 18 were allowed, the success rate was .03 percent, which is extremely small. Is the minister concerned about that at all?

Mrs. Mitchelson: This is a little confusing, and I do not have the figures here to tell you. If you look at—we do not have the breakdown between municipal and provincial income assistance clients who withdrew from the process because they were resolved in a satisfactory manner to the client.

* (1520)

Mr. David Faurchou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So the 157 that were withdrawn, a significant number of those would have been withdrawn because they were satisfactorily dealt with at the departmental level without having to go to appeal. So when you look at the number dismissed, which is 186, when you look at the number allowed, which was 18, I cannot give you the exact number, but in general terms about 32 percent of the total appeals are resolved in favour of the appellant. There would be a significant number of

those withdrawn that would have been dealt with satisfactorily. So the percentage is about 32 percent that are resolved in favour of the appellant.

Mr. Martindale: Well, that percentage is certainly much better than the percentage I was calculating. I think the message to people is that there is a good chance that their problem will be resolved before it gets to an appeal hearing.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurchou): Item 9.1.(d) Social Services Advisory Committee (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$194,100—pass; 1.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$157,400—pass. 9.1.(e) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$829,500—pass; 9.1.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$89,400—pass; 9.1.(f) Policy and Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$772,000.

Mr. Martindale: I note that under Policy and Planning, the staff are responsible for co-ordination of program evaluations and reviews. I would be interested in knowing if this includes an evaluation of Taking Charge!.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If just before we start I could introduce Drew Perry, the executive director of Policy and Planning who has joined us.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurchou): Welcome, Mr. Drew Perry, to the committee.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Policy and Planning within my department is co-chairing the steering committee with the federal government to do the external evaluation of Taking Charge!.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what company is doing the external evaluation?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is Prairie Research Associates.

Mr. Martindale: I have a document called “Taking Charge!”: Strategic Initiative Evaluation Framework and Request for Proposal dated January 1997. By the way, it was not leaked to me; however, I will not tell you how I got it. Very interesting reading, I must say.

There is an evaluation component in it. I am wondering if this is the same evaluation that Prairie Research is doing or whether their evaluation is different?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If my honourable friend would like to share the document with me, we could compare it. I have no way of knowing whether it is the same, unless I know what the document is about.

Mr. Martindale: I would not want to appear too co-operative with this minister, but as long as she assures me that she will return it, I will certainly give it to her.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Absolutely.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurshou): Is it the wish of the member for Burrows to have this document tabled and available for duplication?

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I think it would probably be better if I tabled it than have a private arrangement with the minister. So, yes, I will table it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurshou): Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I certainly will undertake to get it back to my honourable friend as soon as we possibly can. So we will be having a copy of it made, and then if we could take a little bit of time to look at the document, we might be able to indicate whether it is the same evaluation as Prairie Research is doing.

Mr. Martindale: I guess, I just need to know—it certainly will not take long to photocopy—when or under what line I can ask the minister questions so that her staff are here.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If we want to discuss this under Employment and Income Assistance, Making Welfare Work, that would be probably the most appropriate, and then that would give us a bit of time to look at it and get the answers.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurshou): Item 9.1.(f) Policy and Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$772,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$176,900.

Mr. Martindale: I see there is a small item here, Grants and Transfer Payments, I believe it is \$15,000. Can the minister tell me what these grants are for?

* (1530)

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is a \$15,000 grant to the Vanier Institute of the Family that we have committed to. They do research on the family and publications periodically.

Mr. Martindale: It is not often that I commend the government on the record. Our caucus was lobbied as well about supporting a grant to the Vanier Institute, and we said that we would support it. I am glad to see that this minister did as well.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurshou): Item 9.1. Administration and Finance (f) Policy and Planning (2) Other Expenditures \$176,900—pass.

Item 9.1. Administration and Finance (g) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,749,900.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister some questions regarding Public Accounts, Volume 2, and Public Accounts, Volume 1, Financial Statements for the Consolidated Fund. I guess I am beginning with Volume 1.

I do not know if the minister's staff have these here, but it probably does not matter, they will be aware—or I would be happy to share my copy with the minister—that the way Public Accounts shows expenditure is different than the Estimates book. For example, I have in front of me—I guess this would be the most recent one for the year ended March 31, 1997, on pages 4-29, under Family Services, the first category being Administration and Finance, there are a number of categories, and there is a total, and, of course, there are dollar figures beside each category. The only number that corresponds with the Estimates book is the total for Administration and Finance. None of the other categories are the same as the Estimates book.

The problem that this raises and the question that it poses is: how is it possible to compare the Estimates book for the fiscal year and Volume 1 of Financial

Statements—and I would say it is impossible because the categories are different—and therefore how is it possible to hold the government accountable for their spending? In this case, we are talking about \$7,615,900 in Administration and Finance.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurschou): The honourable minister, could you introduce to the committee the staff member now joining you?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Sheila Lebrecht has joined us. She is the acting director of Financial and Administrative Services.

If I might indicate to my honourable friend that I have a feeling we discussed this last year in Estimates, did we or was it? [interjection] Not discussed. This might have been an issue that was raised last year through the Estimates process, and I think I might have given some advice to my honourable friend.

Public Accounts is produced by the Department of Finance right across government, and it is an indication of actual expenditures by appropriation. What you are probably seeing in the Estimates book is an estimate of expenditures for this year's budget. So it is a format that is developed by the Department of Finance, and my advice to my honourable friend, if he is having difficulty sort of following the two different formats or comparing the two, would be to have him write to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and seek his comments on why or ask—I mean, I think there is a committee that deals with Public Accounts that sits either during session or between sessions. That might be an appropriate time to ask the Minister of Finance, or just a letter to him. There might be a very simple explanation, but that might be the appropriate place to ask that question.

Sometimes the Department of Finance has its reasons for printing things in a certain format, and he would be the most appropriate minister, or in his Estimates, possibly, ask that question and find out the reason or the rationale.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I certainly could raise it either by going to Public Accounts committee or writing to the Minister of Finance, but I would like to suggest that in this committee it is impossible for me to do my job.

I would point out that, under Income Security and Regional Operations, we are talking about \$391 million in the last fiscal year. So how can I hold this minister in this committee accountable for the expenditure of a huge amount of money when the categories in Public Accounts are different from the categories in the minister's Estimates book?

You know, I know the minister might want to repeat her answer, but I am wondering, then, if this minister is willing to talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and, on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba, improve the accountability of this department and this minister and her spending, which is considerable.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think that, if my honourable member took a look at the Annual Report for the Department of Family Services, certainly the questions that he could ask and the way he could hold this minister accountable would be to look at the actuals in the annual report versus the Estimates. Right there, then, you would see whether we were overspent or underspent in each line, and questions could be asked appropriately.

Mr. Martindale: Is this minister willing to raise this issue with her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and see if he is willing to change Public Accounts reporting, so that it is in line with the Estimates of the Department of Family Services, or conversely, I suppose, is she willing to change the categories in her Estimates book to correspond with Volume I of Public Accounts?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I already indicated, our annual report spells out very clearly what is estimated and what is expended in any given year. So I would indicate to my honourable friend that there is the appropriate vehicle to ask about the issue of Public Accounts, and that is through the Public Accounts committee or through the Minister of Finance's Estimates. The other option, of course, would be to write to the Minister of Finance, and I would certainly appreciate a copy of his letter.

Mr. Denis Rocan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Martindale: Obviously, the minister is not willing to improve her accountability or change the way she

does things, so I would like to ask about the special warrants. There were three in the fiscal year ending March '97. The first one, under Income Security and Regional Operations, was a special warrant for \$3,984,900. Could the minister tell me what that was for?

* (1540)

Mrs. Mitchelson: For clarification, what year are we talking about?

Mr. Martindale: The fiscal year ending March 31, 1997.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed we have the 1997-98 special warrant information here, but we do not have the '96-97. We could get that and provide it.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister also provide for me at a future meeting of the Committee of Supply, then, the expenditure under Child and Family Services under special warrant of \$3,129,400. There is another one under—I guess that is it. I guess there are two, and she can report at a future meeting of this committee.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rocan): Item 9.1. Administration and Finance (g) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,749,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$530,700.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister might remember from last year questions that I had about the way United Way agencies presented their financial statements. My concern was that there were considerable sums of money given, I guess, in grants, perhaps grants and per diems to agencies, and some of them were not acknowledging under revenue that the source was the Province of Manitoba. The minister agreed with my concern and said that she would write or contact the United Way and that reporting would be changed.

I am wondering if the minister can tell me what resulted. Did United Way agree to talk to their member agencies about their financial statements?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As a result of the discussions last year we did have a conversation with the United Way. They are still reviewing it and they have not got back to us.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am disappointed that the United Way would not act more expeditiously. A year is a long time. Certainly they could have notified all their member agencies that in their next annual report, under their financial statements, that they should acknowledge the government of Manitoba as their source of income. I think we are probably only talking about a small number of the many agencies that belong to United Way.

I have a similar question. I recently requested a copy of the annual report of the Knowles Centre, and I do not want to criticize the Knowles Centre, I am just going to use them as an example. I know that the Knowles Centre is near and dear to the minister's heart. I have been to their annual meetings and their family fun day, and I think they are doing a good job. However, for their financial statement highlights for the year ended March 31, 1997, which was what they sent to me—I guess their '98 financial statement would be available at their annual meeting, which I think is coming up in June—but for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1997, it says, revenue, residential care \$2,240,101; and other \$330,000.

Now, my guess is that a substantial amount of that money, probably the vast majority of that money, comes from the Province of Manitoba. I know there may be federal government money. My guess is that probably 99 percent of their funding is from government, and yet there is no acknowledgment of this in the annual report that I received. Now, it does say schedule 1, and probably if I had a copy of their detailed financial statements, which is not in the annual report that I received, there may be an acknowledgment of the government sources of funding and maybe even by department.

But I am wondering if the minister is willing to review not just the Knowles Centre, I am just using that as an example, but all of the agencies that are funded by the Department of Family Services, because there are millions of dollars going out to external agencies, and I think the minister should look at all of their financial

statements and make sure that all of them acknowledge that the Province of Manitoba is one of their funders under their income statement. I think it would also be appropriate if they acknowledge how much money is from the Department of Family Services in addition to other departments. Is the minister willing to do that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My honourable friend makes a good point. It is always nice to get credit as a government for supporting things that are happening in our province. I would venture to guess that there are certainly more than one department of government that funds or supports Knowles Centre. I know the Department of Education has a significant role to play, as does our department. I do not know if there are any other departments, but I will certainly undertake to review the agencies that are funded through my department and see whether it is appropriate or feasible to have that kind of reporting.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for promising to undertake that. I would say that it is entirely appropriate and feasible to do that. I have some other financial statements here. The Manitoba League of, well, formerly the Physically Handicapped Inc. acknowledges the Province of Manitoba Department of Family Services, the Secretary of State of Canada, Thomas Sill Foundation; St. Amant Centre acknowledges the Province of Manitoba, Northwest Territories and others; Marymount actually itemizes the Province of Manitoba under grants, low incidence funding, and per diem, and then in another category it says Family Services. So we know that some agencies are providing very specific acknowledgment, and there is no reason why all of them not only can but should.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rocan): Item 9.1.(g) Financial and Administrative Services (2) Other Expenditures \$530,700—pass.

Item 9.1. Administration and Finance (h) Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, under Information Systems, it says that they will continue to refine the way the department manages and utilizes information technology. So I would like to ask the minister about their outsourcing agreement with, I believe, IBM. Well, first of all, could the minister confirm what

company has the contract for the outsourcing agreement?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, before I answer that question, I would like to introduce Brian Konopski who is our Director of Information Systems. It is IBM that has the contract.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what year the contract was signed?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The arrangement that was developed with IBM was started in November 1995.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me why the government went to an outsourcing agreement and how much the contract is worth, I guess on an annual basis, or is it an ongoing basis?

* (1550)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, there certainly are some ministers who might be more technologically astute than I am, so I am going to try really hard to help my honourable friend understand what we are doing.

The contract that we have with IBM is for approximately \$1.3 million per year for outsourcing, and it fluctuates slightly. But what we are outsourcing is the management of the department's technical resources, including hardware, software and local wide area networks and providing a single point of contact help desk for staff who use the department's different information systems. So that is basically what we are outsourcing.

Mr. Martindale: How much was your department spending on computers before this IBM contract, which presumably would have been mostly purchase of equipment and staff time, staff years?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that a significant amount of new resource would have been required to maintain the programs and upgrade the programs and the systems internally to meet the demands of the new technological era that we are in and, therefore, rather than expanding and hiring more staff internally, the best option was to go to outsourcing this. We get better value for our dollar by outsourcing

this kind of work so that the staff internally can ensure that they are doing the kinds of activities that are needed to keep our programs up and running and meeting the needs of the clients that we serve.

An Honourable Member: Good answer.

Mr. Martindale: I hope you realize you are not supposed to comment on the record. I hope Hansard did not pick that up. Good. Mr. Impartial Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister, she said that the contract was worth \$1.3 million a year, but it also fluctuates somewhat. What does fluctuates somewhat mean?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed that it could fluctuate to as low as \$1 million, but the maximum is \$1.3 million on a yearly basis. I guess it just depends on what activities need to be undertaken in any given year, how much training is required, whether there is moving of equipment from one place to another to meet the demand.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me how this contract relates to the Systemhouse contracts or whether there is any relationship?

Mr. David Faurshou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed that in 1995 this was a prearrangement before the desktop initiative, which is Systemhouse. So this happened prior to the desktop initiative, and we are now in the process of looking at what the timing would be to merge with the desktop initiative.

Mr. Martindale: Does this mean that the Department of Family Services is also going to purchase services for the desktop initiative from Systemhouse?

Mrs. Mitchelson: At some point in time we will be part of the desktop initiative. We are in the process now of determining when that will be.

Mr. Martindale: Will there be a cost to that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There will be a cost, but we are in the process right now of determining what that cost might be.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister if she has an estimate of how much that cost might be, even an approximate cost.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are not that far into the process now to be able to give any estimate even of what that might be.

* (1600)

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me if there were staff from her department who left the Department of Family Services to go to work for IBM, staff who used to do computer work in the department and left to go to IBM?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is no one who went from our department to IBM.

Mr. Martindale: Is anyone going from your department to Systemhouse, or have there been any who left to go to Systemhouse?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There were six departmental staff who went to Systemhouse from the Department of Family Services.

Mr. Martindale: Were there any staff who went to any other computer companies?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There were seven people from the department who left for private sector opportunities, six to Systemhouse and one to another small computer company.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me for what length of time was the IBM contract? Is it a one-year renewable or five years? What is the length of the contract?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The arrangement was an initial three-year term with an option to extend for an additional two years.

Mr. Martindale: I notice in the annual report that there is a separate system for Child and Family Services called CFSIS. Is that still in place?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Are there any plans to change that system to some other system?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are continually trying to ensure that it is updated, and it will be part of our Better Systems initiative.

You will have to excuse me, Mr. Chairperson. When we get into the technical questions around computerization, I do not have the expertise. I do not know if in this instance my honourable friend would like to hear from the experts who work on the technical side of things, so that maybe we both gain a clearer understanding of what is happening technologically within the department, or I can attempt to answer questions.

Mr. Martindale: I will ask the minister to answer the questions. There were not very many more, and I am sure she has expert advice beside her here at the table.

Could the minister clarify if CFSIS is going to change to desktop, I think she said? Does that mean that they are getting new hardware? What does this mean?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, desktop is replacing the hardware, and at some point in time, the Child and Family Services Information System, CFSIS, will require new hardware. But the program itself has some very good qualities and very good applications that might be adapted into case management throughout the department. So we will continue to try to make CFSIS the best that it can be and adapt some of its good qualities and some of the case management applications for Better Systems.

Mr. Martindale: I am glad the minister came back with the word "hardware," because I thought I meant "software." If my son heard these questions or read them in Hansard, he would be appalled at his father's ignorance. So the minister is not the only one here with a problem.

However, on a serious note, what will be the cost of replacing the hardware? You said at some point, it will need replacing. What is that going to cost?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are just in the process of determining what will be required for integrated case

management which we are embarking upon through our Better Systems initiative. So we are in the process of determining that. We all know that from time to time, even in our own homes with computers, the hardware needs to be replaced and updated and upgraded, and that will be continued and will be required in government as it is in business as we move forward and there is new application of technology.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, when the minister says "case management," is she talking about staff in the department, for example, in Health and Family Services in the regions and Child and Family Services agency staff? What do you mean by case management? Are we talking about families and children as cases?

* (1610)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Really what we are looking at is a way to better serve the clients that we serve and have workers within different program areas within our department have access to, in a holistic way, the family or clients that we serve, and maybe if I could give an example that might help. They presently have a family that is on social allowance, maybe a single mom with a disabled child that would need special needs daycare, but that single parent may be moving into some training programs that we might provide through our association with training and income assistance. So we would want to be able to ensure that we had information available that could help her access different programs, rather than having each program work independently of each other. So if you wanted to ensure that she could access child care in her community so that she had the ability to go into a training program and receive the kind of support that she might need through income assistance, we could have all of that information available on one file so that you are not having to go into different programs to serve a family in several different ways. So it is integrated case management, better service for the client, easier for those that are delivering the programs to support those families that need our support.

Mr. Martindale: I think I understand what the minister is saying, but maybe I can explain where I am going here. We began with the IBM contract, which is mentioned in the annual report on page 18, so the minister answered my questions on that. Then I asked

questions about Systemhouse, and we found out that, yes, the department will be taking part in the desktop initiative. So both of those have to do with the Department of Family Services. So then I went to the bottom of page 18 where it says: continued implementation of the Child and Family Services Information System, CFSIS, in private agencies and regional government offices. So my next line of questions had to do with computer systems and contracts in Child and Family Services agencies. I think I got lost some time after that, so maybe we can back up a little bit. Is the CFSIS system still being implemented or is it going to be changed to some other system?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Ultimately—I mean, CFSIS will continue to be used. The software for case management under CFSIS will be refined and updated and improved, but the case management applications under CFSIS will be enhanced through the integrated case management and better systems initiatives.

Mr. Martindale: Now you have really lost me. Does this mean that there is going to be an upgrading of computer systems in Child and Family Services agencies?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Ultimately, the software in the package for CFSIS, which is a case management tool, will be used because it has some really good capabilities. But it may be improved or enhanced, and it will be a model for the integrated case management system that we are implementing throughout the department.

Mr. Martindale: When I hear “improved” or “enhanced” I think I hear euphemisms. What I really want to know is: will there be the purchase of new software? Will there be the purchase of new hardware, and if so, how many units are we talking about here? A new computer on the desk of the staff of everyone in every Child and Family Services agency?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I have got this. Our Child and Family Services information system, the software will be used, but there may be new applications that come from time to time that, just like I guess every program, every software program, you might be able to add more information into it, but the application, the

Child and Family Services information system is the application we will continue to use.

Right now, government has embarked upon a desktop initiative which says that the hardware, not the software, has to be a certain standard within government, and any new equipment that is being purchased throughout government meets that standard for desktop. As we replace old computers with new, they will have to meet that standard, and that will be on a scheduled, phased-in basis over the next period of time.

That is the hardware. What we are talking about with CFSIS is the software, and that application is a good example of what integrated case management could look like throughout the department to share program information from one branch to another.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if the purchase of hardware by Child and Family Services agencies is something that they do out of their budget?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is something that we pay for, and we gave them more money specifically for a computer purchase last year.

Mr. Martindale: But at this time the minister does not know how much it is going to cost to buy new computers or upgrade the system?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I indicated we were exploring getting into the desktop initiative. We are not into it yet as the Department of Family Services. We are still doing the analysis, but any new computer hardware that is bought is bought meeting the desktop standards. We are still doing the analysis and trying to determine when we will be fully integrated into desktop management, but in the interim any new equipment that we purchase meets those standards.

Mr. Martindale: When the IBM contract expires, will there be a switch to Systemhouse?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That has not been fully determined yet, but more than likely.

Mr. Martindale: So is this minister's department already negotiating with Systemhouse to sign a contract with them?

* (1620)

After Recess

Mrs. Mitchelson: The contract with Systemhouse is a central government contract, so we do not do our own negotiations with Systemhouse. There is a central government process for that to happen.

Mr. Martindale: Would this minister know how much the contract would be worth, even though it is being negotiated somewhere else in government?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, I do not know that information. It certainly has not been determined yet for the Department of Family Services because we are not into the desktop system yet.

Mr. Martindale: The money would be coming from the Department of Family Services, but would any of it be coming out of this fiscal year that we are debating?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have any money specifically in this year's budget in the Department of Family Services for the desktop initiative. We are in the process of negotiations and, I guess, ongoing discussions. We are not down to anything concrete at this point in time. If, in fact, decisions were made that we were to move before the end of the fiscal year, we would either have to find the money within our technology budget in the Department of Family Services to start that move. There may have been money allocated to some other department within government that is not using their resources that may be reallocated to Family Services, but we have not budgeted specifically for the desktop initiative this year in our budget.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurchou): Item 9.1.(h) Information Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,429,000—pass; 1.(h)(2) Other Expenditures \$683,300—pass.

The hour being 4:25 p.m., is it the will of the committee to take a short recess? [agreed] The committee will take a 15-minute recess at this time.

The committee recessed at 4:25 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:46 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurchou): I call this committee back to order. We are now considering item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (a) Client Services (1) Salary and Employee Benefits \$11,793,600.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would just like to introduce the new staff at the table: Gisela Rempel, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment and Income Assistance; Grant Doak, Employment and Income Assistance Policy Co-ordinator; and, Dan Haughey, Executive Director for Welfare Reform.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurchou): Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Martindale: I almost thought you said welcome to the game, but I think you must have said table.

Just so that the minister and her staff know where I am going here, I have some questions about contracts, first of all, with the Manitoba Dental Association and the Manitoba Funeral Services Association, but the majority of my time is going to be spent on the one tier system and Taking Charge! and the child tax benefit. Could the minister tell me if a new agreement has been signed with the Manitoba Dental Association, since, I believe, the last agreement has expired?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurchou): I would like to draw the attention of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) that, in fact, we must proceed in consideration of items of Committee of Supply line by line. It has been drawn to my attention that this particular question of dental falls under the Income Assistance Programs which we have yet to address. Is it the will of the committee to consider it at this time and to skip ahead to the line 2.(b) Income Assistance Programs?

* (1650)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I might ask my honourable friend whether there are any questions under Client Services, Salaries and Employee Benefits or Other Expenditures?

Maybe we could pass that and move on to Income Assistance Programs and deal with any issues under (b) in 1 and then pass (b).

Mr. Martindale: I was going to do the one tier welfare system overpayment recovery under 2.(a), if this is agreeable.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurichou): We will then ask the question on item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (a) Client Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$11,793,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$4,602,100—pass.

Item 9.2.(b) Income Assistance Programs (1) Employment and Income Assistance \$206,053,300.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if she is making any progress in negotiations with the Manitoba Dental Association?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Effective September 1 of 1997, we reached an agreement through a letter of understanding with the Manitoba Dental Association for dental services for income assistance clients. That letter of understanding provides for fees to dentists for 70 percent, 75 percent and 80 percent in three consecutive years of the 1997 MDA fee guide. This also includes a provision to increase the annual restorative limit for adults from \$300 to \$400 in the second year.

Mr. Martindale: Is a letter of understanding the same as signing a contract?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My understanding is it is, in essence, the same thing, that the Manitoba Dental Association cannot enforce a contract or a letter of understanding with their membership, but they have agreed to the terms of the letter of understanding.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us if there is still a problem with some dentists, particularly in The Pas, not providing service to income assistance clients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that the dentists in The Pas have withdrawn their services and continue to withdraw their services, but they are doing emergency services. So that means that we are having to transport those who require regular service to other

communities for that service, and there are other dentists who are doing that regular work.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if anything is being done to encourage the dentists who are not providing service to provide the service since my understanding is that the alternative is that income assistance patients are being sent to Flin Flon, and, presumably, there is considerable cost associated with that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is a fee dispute, and there are other dentists throughout the province that refuse to provide this service to our clients, and we do not have the ability to force them to do that.

So, yes, there is some cost to transport people to Flin Flon, but we are not going to get involved in the fee dispute. If there are dentists who are willing to provide that regular service, we will find those dentists who will do it. We are not prepared to make an exception in the instance of The Pas where the dentists have refused, but they are continuing to provide emergency services.

Mr. Martindale: I have the memorandum of agreement between the government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Funeral Services Association. I notice it was signed in May '97, but the contract runs from October 1, '96, to March 31, '98. Can the minister tell me why it took so long to sign this contract?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We were in negotiations with them and it took us that long to come to an agreement, but we made the agreement retroactive to the time of the start of the negotiations.

Mr. Martindale: We have received complaints from individuals on social assistance regarding the cost of eye exams. They are being charged about \$45, and they are being reimbursed, I think, \$28. Another concern is that people are having to pay up front the whole amount and then be reimbursed. Is that the process that is supposed to happen?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have an agreement with the doctors, but normally they bill us directly and we pay those bills. If in fact there are certain instances that my honourable friend knows of, because we do not know of any, if he could bring those individual

circumstances to our attention and we will look into them.

Mr. Martindale: So normally the individual is supposed to have the exam authorized, and if it is authorized, then Income Assistance pays for it?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Is the same thing true for dental work, that it needs to be authorized first?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, normally, if a dentist has a client's file and it is just sort of regular work that is done, they do not get preauthorization. The dentist just goes ahead and does it and bills us. Where there is major restorative work that is required, we require preauthorization.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I also had a complaint about an individual who claimed that they paid \$50 out of pocket, but social assistance only paid or reimbursed \$30 for an amalgam. I am wondering if that is an anomaly or the normal practice.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The letter of understanding that we signed with the Manitoba Dental Association indicates that there should be no extra billing, so individuals should not be extra billed over and above what the cost of the treatment is. If, in fact, there are specific instances where that is happening, if my honourable friend could provide that information to us, we will look into it.

* (1700)

Mr. Martindale: I received a complaint from a young mother who was taking part in the Healthy Start for Mom and Me program that the minister is aware of, a very good, federally funded program. This individual is a single parent with a two-month-old baby, plus children ages 2, 3, 10 and 14. She applied for provincial social assistance, and she was given an appointment at a future date and told to work out a job plan.

Now, my understanding is that the general policy is that single parents of children under six are exempt, but the major loophole is if they have taken any kind of

upgrading, employment or training paid for by the government, that the job expectation applies to them, but it seems to me that this mother probably should be at home with a two-month-old baby.

I am wondering why the job expectation was placed on a single parent with five children, enrolled in a very good program, Healthy Start for Mom and Me?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is highly unlikely that we would place a job expectation on a mom with a young baby, but everyone is required to fill out a personal job plan and a personal plan indicating what their goals are for the future, and how do you start to organize your life in preparation for having at some point in time a requirement to enter the workforce? So we require everyone to think about the future, to do some planning for the future, but there is not necessarily a job expectation placed on them at that point in time.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me how many individuals, I guess, on employment income assistance and municipal assistance were investigated for welfare fraud or summary conviction offences during the last fiscal year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have just had Don Feener join us. He is the Director of Investigations and Recoveries, and the actual number of cases that were referred to the Investigations and Recoveries unit were 64 for the year 1997-98. That does not mean to say that there are not other activities ongoing on a regular basis in our district offices that verify people's incomes.

Mr. Martindale: Of the 64 individuals referred, how many were charged under the Criminal Code of Canada and how many under other legislation, presumably some reconviictions under provincial legislation?

Mrs. Mitchelson: In 1997-98, there were 20 charges laid; 13 of the 20 prosecutions were under The Employment and Income Assistance Act and seven of the 20 were under the Criminal Code.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what percentage that was of the caseload in 1997-98?

* (1710)

Mrs. Mitchelson: If you take the 20 prosecutions where charges were laid and relate that to the whole caseload, that is .08 percent where cases have actually had to go to court, but that does not take into account the other 350 cases as a result of the fraud line that are investigated and either closed or repayments made on a scheduled basis as a result of overpayments or ineligibility. So when you look at that number, it is considerably more than the 20 cases that went to court.

I want to indicate to my honourable friend that for the fiscal year 1997-98, there has been a savings to the welfare program of \$2.8 million as a result of activity and inappropriate access to tax dollars through the welfare system that people were receiving that they were not eligible or entitled to.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me what the caseload was on average for the year, or even the caseload at the end of March? Last year, I believe the minister said there were approximately 25,730 on provincial and 17,251 on city, so I would be interested in knowing the total caseload so that I can make my own calculations. Last year when I asked this question the minister I think said she would get back to me and did not. My calculations were .001 percent was the welfare fraud rate, so if the minister is saying .08, I would like the number of cases so that I could make my own calculations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We can look at .0008 or we can look at .08 or we can look at .8 or we can look at 8 percent, the bottom line is that \$2.8 million was going to people that were ineligible for welfare, and as a result of the activity that has been undertaken, we have been able to recover that money or remove people from welfare that were fraudulently abusing the taxpayers of Manitoba. That money can be better spent on serving the clients through our welfare system or through many of the other programs that my department provides to some of the most vulnerable citizens in Manitoba.

So my honourable friend may condone fraud and abuse, and people getting money that they do not deserve, paid for by those hard-working Manitobans that are paying taxes to support programs that are really in need, and he may support people fraudulently receiving \$2.8 million per year of hard-earned tax dollars paid for by Manitobans, and that is his

prerogative. But I want to tell you that our government and our party will not tolerate that kind of activity, and we would rather put that \$2.8 million into more support for people with mental disabilities or physical disabilities or into our health care system or into our child care system to support people that are moving into the workforce and off of welfare.

So, I mean, those might be choices that my honourable friend's party might make if they were government, but the choices that we have made are to protect the taxpayers of Manitoba and to ensure that our tax dollars are being spent in the most appropriate and efficient manner possible.

Mr. Martindale: Certainly we in the New Democratic Party do not support welfare fraud of any kind, and we are talking mostly about summary convictions here, not fraud, although I really do not believe that this department saved \$2.8 million from 20 people or even \$2.8 million from 350 cases. I think there are other savings in here which in the past I have said—well, the minister and I always disagree on this anyway, so there is no point in rehashing it, but we certainly agree with the government that we are opposed to welfare fraud as well.

I have a question about social assistance rates for individuals who I guess are on Independent Living as wards of Child and Family Services. I had a complaint that they are getting less money than Income Assistance clients, and I wonder if the minister could tell me how much they are entitled to, not the amount, but if the same rates apply.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is no differential rate. The rates are the same if circumstances are the same, and there is eligibility criteria. If in fact there is a concern or a question about a differential rate or somebody being treated outside of the guidelines in a different manner, I would certainly be interested in some details and would look into those individual circumstances.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me if she has figures, perhaps percentages, on the number of Income Assistance clients who are employed part time and thus qualify for the earnings exemption. My understanding is that in the past it was historically around 11 percent to 14 percent, and I am wondering if there is any

change in that, whether there are more people taking advantage of the earnings exemption.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, since welfare reform was introduced in May 1996, there are 641. Now, this is just on the provincial caseload. I do not know if we have the figures for the municipal caseload, but on our caseload we have 641 more single parents reporting employment income, and since April of '97 to March of '98, it is 174 clients more. Does that make sense? Maybe I should have just given for the last year. There are 174 clients more in 1997-98 reporting incomes from earning than were the previous year.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if she believes that the increase is due to perhaps more people entering the paid workforce because there are jobs available or because of changes in social allowances regulations that made slight improvements in the earnings exemption?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My sense would be that we know people want to work, that there are jobs available and a lot of the training and employment initiatives, plus the whole focus on Employment First through welfare reform has aided in people trying to move off of the welfare system and into the workforce. We know sometimes it is a gradual process. Not everyone gets a full-time job immediately, but it certainly is a step in the right direction.

I think it is a combination of many things. It is a combination of the economy doing better in Manitoba, more jobs being available, and people focusing on where they want to go and what they want to do and gaining some attachment to the workforce.

Mr. Martindale: I have quite a few questions on the one-tier project beginning with rates. Can the minister tell me, after we have one tier, what is going to be done about the difference in rates, particularly for food for children ages zero to 18? Will the province raise their rates to match the city's, or will the city rates be lowered to match the province?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are still in the process of moving towards the amalgamation of the two systems. I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that we are very cognizant of the issues surrounding proper

nutrition for infants as they get off to a healthy start to life. I want to indicate to my honourable friend that the final determination about what the rates will be when we move to the amalgamated system is yet to be determined, and those announcements will be made. We are not there yet.

* (1720)

Mr. Martindale: What is the target date for the amalgamation?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are looking at March of 1999 as the target date for implementation.

Mr. Martindale: So less than a year from the amalgamation date the minister cannot give children on income assistance or social services in the city of Winnipeg any indication of what is going to happen to their rates, in spite of the fact that we have one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada, which I read into the record yesterday. You know we have a huge problem of poverty, not just in Manitoba, but in Winnipeg, where in the past there have been as many as 7,000 children on city social services. I am not sure what the figure is now. I think it is a little bit lower than that. I do not understand why the minister could not give some indication of which direction she is going.

The budget for Employment and Income Assistance is down considerably. The budget for Municipal Assistance is down considerably. We are talking about several tens of millions of dollars. We know that the government has redirected this money in various directions, but why could not some of it be directed to children on social assistance so that we can be assured that the poverty rate in Winnipeg, Manitoba, will not get worse?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I can guarantee my honourable friend that we are not going to move to British Columbia's rates which are considerably lower than what our rates are for infants. Their rate is \$103 per child no matter how old they are; ours start at \$116 per child. I will tell you, you can certainly purchase more for your buying dollar in the city of Winnipeg than you can in the city of Vancouver. So I can guarantee my honourable friend that we are not moving to British

Columbia's rates, a New Democratic government that certainly my honourable friend likes to support and points us to their policy directions in many other jurisdictions. So I want to make that clear.

But I also do want to indicate that we are not—we are, what, in May now? We are looking at the end of March 1999 for implementation, and my honourable friend knows, I am sure he knows, that the higher rates are for infants from birth to one year. Many of the children who will come into the system at the city level have not even been conceived yet. I mean, we are looking at March of 1999 and many of the children who are being supported with the additional rate at the City of Winnipeg will no longer receive that support as of a year of age.

So, I mean, he is talking about circumstances that are certainly unknown. We are several months away. We will be into another budgetary process. We have talked about money in this year's budget for nutrition programs, and I think he should wait to see what those announcements might be before he passes judgment, but I do want to indicate that we are not going to lower ourselves to British Columbia's level for support for children.

Mr. Martindale: The minister specifically mentioned infants. Are the rates not higher for other ages up to 18, or has the city standardized them down to the provincial level?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The city's higher rates were only for infants, ever, and they have always been the standard rates elsewhere for—[interjection] Sorry, Mr. Chairperson, I have to correct the record. The City of Winnipeg for the last two years has—I am informed that two years ago they reduced their rates to half. They cut it in half, and last year they eliminated the higher rates except for infants.

Mr. Martindale: We certainly hope that this minister and this government does the right thing and raises the rates for infants on provincial income assistance to equalize them with the city social services rate.

Could the minister tell me what will happen to the City of Winnipeg employment creation programs under

the One Tier? Does this government plan to continue all those employment initiatives?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will be looking at all of the initiatives that are being undertaken both at the municipal and provincial level. Certainly, any programs that work, we will be looking to continue or even enhance if, in fact, they are proving to have significant success.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I would certainly hope that this government would enhance them because they have many successful programs. Would this government keep the Community Home Service Program or expand it?

* (1730)

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I indicated, we will be looking at all of the programs that are being run whether they be at the municipal or the provincial level. I agree that many of the programs have been successful in the city of Winnipeg.

I also do want to point out the difference, though, between the two different caseloads. I think my honourable friend and I have talked about this privately from time to time, but we have to recognize and realize that those that are on the municipal caseload have always been considered the employable. Many single people that should, with a little bit of help or opportunity, be able to move into the workforce were the clients on the provincial caseload, are single parents that in many instances have young children, and in the past, under former policies, were not considered employable until their youngest child turned 18, or they are in the disabled category. So we have additional issues to deal with, with those that have traditionally been on the provincial caseload.

I know he is asking about specific programs. I want to indicate that we are not going to reinvent the wheel. Whatever is working we will continue, but we will evaluate what has been working and what has not. If there are new programs that could be more successful even, we will look at those. I am not committed to calling any program the same program. I think I want to indicate that if there is opportunity in any sector within our society for Employment and Income

Assistance clients to have the opportunity to enter the workforce and we can support those programs, we will.

Mr. Martindale: I am getting pretty vague answers here, but I am going to continue asking the questions anyway. What is going to happen to the Community Services Worker Project which supplies 54 local community clubs with janitorial, icemaking, and groundskeeping service?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I indicated, we will be evaluating all programs. I have had that issue raised with me personally, knowing that so many of our community centres have the need for the kind of support that that program provides, and will be evaluating that.

I know my honourable friend would like to tie me down to sort of indicating exactly what will happen. I want to indicate and reiterate that whatever is working and if there is an opportunity for employment and moving people off of welfare as a result of these programs and projects, we will certainly be continuing them. I am not going to say forever and a day that programs that work today and are evaluated and find out that they are not being as effective or efficient as other programs will continue forever.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I have said many, many times that governments have to be bold enough to evaluate programs right throughout our departments and if, in fact, they are still appropriately meeting the needs and the requirements, they should be continued. If not, governments have to have the courage to look at new ways of delivering more effective programs. So I have no bias and no sense that we should be stopping doing anything that has worked and will continue to work. We may want to change slightly the program. I am not going to make any definite commitment today. I know my honourable friend would like some sort of absolute concrete commitment, and I cannot do that. But as I indicated, what works will continue.

Mr. Martindale: The minister says I want to tie her down, but actually what I want is a plan or a direction. Does this government know where they are going? Do they know what they want to do? Why can they not

commit to keeping some good programs? For example, will the government continue the city's Dutch elm disease project and infrastructure renewal project which employ a lot of employable people who would otherwise be on social assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would just like to indicate that Sue Bentley has joined the table, and she is the director of Municipal Assistance.

As I said earlier, I have no reason to believe that programs will be discontinued if they are working. We know we have had positive results from many of the programs that have been run, and I am not going to reinvent the wheel. Yes, we do have a plan. We have a plan to make our welfare program in the city of Winnipeg the most efficient and the most effective with the most opportunity for employment and attachment to the workforce for as many individuals that are on our welfare caseloads. We know that certain programs work well for single employable individuals, and other programs and probably with a little more detail and a little more support need to be developed and continue to be developed for those that have additional issues to deal with, namely, being single parents and alone or disabled.

So I am not indicating today that I am discontinuing anything. All I am saying is that I am not going to reinvent the wheel, and we are not going to reinvent the wheel. I know my honourable friend will be really interested in hearing the announcements that will occur as we move to amalgamating the caseload and ensuring, as our ultimate goal is, to secure attachment to the workforce for as many individuals that that can possibly happen for.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if her department is going to continue or provide for existing functions provided by the City of Winnipeg such as emergency social services response, specifically the provision of emergency food, shelter, clothing, and counselling for victims of disaster and other small-scale emergencies, which the minister knows is a very important function, whether it is a flood or a fire in an apartment block or whatever.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is all part of the ongoing discussions and dialogue with the City of Winnipeg. We do know in emergency disaster situations,

municipalities do have a responsibility to look after the residents of their municipality, but we are still in the negotiation process with the City of Winnipeg around what our roles and responsibilities will be versus theirs. That has not been finalized, but I want to assure all citizens in Manitoba that there will be a response should a disaster occur and emergency social services and emergency placement be needed. It will be done.

* (1740)

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us what will happen to the 350 staff approximately who are currently employed by the City of Winnipeg?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Ultimately, staff from the City of Winnipeg will move over. The ultimate end result will be that all employees in the Employment and Income Assistance program will be provincial employees. But we are still in the process of the labour relations negotiations with the City of Winnipeg, and those details have not been finalized yet, but I do want to indicate that the ultimate end result will be that there will only be one level of government delivering social allowance in the City of Winnipeg and that they will all, at some point in time, become provincial employees.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I should probably correct the number that I quoted. I think 167 staff would be a much more accurate figure. I think I was looking at the staff of provincial and city. The city is a much smaller figure.

Can the minister tell me what is going to happen to the city's financial contribution, and do you know how much that will be? Since the government said it would be cost neutral, presumably there is an ongoing cost to the city.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are still in the midst of negotiations around cost neutrality, and we are not that far apart as a province or a city in coming to the final numbers and what exactly that will be, but that still is in the process, and I am not at liberty right at this point in time to indicate what the exact figure will be.

Mr. Martindale: I think that is it for one tier. I could probably go on and on, but I am trying to get through this.

Could the minister tell me the reason for the reduction in the budget for both Employment and Income Assistance and Municipal Assistance? I presume it is based on caseload reductions, but I wonder if the minister could tell me the reason for the reductions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The majority of the reduction is in caseload reductions. We do know that in total there are over 8,000 individuals or families that are no longer on our welfare caseloads as a result of increased employment opportunity and our focus on Employment First.

As I indicated, as a result of the caseload decrease, there is a \$20-million decrease in the budget line, and there is also a \$9-million decrease as a result of the National Child Benefit. I indicated there was \$9 million that the federal government will be adding to cheques through the National Child Benefit that we will be either reinvesting in the welfare program—\$1.7 million of that is to ensure that as people transition from the National Child Benefit that they are not losing any money, and there is also some money that will be reinvested for nutrition programs, and there is another half-a-million dollars for increase in the Making Welfare Work line. That is increasing our agreement with Opportunities for Employment to find work placements for an additional 115 clients. Also, there is an increase of about \$4.4 million in cost of utility, shelter, prescription drugs, dental and optical care.

So there are some increases and some decreases.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for those explanations. I wonder if we could deal with the categories separately beginning with Employment Income Assistance where there is a decrease of approximately \$8,277,000. This category is single parents and disabled people. So I am wondering where the savings come from there, if it is partly from the child tax benefit and partly from clients going to gainful employment. Maybe the minister could give me a breakdown for that category.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Roughly half is as a result of caseload decline, and the other half is as a result of the National Child Benefit.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister give me a similar breakdown for Municipal Assistance where there is a saving of over \$17 million, or I should not say a saving, I should say a reduction in the budget number of \$17 million.

Mrs. Mitchelson: About \$1.4 million under the Municipal line is for the National Child Benefit, and the rest is caseload reduction.

* (1750)

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister could tell me how many cases, then, the reduction is expected to be approximately.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This is as a result of last year's decline in caseload of 3,126 and an additional expectation that another 700 cases will decrease on the municipal side this year.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister is aware that even though the caseload did decline substantially in the last couple of years, it has also crept up in recent months. Also these figures are almost unbelievable if the minister is saying that she is going to save approximately \$16 million by having 700 fewer clients. Is that what the minister is saying?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, no, I am saying that the decrease in the caseloads last year was significantly greater than what we had anticipated or budgeted for. Therefore, we had savings that accrued last year that we did not have to budget for this year, and we are anticipating another 700 decrease. So we did better than what we thought we were going to do last year because of the booming economy in Manitoba and all of our efforts as a government to create economic activity and employment opportunities for people. As a result, there are many, many more people. I would love to see that number of 700 that we have estimated be twice as many this year. It may even exceed that, who knows, but we are being realistic in saying that 700 individuals more on the municipal caseload will be working over this next year.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am grateful that the minister clarified that for me because certainly I did not expect that they were going to save that huge amount of money

in one fiscal year. The numbers look a lot better than they actually are. We are really talking about savings from 3,000 clients less rather than 700 clients less.

Can the minister tell me: as a result of changes in Order-in-Council, how many Income Assistance recipients between the ages of 60 and 65 were forced to apply for CPP benefits five years early?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have that number. We can get it, but I want to clarify for my honourable friend that the practice that we have put in place here in Manitoba is not unlike what is happening right across the country with all provinces. Quite frankly, I make no apologies for trying to access a few federal dollars. Maybe it is offloading in reverse, but I mean we certainly have lost a considerable amount of money in transfers from the federal government. If, in fact, people have a legitimate claim on federal dollars, I make no apologies for having them access those dollars before they apply for provincial dollars. I think you would find a consensus right across the country because I know that all the provinces are using the same method of providing support to individuals in their respective jurisdictions.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I assume that the next time the Committee of Supply meets, the minister will have the figure for me.

But I must say that I am disappointed in the answer because while it might seem fair to the provincial government to offload expenses to the federal government, in fact, it is very unfair to the individuals because when they apply for CPP, they lose, I think it is 0.3 percent per month for every month between the time they apply and they are 65, which works out to a third. They lose a third of their benefits from age 60 to 65, and they continue to receive CPP at a rate that is one-third less for the rest of their life. If you figure that out, which I did, for a person who lives to age 85, they are losing about \$22,000 in benefits from the time they are 60 to 85.

We know that the one category of poverty that has been coming down consistently over the last 25 or 30 years is the rate of poverty amongst seniors. There are some reasons for that: one is that there are more women in the paid workforce and, therefore, more

women paying into a CPP and company pensions; and the other major reason is the Guaranteed Income Supplement. So there has been a considerable reduction in the rate of poverty among seniors.

However, I read into the record yesterday that there has been an increase in the poverty rate among seniors in Manitoba. So when I see this government trying to offload expenses to the federal government at the expense of individuals, on behalf of those individuals, I am disappointed that this government would take that action.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I just might take a moment to respond to that. Our welfare program is a program of last resort, as it is right across the country. People are entitled to only a certain amount of benefit total. If they are getting money from the federal government by way of pension or benefit or OAS or GIS, in many instances, there is not a requirement for additional support from the provinces. Those kinds of benefits offset what the province would have to pay. So reality is that if the money is available from the federal government, that should be accessed before any additional support is provided through the province. Those people would be no better off or no worse off, because we take into account any money they are getting from the federal government in determining what we would pay. So it ends up being the same, and they would never have any more benefit as a result of them receiving federal and/or provincial resources. So I am not sure where my honourable friend is coming from.

Mr. Martindale: I am going to have to review Hansard and see what the minister said and perhaps respond to it the next time Committee of Supply meets.

The next section that I would like to ask questions about is the child tax benefit. I presume it is appropriate under this line. This province had some choices to make as to how they were going to use the new money from the federal government, and I am disappointed that they chose—in fact, they made the wrong choice. They chose to claw back all of it from Income Assistance recipients when they did not have to. It was really up to the provinces as to how they used that money and they could have made better choices. One of those choices would have been to let

people on income assistance keep some of the money. That is what happened in Saskatchewan.

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

HEALTH

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

When the committee last sat it had been considering a motion moved by the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). The text of the motion reads as follows: that this committee recommend that the Legislature support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly and further that the Legislature urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to contact the federal government and press for the existing compensation package for victims of tainted blood to be reopened and reviewed with a view to extending compensation.

The honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) had been speaking to the motion and had 28 minutes remaining.

An Honourable Member: He is not here.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, I would ask the committee to consider this for a minute, and that is simply that he told me that he had to start the committee in the Assembly and then he would be coming directly here.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, we have no problem with allowing him to continue when he arrives at the committee, but I do not see much point in waiting.

I want to again make a very few comments. Partly, I think it is very important that we do put our position again. I think it is clear, but we should put it again clearly on the record in this particular debate.

We started this process in December when we became aware of the Krever inquiry's view of

compensation in regard to people who had suffered HIV infection through the blood system and Krever's position after a tremendous amount of testimony over a number of years and careful thought on many people's parts, that basically those who were economically ravaged by HIV infection should be compensated without question as to fault or negligence, that simply it should be accepted that these people had suffered a grievous loss in their lives and that there was a duty of compassionate compensation owed to them, not on legal grounds but on ethical and moral grounds. We raised this issue in December in a motion in the House. Unfortunately, the government did not share our view at that time, and that, of course, is their right.

So we have been clear, I believe, from the outset that our view is that where persons who have received a blood-borne infection have been economically disadvantaged in a significant way, they should receive compassionate compensation. The minister and others have pointed out they do receive health care, and, of course, that is both a truism and an important truism. All Canadians receive health care for illnesses regardless of whether they assisted in causing their own illness or whether they received their illness in an accident not of their own fault or whether it involved their own fault, but the issue is not asked when you arrive at hospital whose fault is this before we provide health care. So, while it is an important point in some ways, it is also a truism. It is true for all Canadians in all health matters with the exception of those that governments have disallowed over the years or have failed to move to insure over the years.

I think the third important point that I want to reiterate is the ethical absurdity, Mr. Chairperson, of a nurse who accidentally injures herself in administering blood or dealing with blood products and becomes infected and is entitled to wage compensation, economic compensation if she suffers economic loss as a matter of entitlement through the workers compensation function. So she accidentally injures herself, or himself, and is entitled to compensation, but the patient whom she deliberately administers a substance to and who then becomes ill as a consequence of deliberately having been administered a blood substance is not compensated. Though their circumstances might be identical, their ages might be identical, their family situations might be identical, the

one who accidentally injures herself or himself at work is compensated for economic loss; the one to whom the substance is deliberately administered is not compensated if she or he happens to have received that prior to 1986. I think that is an analogy, an example of the ethical dilemma that we find ourselves in when we make decisions about compensation based on arbitrary dates where there is a significant group of people affected.

* (1440)

The fourth point I want to make is that I have tried over the last few days to ascertain some sense of the numbers involved here in Manitoba, and perhaps the minister will be able to shed some light on this issue himself in response. I am told that at the present time there is a cumulative total of some 1,500 Manitobans who have tested positive for hepatitis C, that that is an approximate total from 1990 forward from the time that there has been, in other words, a specific antibody test that is specific to hepatitis C. I am told that the vast majority of those—the doctor I spoke to was not able to give me a specific number, but that the vast majority were because of needle exchange or drug injection; in other words, pure negligence on the part of the person involved, because it is obviously well known, the risk involved in injection drug use. I was told that the new infections are running at the rate of about 25 a month, or roughly 300 a year and that they are all basically because of dirty needles injection drug use.

Now, the estimate is that we know about, in other words, roughly 1,500 confirmed cases, and if the number of injection drug users are 25 a month at present—I do not know what they have been over the last five years, but even if they had been 25 a month since 1993, that would account for all 1,500. So I do not know if we have a sense yet of the scale of the problem we face in Manitoba, but I am told by this particular doctor that it is quite modest, certainly in the low hundreds, and perhaps the minister would be able in response to shed some light on that number more accurately. I believe Dr. Minuk probably has the best handle on this in the province, and it would be interesting to have his views on this.

But the last thing I want to just put on the record is my appreciation for many very good interventions that

have been made by various members on both sides of the table, who raised various very interesting and useful points. There has also been a great deal of blathering that has been not useful at all, and in this particular case I would like to refer to the remarks of the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Toews) who twice in the last few days has put on the record errant nonsense about the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario and the record of the Ontario NDP government of Premier Rae.

I am not a particular defender or opponent of that government, but it struck me that his comments were so extreme and exaggerated that it might be interesting to go and actually get the annual reports of the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario and just find out whether the Attorney General had any substance to his remarks or not. Sadly, I find that his remarks are so wildly exaggerated and so at variance with the fact that it would be appropriate, I think, to challenge whether or not he was deliberately misleading the committee because the facts are a matter of record; they are not a matter of dispute in that they are in print in the form of the annual statements of the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario.

Now, I am a relatively new member of this Legislature, Mr. Chairperson—three years is not a long time—and I still have the naive notion that there are at least a couple of ministries where one has a high expectation of circumspect approach to the truth, that particularly the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General (Mr. Toews) has a duty to not shade the truth, to not exaggerate wildly, to not put on the record obvious misstatements, and yet this minister not only did it once—he might be excused for having a faulty memory at that particular time—but he went on and did it twice. So I want to simply for the record table a 10-year history of the Workers' Compensation Board, and I just want to make a couple of comments about it. I will table three copies.

The Workers' Compensation Board in Ontario, indeed, has a serious problem of its unfunded liability. When the NDP government took office in late 1990, the Workers' Compensation Board ended that year—presumably these are March 1990 figures, so prior to the end of the Peterson government they had a \$9-billion liability, unfunded, and three months after the

Rae government had taken office, or four months after, the liability was reported as \$10.347 billion, a very serious liability. I agree that it is serious.

I think it would be reasonable to think that in the first three or four months of office a new government would likely have a great deal of difficulty turning around that scale of a liability or slowing down its growth because indeed it had grown from \$6.2 billion in 1986 to \$10.3 billion in 1991.

Now, the Attorney General (Mr. Toews) made some absolutely wild statements about this. He talked about them running up bills at \$100 million a month. He talked about, and I am quoting now from Hansard: “At the end of their tenure, the board was somewhere and still is \$12 billion to \$15 billion in debt.”

The truth is, at the end of the Rae government's time in office at the end of 1995, they had an unfunded liability of \$10,892 million. They came in with an unfunded liability of \$10,347 million. They managed to slow its growth, reverse its growth and bring it back down almost a billion dollars from its peak and put it on a road that would be, in the long term, sustainable.

So it is a very interesting comment, that in the process of a debate on compensation of people who have been affected by hepatitis C, the senior law official of the province goes off on a wild exaggeration bearing no relevance to the issue at hand, but simply a narrow partisan attack on a government that has ceased to be government in Ontario, for no reason other than a shallow attempt to somehow link stewardship of a government in another province with the ethical position of the opposition in this province, that all people who have been affected by economic loss as a result of exposure to hepatitis C should have compensation as a matter of ethical right and not as a matter of having to prove legal negligence or legal liability on the part of the government.

So I hope that the honourable Justice minister's colleagues, who are here, will communicate with him about the concern that he ought not to put false and misleading information on the record, and that to do so twice in the same debate either displays a very shallow understanding of his role as Attorney General, or it displays the kind of bitter and nasty partisan approach

which he often takes in response to questions. I think it demeans his office when he does that. It demeans it in particular when he puts such false information on the record.

So I think that we have had some highlights and some low lights in this debate. Unfortunately, that minister's contribution was mainly the latter. I hope that, as we continue to discuss this, it will focus on the issue and not bring in such specious and misleading arguments as were put forward by that minister.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Norbert—

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: —to complete his—

Mr. Laurendeau: I can start over again.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, okay.

Mr. Laurendeau: It is a new day. I do not believe I will use up 30 minutes, but thank you to the committee for waiting for me. I had to start the other committee before coming over.

Mr. Chairman, as I said yesterday, I find this a very heartfelt debate in a lot of cases. I hear us going around, but in all, I think this is going to be known in the future as the shame game, because that seems to be where we are going from, not only in Manitoba but throughout the country. We have the NDP in Saskatchewan that moved a motion and it was defeated. They ended up passing something expressing sympathy. We have the Ontario government that came out and started threatening to sue the federal government. We then had them yesterday bringing forward a resolution of their own. We have the NDP in Manitoba bringing forward this resolution supporting the Quebec resolution.

* (1450)

Mr. Chairman, to see what everyone is up to really bothers me. It says to me that this federal system is not working. I thought that is what we were attempting to

do was to try and bring a federal system back into operating condition. I thought that our premiers and the Prime Minister and our Health ministers had come to an agreement where they could sit around a table and negotiate how our social services across this country would be serviced and handled, so we did not have a two-tiered system throughout the country.

I think we have a system that we should be proud of. I think we have a system that other countries will look upon and say it works and they want to come here. It is bringing everybody to the table to do that negotiating. I do not think the negotiations should happen within this committee or within this Legislature in a sense. I think it is at the table when those people who are involved are there.

But what I do find that will work from having this debate at this committee, Mr. Chairman, is that our Health minister and those involved in the debates will know where each of us stands when they get there. They will know where we put our positions or our strength behind their negotiating. I would not want to put any handcuffs on my minister because I understand when you are negotiating, as I am sure the NDP would understand when they are negotiating—they have been there through a number of union contracts—you do not like to table too much of your position because you do not want to lose too much of it. So you take your position when you go to the table and you come out with the best results.

We have taken a position, Mr. Chairman, and that position will be brought forward at that committee, and when that position is brought forward to that committee at the federal level with the other ministers present, I would like the minister to understand that I have some concerns that I would like to have brought up when it is being brought forward to discuss.

My position is quite clear. I do understand that we have to have on compassionate grounds as Justice Krever had put it within his report—I think it was on page 1045 of his report: Compensating some of the needy sufferers and not others cannot, in my opinion, be justified.

Now, Mr. Justice Krever put that very clearly in his report, and he went through all the dates of when

hepatitis C was first basically discovered. You can date it back all the way down to 1974 when they were not sure what it was and they were saying it was non-A, non-B and all the other medical terms that were involved in it, but it was not until 1989 I believe—I could be wrong on the years, but it was 1989 that they finally came up with something that some said worked but it was not, according to others, good enough to do all the tests.

But in 1991 they finally came up with the test that was approved to do a lot of the testing and proved successful. I could be wrong on those dates, but I believe it was '89 to '91. If I am wrong, I am sure the member can correct me. [interjection] '86 to '90, but in 1989 was the first test, and 1991 was the next test that was developed. There was no test between 1986 and 1989. It was in the late part of 1989 that the first test was developed, but that is here for argument. I will find you the stats on it when I go through my papers later. I do not have it here because I handed it out on the way in.

But, when I look at this and I say where is the culpability, and I can understand the lawyers coming around the table and saying, well, culpability then ends up between '86 and '90, and I can agree with that compensation level that they are dealing with at that level, but I still want to see some type of a solution for those who fall outside of that. Would I want the agreement opened up that we have now? No. I would not want that agreement reopened.

Mr. Chairman, the reason I would not want that is I do not trust our federal government. It is shameful to say it, but they are playing the shame game. When I hear our Minister of Health federally, Mr. Rock, saying that our ministers across the country are hypocrites, I am sorry, he has lost any faith I ever had in that minister. This man has overstepped and does not belong in the ministry anymore. He has taken this and turned it into a shame game. He has taken this and is trying to relate it back on the provinces' shoulders, and that is wrong. It is wrong because culpability lay directly with basically the Red Cross and, after them, the federal government. We as provinces have accepted part of that culpability within the negotiations. But we as provinces, if we start taking our own shares of culpability, will have a two-tiered system of how we

are dealing with this in the end, and that is what would not be fair not only to us as a province but to the victims of hepatitis C.

That is why it is important that our ministers and the federal government understand that we have to have a system that the federal government is truly responsible for not only in the short term but in the long term, because we will not know, Mr. Chairman, in the short term, how many victims there truly are. It might be 25 or 30 years from now before we have the full extent of how many people have been damaged throughout the system. So can we come up with a true dollar amount today? I do not believe we can. Can we come up with a system that might be able to establish dollars? That I will leave up to the ministers to come up with those dollars and how the dollars would be allocated.

But I think we have to be very careful when we are allocating that money, because if the dollars are being allocated in such a sense that five years from now there is a cure, some of these victims may not ever need the money. Some of these victims might live longer than you and I, and then we would end up with the area of have we compensated somebody for something that was not really necessary. So we have to be very careful how this plan is put in place.

I understand at this time we have a memorandum of understanding, and we have to iron out the fine detail in the end. But I would like to see that we took into account what if the cures come into place, and then when we start talking about cures, how many dollars that we put into the system could have brought forward the cure a little earlier. I mean, the research and development aspect is a very important part of our health system in Canada. We have developed some of the cures to some of the diseases that were worldwide right here in Canada. Diabetes, the cure was developed here in Canada.

So, if we can develop some of the cures for some of these diseases—and it is not only hepatitis C; there are other diseases as well—we can actually start saving the health care system money in the future. But to be compensating someone for something that might be in the future and never happens would not be right. So it cannot be open-ended. Is that being uncompassionate? I do not believe so. I believe you are being

compassionate as long as you are saying you will compensate someone who is in need at the time and if there is a damage and they are not able to work or they are incapacitated in some way by the disease. But I think we have to be very careful how we approach that.

So—if you do not mind, I am going to go through some of my notes. So how do we bring the federal government back onside here? I really have concerns. If all of a sudden they put more money in, does this mean next year we are going to lose more on the other side? Is the federal government just going to say: well, that is fine, we will come to the table today; we are going to put another \$1.2 billion. But they are going to come back next year, and they are just going to pull it out of our budgets again. That is what they have been doing to balance their books. I am afraid that is what they will do in the future if we do not make sure we have something that has been negotiated in such a fashion that even their bean counters and their legal eagles down in Ottawa cannot find themselves a way around it. They have to be married to this thing without any possibility of a divorce. Too easily nowadays, we are having these annulments, and these annulments are happening throughout government because they marry themselves to a program, but three years later they are passing the buck and passing it down. That has to stop. If we are going to have a social network within this country that is going to help unite us instead of tearing us apart, then we have to work together.

* (1500)

I have full faith in my Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to go to Ottawa and negotiate on my behalf. Will he come back with everything that I would like to see in a proposal? Probably not. Will he come back with everything that would make the Premier of Ontario happy? Probably not. But will he come back with what is probably the best possible deal for Canadians? I believe so, because our Minister of Health cares, our Minister of Health cares that we have a system that works, not only for today but for tomorrow. He has got a bigger responsibility than just today. He has got to see that he helps build a system that is there for my children and my children's children, because if we do not have that system in place, the whole health system across this country will not be worth anything in a few years.

If that health system goes down, I am afraid we are going to lose part of our country, because our country is relying on this. This is turning into a unity debate. This is exactly what Quebec wants. You take your separatists in Quebec, this is exactly what they want. They want us fighting across the country on an issue. They want us saying we cannot come to a resolution to satisfy the needs of Canadians because they do not want there to be a Canada. Well, I say we as Canadians can put it together, and we as Canadians, who believe strongly in a system that has worked, can put it together. When our ministers meet in Ottawa or Halifax or Edmonton or Saskatoon, I know that they can come together and do what is right for Canadians. Will it satisfy everybody's needs? No. But let us just hope it can satisfy the needs of Canada, because that is where we are headed: down a very slippery slope. If we continue to play this shame game with the federal government, that is where we will be.

In three years we can find out if that federal government still wants to continue to play when they are getting closer to their election time, because that is not the way we resolve issues by trying to shame someone else, and that is what they are attempting to do right now. I do not want to play that game. I respect the honourable members for bringing their views forward. I do not agree with the position they have taken because of wanting to reopen the negotiations. I also do not accept it because they are basically saying they want us to adopt the Quebec resolution which I disagree with because it is saying that the federal government is on the hook for the whole nine yards and that is all there is to it. Well, that is not true. We are picking up a good chunk of the health care system already, and we have already agreed to put some money on the table. For us to walk away from that would not be right. Our minister has made his commitment that we would have that on the table, and I believe it should be there if that is the commitment he has made. So I cannot support your resolution. I support the issue that you bring forward, but if it were up to me, I would probably request that you take this off the table so we no longer had to debate that resolution. It is not going anywhere. I would vote against it when it comes to a vote.

But let us work towards one thing. As the opposition your job is to critique what we do, and I accept that,

and criticize if you want when we are doing wrong, but in this job, my minister has done what was right. He made a deal and he abided by it. If he had not abided by it and he had been one of the weak-kneed that came out first, crying the blues that he did not have a good deal, I would have lost faith in my minister. But he did not; he stood strong because he had made a deal. There is nothing wrong with standing by your commitments once you have made a deal, but there is nothing wrong with coming back and saying we can always start another deal, but let us get back to the table and negotiate the other deal. But the other partners have to be willing.

When you have a Minister of Health like Rock out there who could not defend his way out of a wet paper bag unless he had the help of all the rest of his little—Finance Minister Martin behind him toting him along. I mean, give me a break. These guys have gone down to nothing. The shame game will not work, but that is all they know. Sheila Coppins and the rest of her boys—they have lost Nunziata. I mean, Nunziata was smart enough to go to the other side of the floor because he saw where they were headed.

So I only hope that my minister can go to Ottawa and meet with these ministers, because I know if I had to I would have a hard time keeping it down when I met with Mr. Rock. So you will have my support when you go and meet, Mr. Minister, and I hope you can do what is best for Canada and what is best for Manitobans and keep in mind that a victim is a victim is a victim. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): We thank the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) for his comments. Very interesting. We heard his suggestion that the motion be withdrawn from the table, and I put back to him that we are ready to vote on the motion, and we are just hearing his members out. I am sure that they will soon be ready to vote on the motion as well. I wondered if I could, though, just ask the minister something that is on my mind. We have been talking about the issues related to hepatitis C and various responsibilities and who is responsible for what, and I wondered if the minister could tell me how long the Canadian Blood Agency has been a participant in the Canadian blood system.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, I am advised by Mr. Wendt that it was 1991, approximately. He is going to confirm that date in which the Canadian Blood Agency was initially established by the provinces and territories, and it replaced the Canadian blood committee which was really the body, an informal body—I understand it was not a legal entity—that acted as the co-ordinator of the provinces and territories in the purchase or funding of the Red Cross. When all of the issues began to emerge over the way in which the Red Cross was managing the blood system, the Canadian provinces and territories—my understanding from Mr. Wendt—created this agency as a more formal way of managing the provinces' response and issues as opposed to the informal blood committee.

Again, I was not around at that particular time. I am only repeating to the member what, in fact, information is provided to me by Mr. Wendt who—that information, as I indicate, is coming from Mr. Wendt who has been our province's point person on these particular issues.

* (1510)

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, the reason I bring up that question is that I have a document that says the three principal participants in the Canadian blood system are the federal government, through the Health Protection Branch of Health Canada, the Canadian Blood Agency, and the Canadian Red Cross. Then I understand the ministers to say this would have been approximately 1991 and that these three principals were not participants in the Canadian blood system prior to 1986. At least let me rephrase my question—that the Canadian Blood Agency was not a participant in the Canadian blood system prior to 1986. Is that the case?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I understand that, from the information provided to me, that was the case, that the agency in fact was not created until the early 1990s. We will get an exact date for the member.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I would very much like to have the specific information. It would be important, so I look forward to receiving that information.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): I have been watching and listening to this

debate from the time that it began, listening to or seeing when the Krever report was brought down and the recommendations made in that report, and then following that with the federal-provincial negotiations that took place with regard to compensation for hepatitis C victims, and eventually arriving at a package that saw the victims being compensated between the years of 1986 and 1990. To me, at that time, it seemed like this was the resolve of the issue.

However, the various groups came forward and started to ask the question about the hepatitis C victims prior to 1986. I guess it was at that particular moment that I felt a great deal of sympathy for all victims of hepatitis C, because inadvertently they received the disease through no fault of their own.

The motions that were put forward by the opposition, when you read them of course I could see that there was a lot of validity in them. At the same time I had to keep asking myself the questions as to whether this was the right direction that we, as Canadians, should be proceeding. Throughout the framework of this country, the federal and provincial governments have always been in a sharing process, and I think that I can probably expound upon that when we get into areas of disaster financial assistance, because I think within that example, I could probably show you just what happens when there is not the continuity and agreement across the country.

But getting back to the issue at hand, which is the issue concerning hepatitis C, there are many, many different views from people about whether or not the compensation should be beyond 1986. Interestingly enough, on CBC Radio talkback, a person had called in and had indicated that his wife had contracted hepatitis C in 1980, at which point she became ill over the years. The reason she got this hepatitis C was through a gamma globulin shot, I believe it is called, prior to going on an assignment to India. So it was through no fault of her own that she received hepatitis C, and she was quite ill over the years. Her husband shared with the radio program that, I believe it was 1993 she received a liver transplant, and since that time has been doing quite well and is almost fully recovered. However, he pointed out that they are themselves affected by this. He said that if the compensation were to be extended beyond 1986, which would include his

wife in that case, that he did not feel right about it because it would establish a very difficult precedent across the country with regard to that compensation.

Another question I always have to keep asking myself is how far back would we go with compensation? Blood transfusions have been occurring for decades.

An Honourable Member: Since the Spanish Civil War.

Mr. Pitura: The Spanish Civil War?

An Honourable Member: That is when it started.

Mr. Pitura: So would we be looking at then some sort of compensation for families who had traces of hepatitis C from that time where they felt that the individual died of a diseased liver that some compensation should be there for that family? So it is always a question as you start going back: Where do you draw that line and say is it now from 1950 to 1986 or is it from 1940 to 1986, or do you keep going back to when the time transfusions were first begun?

Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The other aspect, too, I believe my colleague for St. Norbert said that the test for hep C was perfected in the late '80s, that you have to ask the question: What if there was never a test developed, and at this point in time would we be talking about this issue? It is because the test was developed that it actually revealed the fact that we could ensure a clean blood supply. At odds here I think is the fact that since 1986 when the test I guess was first used in the United States that the Canadian government, which was I think as our Health minister pointed out, the regulator for the blood supply in Canada, chose not to adopt that test. Therefore, it clearly establishes the fact that since 1986 that there was liability for the federal government and the Canadian Red Cross with regard to the supply of blood because they in effect could be deemed to be mismanaging the blood supply because there were protections in place.

I think as our Health minister pointed out, and it is a very important part of the issue, is the fact that the provinces were indeed customers of the system, so as a

customer we should have been given a blood supply that was something that we could count on. As it turned out, because of the Canadian Red Cross mismanagement of the supply and the Canadian government's lack of regulatory powers being exercised in the supply, we as provinces received some blood that eventually infected people with hepatitis C.

So, when we take a look at this whole area and say: well, why are the provinces even at all involved in the compensation? We are a consumer. We should actually be in front of the court filing a statement of claim against the Canadian Red Cross and the federal government as well as a buyer of blood. However, as the way the Canadian system works, that is, the federal-provincial partnership, we have got to the point in this process where both levels of government proceeded to come together and establish I believe it is a \$1.3-billion compensation package for those victims of hepatitis C between the years of 1986 and 1990. That is a lot of money.

* (1520)

But you have to go back, or at least what I would like to do right now is, the deal that was struck between the federal and provincial government Health ministers I think was an honourable arrangement between the 10 provinces and the two territories and the federal government. However, we have other federal-provincial sharing arrangements in terms of sharing costs.

I would like to spend a little bit of time discussing what I just recently went through as the minister responsible for the Emergency Management Organization and the Disaster Financial Assistance program. I would have to say at the outset that I say it is very fortunate that we, as Canadians, have a Disaster Financial Assistance Policy in place that responds very quickly to the needs of victims of a disaster. For that I am very thankful because, when I take a look at some of our neighbours to the south and indeed some other areas of the world that were affected by disasters, their individual governments could not respond as quickly as the Canadian and provincial governments here to a disaster.

However, since 1974 we have had the Emergency Measures Act in place. That act was redrafted to

replace I believe it was the act that was used through the October Crisis in Quebec.

Mr. Praznik: The War Measures Act.

Mr. Pitura: The War Measures Act, thank you, Mr. Health Minister. It replaced the War Measures Act and, in fact, became the Emergency Measures Act across the country. But, as to disasters in the early '70s and throughout the '80s, there were not that many of them across the country, the policy that was in place was basically left there unattended, never updated.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Essentially the basic bottom line or the basic objective of the act stated that the federal government would enter into a cost-sharing arrangement with the provinces when indeed a province that had a disaster was going to endure undue hardship. So it was a pretty broad definition that was put into place for this program to be activated. However, because of the fact that there was no such thing as a regular disaster, which I am glad we do not have, the programs were not tied together nationally. As each province addressed a disaster, they would make their own arrangements with the federal government and that would be the program that they would offer to victims of that disaster, whether it be a tornado, whether it be a flood, or whether it be from forest fires or what have you.

When we got into the '90s, the frequency of disasters increased to the point that almost annually, sometimes twice annually, we had a disaster occurring in this country somewhere. So what happened at that point was that the then arrangements that were made between that respective province and the federal government were fresh in the minds of those people within that province. As well, they were able to be accessed by other provinces. So as other disasters occurred, what we tended to do was to rely on the previous province's negotiations with the federal government to use that as a base for entering into a new arrangement with the federal government when the disaster struck our province.

Even in the flood of 1997, and I believe my colleague from St. Norbert brought this up, was the fact that he did not trust the federal government. In a way, that is

very true, and you sort of get gun-shy of anything that the federal government says that they will do and promise. Essentially, when the federal government was asked about participation in the various programs within Manitoba, the federal government's response was that the province can do anything it wants, and that is true.

But what it did not say in that statement was that the federal government will be there with the province when it does anything it wants and therein lies the problem that existed with the arrangements with the federal government and also ate up some of the time involved in trying to get some sort of a negotiated agreement in place. You just could not go on a verbal commitment and a handshake as being part of the process that said, yes, we are going to be there. Often the statement was made that, yes, Manitoba can do anything it wants, but when push came to shove, the federal government probably would not be there to cost-share. So we had to make sure that the federal government would be in a position to cost-share.

However, having the frequency of disasters that we had across the country, it allowed us as provinces to have more open communication with each other, and, in fact, very shortly we have had our—this will be our second or third delegation coming in from Quebec. We have had visits from Alberta, visits from Ontario, visits from eastern Canada, and, likewise, we have attempted to visit other provinces so that we are now establishing a uniform approach provincially to disaster financial assistance.

We are at the present time now asking the federal government to come forth and act as a leader and bring all the provinces to the table so that we could have a uniform and fair and equitable Disaster Financial Assistance Policy across the country. Now you say: well, why is the member talking about the Disaster Financial Assistance program in this light? I think that one of the areas with the hepatitis C issue was the fact that all the provinces and the federal government, I think, had demonstrated in the early part of the discussion that they could all get together and arrive at a suitable agreement if there was a willingness to do that. We are asking the federal government now to have that willingness to also treat the Disaster Financial Assistance program in this same light.

The other area that I would like to just mention as well within the Disaster Financial Assistance framework is that it is a policy that is put into place and it is not a broad enough policy to cover all of the issues that are faced within the disaster. Say it to the federal government: well, why do we not broaden the policy to make sure that—entering into these memorandums of agreement for all these side programs is a time-consuming exercise and a frustrating exercise to have to do this on each and every occasion.

There has been a reluctance for the federal government to accept the fact that a Disaster Financial Assistance Policy should be that broad. We hope, and we are pushing as provinces, to bring the federal government to the table to have this frank discussion about looking at a broader policy that will apply in all situations with very little left to be falling through the cracks.

So that is the direction we are hoping to head, but it has taken from 1974 until now for all of us as provinces to get together to be able to chase this issue. I think that on the hepatitis C issue you are looking at the agreement there being right up front. I tend to agree when I look at it and I take a step back and say: well, yes, there is definitely liability between 1986 and 1990 when the blood supply could have been checked and was not. So, therefore, yes, the federal government should pay. I am not sure that the provinces should be involved at all. However, I think that the initial response was that, yes, the provinces will take a minor partnership role in the compensation package.

Since that adoption, though, the whole system has started to unravel, and what we are doing and what we are seeing happening is exactly the same thing that we are attempting to solve in the disaster financial assistance area. We are going back to that type of a situation where indeed each individual province will have its own agreement with the federal government, and there will be good packages in some provinces and not so good packages in other provinces, and that would be an unfair system because I, myself, think if we are going to compensate victims outside of the '86 to '90 period, that whatever is done is done nationally, and it is done uniformly, and it is done equitably, and it would respond to an individual's needs.

* (1530)

That is one of the things, of course, that is really, in terms of the discussion that has taken place thus far, is that, yes, there seems to be that willingness on the federal government's side now to reopen the discussion with regard to the compensation package. The question is what kind of shape will this package take prior to 1986, and I would have to say, Mr. Chairman, that right now I would not like to see the initial package agreement opened anew to try to see what kind of a package can be struck prior to 1986.

I think if that is done, it has to be done on its own basis, its own merit, because as I like to point out, once we have established and committed to liability back for as many years as it is decided upon, then on any issue that comes up that suggests that there may be liability, the precedent has been set as to what that federal and provincial government liability should be for anything else that might happen in the health care system.

Mr. Chairman, in a sense, the way that it is happening now is kind of scary to me because I think that we could end up with a helter-skelter type of compensation package. I am happy to hear that Mr. Rock is planning on bringing the health ministers back together to have a discussion because I think that is where it has to be. I do not think that Manitoba can go into that process with a very definitive agenda as to what they would like to see happen or come out of the process.

You can have an idea of what you would like to see occur as a result, and, of course, there are many arguments to suggest that the federal government should be paying 100 percent of the shot. That would probably be a good jumping-off point in the negotiation process. However, it is also the reality of the fact that there could be a joint partnership, and then what would be the responsibilities of the province? Is it going to be the same percentage as it was in the original agreement? Is it going to be a higher percentage? Is it going to be the same?

Mike Harris has suggested he is willing to go into the agreement on the basis of the previous agreement. I would dare say that the federal government will probably come back and say, well, yes, we are willing to go into the agreement, but, I am sorry, the percentage

has changed. Besides, the provinces took the first step to open it up, and Mr. Rock will probably challenge all the provinces to come up with more money. So that is going to be the issue in and around the table, is how to make this agreement.

Now, the other area, too, is if you are going to compensate the victims prior to 1986, how do you compensate them, to the same level as the victims between '86 and 1990, or do you compensate victims on the basis of their need? If so, how do you begin the identification of that need? I can see a tremendous amount of paperwork occurring as a result of that kind of a process. I think, as my colleague from St. Norbert said as well, are there many, many hepatitis C victims out there that as yet have not shown any symptoms, and that they do not even know they have it? When they find out they do have it, will at that point and time the window of the program be closed? If it is, then we are going to have perhaps thousands more people saying: it is unfair; you cannot do that. I did not know I had hepatitis C in 1997, and now you are telling me that the window is closed.

You are going to open up the whole issue again and say: well, now, does this compensation package even expand to that group that did not know they had hepatitis C during that time? So this whole area of compensation at the best is a smudgy gray because I do not think there is an answer to this issue that is right.

The best that one could come up with in this issue is probably something close to what one would feel that they would be comfortable with at the time of putting it together because somewhere along the way—and I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) mentioned it the other day; he made the point about January 1, 1986, versus December 31, 1985. Well, unfortunately, with all programs there has to be a beginning and a start, or a line drawn, a geographical line.

Now, with my being in agriculture, I know that on one side of the road a farmer is covered for 35 bushels of wheat to the acre under crop insurance; on the other side of the road, the farmer is covered for 28. Now the farmer on the other side of the road cannot believe why his field is not as good as the farmer across the road. But, sorry, there is a line drawn, and the line had to be

drawn somewhere, and, unfortunately, it was drawn right down the middle of that road where—yes. So programs like this do have—

An Honourable Member: The ag rep always got blamed.

Mr. Pitura: The ag rep always got blamed, right, but I always passed it on to the Minister of Agriculture at that time. [interjection] Well, sure.

So in a compensation program, Mr. Chairman, for hepatitis C, you run into the difficulties that, if compensation is agreed upon for those victims prior to 1986, how is that compensation program package to be drawn up? That is going to take the wisdom of Solomon, I think, to be able to put that type of a package into place because there are so many unknowns, unforeseens, within that area. It was very definitive between '86 and '90. Prior to that, it will be very difficult, I think, to put that kind of a compensation package into place.

I think just to end my remarks—and I appreciate having the opportunity to take part in this debate; this is my first time. The basic fear that I have personally about this in the way this whole issue is moving—my biggest fear is that I am at an age where I kind of want the health care system there for me when I need it. I am closing in on it fast. Essentially what could happen, and I hope I am wrong, with this whole issue is that the future of medicare, I think, is at stake here. So it is not just a case, I do not think, of trying to decide whether hepatitis C victims should be compensated or not compensated, but I think the deep, underlying question to this is the future of medicare. Are we, indeed, weakening that ability to maintain medicare in the future as a result of this or are we going to be able to maintain it?

I think that, as a growing population of seniors increases, that is going to be a very important concern for them because they have what they consider a good health care system now. They would not like to see that jeopardized through one action of federal and provincial governments to virtually blow medicare out of the water. I for one would not like to see that happen. That is a fear that I have, that I think will be the bottom line in the future.

So, with those few remarks, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

* (1540)

Mr. Sale: Just a couple of comments on the minister's remarks. First of all, he quotes or cites a friend, an acquaintance, who is troubled by the idea of compensation prior to '86. I would say to that person, by all means, if you feel that this is something that you do not wish to apply for, do not apply for it. You may not need it. Maybe he has means that provide him with a livelihood—

An Honourable Member: It does not work that way.

Mr. Sale: It does, in fact, work that way. You have to apply for compensation.

First of all, I think people would never be forced to accept compensation they did not wish to apply for. Secondly, the problem that he cites with the design of the program because of the long latency, or not latency, but incubation period, that problem has already been dealt with in the design of the current program. It is really no different for people prior to '86.

I just cite a paragraph from a part of a website from Public Health Canada which we pulled off yesterday. Only 5 to 25 percent of people with newly acquired infection have symptoms which are similar to but often milder than those of hepatitis A or B. Up to 90 percent of infected persons continue to carry the virus indefinitely through their whole life. These people are at risk of clinical sequelae, meaning things that follow after the illness is first established, outcomes such as profound fatigue, 50 percent at 10 years; cirrhosis, 25 percent at 20 years; and liver cancer, 5 percent at 30 years. Liver disease related to HCV infection is the leading reason for liver transplant in Canada.

So there are many situations where people continue to appear for many years to be healthy and they may indeed reach retirement age with adequate resources if they continue to be asymptomatic or relatively asymptomatic. Among a sample of blood donors in Montreal who had HCV infection but were otherwise apparently healthy, 37 percent had chronic hepatitis without fibrosis; 43 percent had chronic hepatitis with

fibrosis; 20 percent had cirrhosis. There are a great number of outcomes to this disease. It is not very predictable either as to time or as to what will happen.

I think we have always only been talking about compensating people who are economically impacted by the disease. We are not talking about compensating those who are not impacted in that sense.

The other thing I just wanted to note is that we have now had two government members making essentially what sounds very much like the beginning of a policy. I really welcome that. Both the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) and the minister who just spoke have indicated that they personally are comfortable with the notion of extending compensation via a separate agreement. They do not want to reopen this agreement. They both made the point, which I think we all agree with on all sides of the House, that it needs to be a national program. We cannot have provinces going their own way for all kinds of good reasons.

So perhaps this debate, which seems to be a bit endless at some times, is in fact leading us towards a position that the government will finally be able to adopt. I would just note that generally when a minister of the Crown makes a statement, he is speaking with some authority, not as a backbencher, and the minister of the Crown indicates he is speaking with his heart. Nevertheless, he is a minister and I would think his statements to the committee carry some weight, that he essentially is very close to adopting the view that there should be a new agreement negotiated on equitable terms to extend compensation to those affected before 1986.

I would have no problem endorsing that position personally. I think a new agreement is an appropriate way to go because the existing agreement is there, and that battle should now be laid to rest, but only if there is a commitment to extending compensation pre-'86, with a new, separate, equitable agreement. We are not, as opposition, nor are government members who are not in the Health department probably in a position to say what that would mean in specific terms, but to say that they favour extending compensation in cases prior to 1986, on equitable and fair terms, I think, is the kind of policy direction we wish to have on the record. The last two speakers from the government side have been

very close to making that position, and I welcome it. So maybe this long debate is, in fact, producing a direction.

I do have a question for the minister. He may not be able to answer it, but perhaps he can undertake to get an answer. I indicated in my earlier remarks that we had information from a physician that about 1,500 cases existed currently, HCV confirmed, that the vast majority of those, in his estimation, although he could not give me a percentage, were as a result of lifestyle choices, specifically needle-injected drug use. Does the minister have or is the department working on a rough approximation of numbers of this 1,500, how many are assumed to have been nonneedle caused? Could he give us a breakdown of pre-'86 and post-'86?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask Mr. Wendt to explain exactly where we are in terms of our numbers, and some of the difficulties we have in obtaining the kind of information that members would ask for.

Mr. Ulrich Wendt (Manitoba Representative, Hepatitis C Working Group): Mr. Chairman, this is a difficult area, and I am not an expert entirely either. I understand from Dr. Minuk that one of the difficulties he has is that he is unable to match—[interjection] Sorry, Dr. Minuk is a hematologist in Manitoba, one of the foremost experts on hepatitis C and blood-borne diseases. He is also unable to determine what proportion of his samples are due to the blood supply and what proportion is due to other causes.

I think that an epidemiologic approach, I am told, would be to instead work through hospital records and a blood test record as much as possible to try to get as much precision as possible on the numbers. That is quite difficult. That is why there is such a range of estimates right across Canada, not just in Manitoba. There is quite a range of estimates both from the federal epidemiology department and in every province in Canada.

Mr. Sale: I thank Mr. Wendt for having a run at the question, even though it is not an easy question to answer. Could the department then give us confirmation as to the figure that I have put forward which comes, I believe, from the same source that since

1991 the cumulative running total of confirmed HCV infections by test is in the neighbourhood, within a hundred in other words, of 1,500? That is what the department official to whom I spoke indicated; cumulatively that is what we have got that we know about as of today.

Mr. Praznik: We will check on that information to confirm it. Mr. Wendt advises me he is not able to confirm that with the member today.

* (1550)

Mr. Sale: I looked through the Department of Health's reports on the expenditures on average on blood-borne diseases from annual reports. The expenditures vary from year to year on average, but they are in the \$60,000 to \$70,000 per case region. I am wondering whether the minister or his officials could tell us whether the very substantial sums that are being quoted as the cost of HCV infection across the country, first of all, are they the average lifetime costs? In other words, the cost of treating a case to its conclusion, whether it is at the death of the patient or whether it is through a course of treatment that is to recovery or to a stable lifestyle. First of all, is it based on that kind of an estimate?

Mr. Praznik: We as provinces, in assessing the cost on our health care system for the 20,000 or so cases that were in the 1986 to '90 group on which we are basing our assessment and going to the table with the federal government, did detailed work here in Manitoba. British Columbia, I think, was another province that we shared, and Ontario. I am going to ask Mr. Wendt to provide the detailed information that the member is requesting. So our estimates of cost are based on that '86 to '90 group; the \$1.6 billion is based on the 20,000 or so assumed cases. So one can work off those numbers, I would imagine, although people prior to '86 might have a different distribution in the advancement of the disease, but I would suspect that there are similar results in costs, although at a different point in time given earlier infection.

Mr. Wendt: Again, these costs are difficult to estimate. They are partially based on B.C. data and partially based on Manitoba data and partially based on

Ontario data. What was attempted to be done was to compare the difference between people who are HCV positive, who were recipients of the blood supply, against people who are HCV negative, who were recipients of the blood supply, and compare the health care costs differences between those two groups. That is where the health care cost component of those numbers that you are referring to would have come from, Mr. Chair.

There was also an attempt made to estimate the social service cost and so on. The average cost of health care system therefore would include people who are only mild users of the health care system, people who have very low symptoms or were asymptomatic, as well as people with severe symptoms such as liver disease, end stage liver disease, and cancer.

Mr. Sale: Just a final question. I appreciate the department's willingness to try and get us some clear answers on this. It seems to us that if in Manitoba in total, if the official that I spoke with, the physician with whom I spoke, was accurate in his statement—and I have no reason to doubt that—the total number that we know about that are positive, let alone symptomatic, just the total positives are only 1,500 in the province. He is indicating that the vast majority, he said, and certainly the largest number would have come from injected drug use. So, even if we took a small percentage, 40 percent, let us say, that would be 600 people who are HCV positive, and the causation was blood system or something other than injected drug use.

Then, when we look at the asymptomatic percentage, which, again, we are told, is very high, it seems puzzling to us that the cost for care is estimated to be so large when the numbers involved seem to us to be quite low. Talking to the Hemophilia association, it seems that it is well under 100. The sense that we have here is that we may be talking a great deal about a relatively small number of people in Manitoba at least. If to 1998 we only know about 1,500, this seems to us to be a modest number of people, particularly since that includes, in the official sense, about 300 a year in the last two years that have been coming as a result of injected drug use, and virtually no new cases of blood-borne, because from 1991 on, the blood system was free of HCV infection.

So I am puzzled that we have all of the debate and discussion. Yet we do not seem to have a handle on numbers, and the only number that we can come up with would seem to be overwhelmingly as a result of injected drug use and not as a result of the blood system.

Mr. Wendt: Mr. Chair, that would be true for numbers post-1990. There would be relatively few new blood-borne diseases, because wet heat treatment, which was adopted in 1990, has made the blood supply relatively safe, although there will probably always still be some infections in the blood supply.

Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I would have to check and find out where that number of 1,500 came from because I do not think that refers to all of the hepatitis C infections in the province, particularly prior to 1990. I think that probably refers to the particular set of samples that Dr. Minuk might have, but again I am not certain of that. I would have to check on that.

We were trying to base our numbers on the best epidemiologic evidence that was available at the time, and we have no particular reason to change those estimates at this stage. The relatively small number from the Hemophilia Society that has been referred to from time to time would be a number only from people with hemophilia, not from the rest of the population that would have used blood transfusions. So that would be the reference to that number. Anyway, I am sorry I cannot be more definitive at this point, but I am not sure if anybody in the country can be it right now.

Mr. Sale: Just so the staff member and the minister knows, this 1,500 number was stated to me as the cumulative number of the specific tests for HCV. I do not know whether the right term is the sero positive test, but it is the test specific for HCV that came in, I believe, in '91—it was either late '90 or early '91 that it came into common use—and the statement that was made to me was that that was the cumulative number since that test began to be used in Manitoba of positives. Now, I am trying to be as clear as possible so you can check your own sources and find out what this may refer to.

I guess my question would be would someone who was showing the symptoms of HCV infection, whenever it was caused, whether it was 1980 or 1990, would they not have had, at some point in the last few years, that test to absolutely confirm that what they were looking at was HCV infection, because that test was the first one to be very specific for that particular virus. The diagnostic procedures prior to that ruled out lots of other things, but they were not specific to the virus itself, so would not all patients now have been tested using that test to determine whether or not they were HCV infected?

Mr. Wendt: I am not a physician, so I do not know that aspect of the health care system. But it is my understanding that many people would be asymptomatic and would not have had a test. Other people would be symptomatic and would be known. I am not entirely certain how we could get that number until people come forward.

* (1600)

Mr. Sale: Is that not exactly the point, that we are very anxious about the scale of the cost of this program, and we are using numbers, but it appears that the more we delve into it, we have virtually no numbers, and that we are not able to speak about the scale of this problem with any clear understanding? What we do know since the very specific test was brought in is that cumulatively it is not that big. It is 1,500.

So I really am puzzled that the ministers of the country and the health systems of the country are grappling with an issue that they claim to be, as in the words of the previous speaker, the minister, threatening to bankrupt the Canadian health system, and we do not apparently have any data that we can point to with any sort of certainty or even a vague level of confidence.

It sounds to me like we have been extrapolating from some samples or something and drawing conclusions with extrapolated data and that we do not even know around this table, with all the health resources we have, how many HCV-positive tests we have had in Manitoba. The number of 1,500 has been put forward by us, but it is not able to be confirmed. I mean, where is all our expertise?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask Mr. Wendt to inquire in our department to actually confirm that. The member has indicated he spoke to one of our officials. He may want to provide us with whom he spoke to. I have no problem with that official speaking to the member, but it would make it easier to confirm the number at this committee.

Secondly, Health and Welfare Canada, Mr. Rock's shop, along with the provinces did a great deal of work in determining the body around the compensation group, around 20,000 or so individuals who would be eligible within the current package, and although one cannot be absolutely firm, that is part of the nature of this disease, that there are people there who are likely yet unfound who are carriers of hepatitis C. So there is a lot of extrapolation, and there is a lot of guesswork involved in numbers, but here is a fundamental problem.

As the country or the media and many parliaments and legislatures in the country drive toward expanding or having an additional program, and as Minister Rock now calls us to a meeting to discuss this, what are we discussing? A fundamental problem here—what are we discussing? It took a great deal of work to be able to determine a group around that 1986 to '90 period. We do know that most of the people in that group who are identified now are involved in legal action. I mean, that gives some firmness to those numbers. Around the other group and how many in this open-ended compensation plan, how many people are we really talking about? No one has presented very firm numbers. I have seen estimates of 20,000 to 60,000 being generated.

But here is a fundamental question. As everybody advises us to compensate, what do we put aside to compensate? A fundamental problem. Do we say: here is a package that is available for ever and a day as individuals come forward and have difficulty with ever knowing what is in that package, or do we book, as ministers, a block of money? I have noticed Mr. Harris has committed \$200 million, which may sound like a significant amount of money, but is probably a rather meager sum if, in fact, 60,000 is the right number.

So do we book a pile of money and put it in a fund and slap ourselves on the back and say we have done it

and the media hype dies down and then the fund turns out to be grossly inadequate to do anything?

The way this whole debate has progressed, far from principle, about what one is doing, that may be, in fact, what happens. The sad part of it all is that this thing gets driven towards that end, and what I find most troubling as the Minister of Health is that we are now creating three categories of people within our system. We are creating those who are harmed by the system by act of negligence, and I do not think there is a person—in fact, our legal system provides opportunity for redress.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Then we are creating a category of people who suffer harm in our health care system, not from negligence, but from the assumption of the ordinary or the risks inherent in that system, who are able to grab such public attention that they get compensation. Adequate or not, we do not know. If it is inadequate and they cannot get more public attention, they live with it; if they can, they get more.

Thirdly, the individual who suffers harm in the system who is not able to get the public and media attention and support of parties and legislatures and gets no compensation, and that is what Canadians are doing. That is where we are heading, because we have abandoned principle here about why we are compensating and for what. Because I have yet to hear Mr. Harris. I have yet to hear Premier Clark, I have yet to hear Premier Bouchard come out and say: let us put together a no-fault compensation plan for anybody who is injured in our health care system.

I have yet to hear anybody argue—well, I should not say that. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has implied it in this debate and we have discussed it about enhancements that may be needed in our Canadian social safety net, but we have not heard on the national stage Preston Manning, Alexa McDonough, Elsie Wayne, or any of the senators in the opposition suggesting we should be enhancing our safety net. I have yet to hear them say we need some sort of no-fault insurance scheme for anybody who is injured because of a reaction to anesthetic, reaction to drugs, the risk inherent in medical procedures.

I have heard them pick a category of people who are injured in the system and say we should compensate them. The country may be marching to that conclusion, but all of us as legislators have to at least for a moment pause to reflect upon what in fact is happening here. That is part of the difficulty.

The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), I think, nodded when I made the comment, we do not know, if we have a meeting next week, what we are putting together—\$400 million, \$1.2 billion, \$2 billion? How much do we put in a pot? How much do we? I know that was one of the great problems when we announced the \$1.1 billion of government assistance for the negligence group, with another \$100 million or so from the Red Cross. Is that going to be enough? There were a lot of people who did the quick addition of 22,000 divided by that number and said this is a paltry sum. It worked out to \$50,000 or \$60,000 a person. What does this buy? You are right if you do that, but the whole intent of that capital fund was to invest it, put money away, and to provide an income assistance top-up for needs, et cetera, down the way as people who have the disease progress. Will it be enough?

That is an issue that the courts will have to pass judgment on because we wanted that to be a court-approved settlement, and the details there are not yet done. So as we see this roller coaster or juggernaut develop across the country to do something—and I am not going to speculate at this time on the motivations behind it. I am not referring to any member of this committee, but the motivations by many on the national scene that one has to reflect on: is this the right way to make public policy? I do not believe it is, because there are so many things here that are difficult, if not impossible, to put together.

* (1610)

If that is where the country wants us to go so we can all put a pile of money into a fund and pat ourselves on the back, and this issue is done and five or six years from now find out it was basically meaningless and there is no more media attention to expand it, then my words may be very prophetic here today. But the member asks very good questions, and that is one of the difficulties that we, as ministers of Health, if we meet and get a consistent position out of some of our other

provincial colleagues, are going to have to grapple with. What are we putting together? It is not an easy question because, quite frankly, we do not know. If it is \$60,000 or it is \$20,000, it makes a big difference in the goal, but I get the great sense that those kind of details do not really matter to the national debate that is raging.

An Honourable Member: It matters a great deal.

Mr. Praznik: Well, I get the sense though that they do not really matter to those who are driving this on a national basis. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and his colleagues, to their credit and I recognize that today, are asking the kind of detailed information that any, I think, logical individuals trying to deal with this issue would want to have. Yet, I have not seen that at all in any of the national debate that rages on our television screens every night as this juggernaut.

An Honourable Member: Once again Manitoba is a leader.

Mr. Praznik: Well, perhaps we are a leader in this thing, but I think what concerns me the most is the principles that are here. I know it is easy to say a person injured in blood system should get compensation, all treated equally, but that is not the case. Injury is not always the same, or the insurance coverage we carry is not all the same. Two individuals enjoying the same hobby of boating, one takes out insurance, the other does not. They are hurt in a boating accident, one gets coverage, one does not.

I come back to the analogy that the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) drew of the nurse working in a hospital who becomes, in the course of her work, infected with hepatitis C who will have a compensation package through the Workers Compensation Board, and the patient injected with blood in that system will not, unless it was in the negligence period of '86 to '90. Well, we collectively as a society, going back to 1915, thought about a compensation plan for people injured on the job.

We realize that maybe today it is only probably less than 10 percent of workplace injuries would actually result in a successful negligence claim, brought in a no-fault system in 1915 in Manitoba and Ontario and other

provinces where we said fault will not be an issue. We will not provide all of the damages of tort, like pain and suffering, but we will provide a basic income replacement and medical costs so that people injured during work will not be left destitute and will require employers to pay for it. We arranged how we would finance it, what were the terms and conditions, what were the qualifications. But here in our health care system, we are not being asked to build a no-fault insurance scheme for people injured in health care for all, we are being asked to provide for compensation outside of negligence for a group of people who were injured in normal risk, for which we had no planning. We prepared no system. We put no dollars away. We had no provision for funding.

I think even worse yet, we have made no provision. I have heard no discussion in the national debate at all about what about individuals who are injured in other ways in the health care system, or what about individuals who will be injured by the next round of blood-borne diseases that we are not able to detect. I have not heard that anywhere in this national debate, and those are very real and haunting questions, because all who participated—and I am really referring to the national debate here. No member opposite should take this personally. It is not meant that way—but in this great debate we see raging now about everybody getting into the act nationally.

I see the Progressive Conservative senators in Ottawa, in their great wisdom and judgment, have joined the debate as well. I must admit their contribution to it does give me some concern about the need for a senate, but perhaps Stanley Knowles' ghost lives on in this Chamber at this moment. But, as we see everyone going in this debate, I do not see the fundamental questions being addressed by these advocates.

In fairness to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), he has asked some of the telling questions and, yes, we do not have the answers to them today. You are right. That is part of the administrative difficulties one takes on, but also those fundamental questions about where do you go after we all pat ourselves on the back and put a chunk of money away, if that is what happens. What do we say to those other individuals

who suffer harm in our system, including our blood system? Inevitably someone will. How do we deal with them? How do we deal with them when the day comes when they are not able to muster the kind of support from the Globe and Mail and the CBC and the national media and groups across the country?

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order, I am just wondering if we might ask the informal meeting in the spectators' chairs to perhaps be moved to the Conservative caucus room or in the hall. This has been going on, and I did not mind a few discussions. We all have private discussions, but this looks like quorum at the Conservative caucus. I wonder if we could ask the meeting to move outside.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson does have a point of order.

Mr. Praznik: Hear, hear. They should be here listening to their minister.

Mr. Chairperson: And I would ask all honourable members and guests, I guess we could term it as, if they wish to carry on a conversation, perhaps they do so at a very low tone or move out in the hallway, please.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to finish.

Mr. Praznik: So these are the issues that come out from the debate that is now raging for which no answers are being offered, or few answers. They are very valid questions, because this is a major, fundamental move in policy. When all of the public limelight has dispersed and many have patted themselves on the back and taken credit for their great show of compassion, as I am sure will happen throughout the land, there will be many left to deal with those very real issues.

When people talk about bankrupting the medicare system or the health care system, they are not talking about hepatitis C per se, and they are not talking about

putting another billion dollars or whatever it will be on the table, and I flag again my concern that whatever the federal government puts on the table in the next few weeks will be coming out of provincial pockets somewhere else. So we will end up footing the whole bill. I flagged that. I flagged that from day one.

But what we are going to do with that principle, that advancement, and what will bankrupt the Canadian health care system is if we continue to move to the principle that every risk that results in some injury or ill to befall a citizen using the health care system will result in a compensation plan. Health care cannot assume that cost. That will bankrupt the health care system, and that is the direction in which we as a country are moving. It scares some of us. It scared Allan Rock, and I am sure it scared the Prime Minister, and it scares me because I see it continue to grow and grow and grow. How it will be reflected is that health care systems across the country will now start to want to be able to provide protection from this kind of growth and expansion in, I would not say liability but in gratuitous payments.

We were just chatting about this now. I think we have to be very clear in the new Canadian blood system. I think every conceivable risk should be flagged, absolutely, with everyone taking blood, so that people have—if there is an argument that has been made in the past that people were not necessarily aware of all the risks, well, I, for one, believe they should be aware of absolutely every risk and accept the responsibility that comes with that risk. Maybe that is a good thing; maybe that is a good advancement that will come out of this.

What does it do if we are adding these gratuitous payments of compensation on to our health care system? What does it do in pricing products like blood and blood products? How do we insure our system against negligence that can happen from time to time? These are going to be very real and difficult issues, and I just hope that the level of support that we see now across the country will be there when some of these difficult issues also come up. That will be the true test, I believe, of compassion.

* (1620)

Mr. Chairperson: If the member for Osborne has one or two questions, then I will allow that, and then we will go on.

Ms. McGifford: Actually, I have a comment, a brief comment, and then a brief question. I wanted to sympathize with the minister and say that it must be very difficult to pass public policy when information is so scanty and when he feels that decisions are being made in the dark. I am sure that the minister is equally sympathetic with those individuals who feel public policy is being passed which excludes them, and decisions are being made in the dark without complete ideas of numbers and expenditures. It is also very hard for us as an opposition to be supportive when we do not have information. So I think it is something that we all share, this being in the dark on numbers, on costs, where we are going. These are very serious issues, and I sympathize with the minister.

My question was that the guesstimate of the number of those infected between 1986 and '91 is 20,000 cases? Is that accurate?

Mr. Wendt: Mr. Chair, approximately 22,000.

Ms. McGifford: Then the figure that I had understood to be the best guess for the number of Manitobans who would be affected was approximately 800.

Mr. Wendt: Mr. Chair, approximately 840.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if Mr. Wendt could tell us, of this 840, these are people who have tested positive for hepatitis C. They are not necessarily symptomatic at this time. They are not necessarily suffering from the disease. They would not necessarily be in a position where they would need compensation. Is it true that many of these people are working, making a living, carrying on with life as normal?

Mr. Wendt: That is an estimate of everyone who would have obtained hepatitis C through the blood supply.

Ms. McGifford: So a percentage of those 840 persons would be healthy, would probably not be desirous of compensation at this time.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I think the principle that we looked at in setting aside the dollars for the '86 to '90 package, there was a considerable debate on how the package should be divided. I was always of the view that Manitoba's position should be that the package should try to put as much, if not all, the dollars, but as much as possible, into the side of income replacement. In all the discussions I had with hepatitis C victims through the Hemophiliac Society, they recognized that their health care costs were covered through the provincial plan, drug costs through Pharmacare, and that of course is income tested here, so if a person was not able to work, their deductible we were talking about was likely to be relatively small. Home care was covered by the province. That was not the case in every province, so there were some issues about how those would be covered. That is still one of the credit issues we have to deal with between us as provinces.

We should not use our share of this to provide a backdoor for other services in other provinces that do not have home care or support, but that is really an internal accounting matter between us. We believed in Manitoba that the bulk of the money should be put into a pool, a capital pool, that those who are party to that pool should have control and responsibility for it. The money should be invested and produce income and the capital and income over the 30 or some years in which we expect to see the people who are victims in that '86 to '90 group, that there would be a fund on which they could draw for income replacement, perhaps similar to the WCB system, tax free as top-ups to their existing income replacement programs.

We certainly did not want to replace CPP disability pensions or any of the other public insurance schemes that might be there for income replacement for those who are disabled and unable to work, that there should be a top-up. The rules around that of course would have to be negotiated with the group. Mr. Rock and several of the provinces thought it would be best to have some up-front payment to each in that category, the remainder being available for income replacement. There was some thought that some of that money should be used to cover, as I have said, drugs or home care costs in provinces that do not have that. If that is the case, Manitoba will want an accounting between us so that we, in fact, are not subsidizing services in other provinces. That was the logic behind the fund.

We do not have lots of experience here, but we have some idea that over a lifetime you will see an increasing number of people who will not be able to work and require income assistance, so that is up to the actuaries and the people with that kind of data to determine. When that is available, if I do have the power to make it public, because there may be confidentiality with respect to litigation that is part of that, but if I have the ability to make it public, I certainly will. Then I think one can see the work of how that system was put together. But at least we had a group that was fairly well defined around the 22,000 or so.

We also know that some of those people have passed away. To be eligible at least for a lump sum payment out of the lump sum portion of this, we would require a death certificate, we determined, that indicated that the cause of death was hepatitis C related, you know, the normal kinds of things. But at least we had some ability to be able to put some numbers around that. Part of it, I suspect, in hearing Mr. Wendt speak about this on a number of occasions, part of this, I understand, was that the recordkeeping in the blood system has been improving over the years, so the records from '86 to '90 would be more recent and probably better than they would prior to '86, and that is part of the issue here as well.

We have all kinds of guesstimates as to whether it is 5,000, 20,000. I have heard 20,000 to 60,000. So if you provide the exact same packages we are offering at \$1.2 billion today—which, by the way, has not yet been accepted by those groups—then if it is 20,000 cases, we are looking at another \$1.2 billion. If it is 40,000, we are looking at \$2.4 billion, and if we are looking at 60,000 cases, we could be looking at \$3.6 billion. I do not know how all that plays out in terms of numbers and how many have passed away, but that is the kind of work.

But, again, not a lot of work was done by us on that area because we went into the discussions on the basis of dealing with negligence, on the basis of dealing with the area in which there was a potential legal liability, so why would one spend the effort in doing the detailed work? Some work was done to get some handle on it, but you know obviously that was not the reason why everyone was really at the table. We will never have as

accurate information for the pre-'86 as we have the '86 to '90.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, speaking of the Manitoba numbers, then I understand that our best estimate is that there are 840 persons who today have tested or there are 840 persons who are positive, and then I am hearing the minister saying new cases may crop up. Does this 880 include those who may pop up or those who are? The other question I wanted to ask: Is it the minister's understanding that approximately 50 percent of those persons who would test positive will remain asymptomatic throughout their lives?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, first of all, I believe the 800-and-so cases is our estimate of the number of cases that will be in the pool of the 22,000, based on our percentage of population expectation. So all of those individuals have not yet been identified, but that is the estimate on the pool. So again, you know, I mean if you just do some quick extrapolation, if the total number of cases are 60,000—sort of three times the '86-90 group who would be outside of that—I am sure we would have something similar in Manitoba. That is the kind of numbers that we as ministers have been working with.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Osborne, with the last question.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister has an answer to the second part of that question and that is: is it the minister's understanding that approximately 50 percent of those persons who would test positive will lead their entire lives as asymptomatic, that is, not appear to have the disease although they are carrying the disease?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, Mr. Wendt may want to respond to that detail, but we do recognize there are some people get very sick very quickly, and then over a period of time more and more people suffer the symptoms. Inevitably, there will be some who suffer none, and there are sort of some percentages developing of what one can expect. That is the kind of numbers that the actuaries will be working on in developing the plan for the \$1.2-billion fund, because obviously it has to be able to have a life to be able to deal with that full range of those 22,000 people. Some

of them have passed away and will only get a lump sum if they are eligible. Others may live a completely normal life and have virtually no cost or maybe only a few things in terms of drugs, et cetera, but there will be that whole range in between. So the fund has to be able to have enough income in capital to be able to carry the income replacement portion for the life of those people until expected retirement age.

* (1630)

So it is a great deal of work and undertaking to be able to do those calculations and work out those arrangements, and we as ministers could not impose that. It was part of a settlement in litigation which we wanted to have approved by courts, particularly in the three provinces where there were class actions taking place. That is the kind of very detailed work that has to go on and be negotiated by our representatives and by the lawyers representing those victims.

The simple comment to extend the plan, and I think members are starting to appreciate the great difficulty in doing this—

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: With respect, on a point of order, Mr. Chairperson. I know the minister is not trying to be argumentative, but this is ground that has been plowed. The question was: Is it correct that as in the statement made in the page pulled off the web that approximately half of all positives will live most of their life with very little consequences from the disease? I think the member was trying to establish some sense of relative risk, and I appreciate the minister's breadth of concerns, but we have gone over most of that. I think you should ask him to either take the question as notice or to respond to the question.

Mr. Chairperson: It was a dispute over the fact, of course.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am not being argumentative. This discussion has had a rolling nature to it. I know myself from the meetings that I have attended, each time we go through this detail, more and

more sinks in as the consequences and the difficulties of which we are talking. So I did not mean to be argumentative, and I do not intend to be.

Mr. Wendt advises me that that concurrent thinking may be right, but nobody really knows. He may want to respond further to it.

Mr. Wendt : Mr. Chair, I really do not have a lot more to add to that. I am not a physician, and I cannot really comment on the sequela of the disease, but my sense is that is about right.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): I just want to put a few remarks on the record. Regretfully, I have not been in here for all of the discussion, but I was most interested in the questions from the member for Crescentwood because I thought they were very valid. I came in unfortunately just at the tail end, so I did not get the whole thing.

It seemed to me the drift was, he was concerned that we did not have the numbers. To me that is a very valid concern. The minister mentioned that we at least have a sense of the numbers for 1986 to 1990. It is far easier, I believe, to come to some sort of consensus or agreement when you know the numbers, but we do not seem to be at that point yet.

So I am just going to go back very briefly to the resolution. I guess what disturbs me about the resolution is the word "reopened." I think if I were one of the victims and finally, after all of this time, federal government, the provincial governments and the territorial governments had come to some kind of an understanding and things seemed to be progressing, and then all of a sudden a resolution was passed to reopen things—and to reopen things when it seems to be on such shaky ground—I as a victim would be very upset. There is a saying, it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that a bird in the hand is worth, what is it, two in the bush, and I really very much believe that if—[interjection]

An Honourable Member: A dozen in the bush.

Mrs. Render: A dozen in the bush, okay. If an agreement, if the start of an agreement, if we have got that far, let us leave that agreement intact. If we are going to be looking at victims before 1986, let us make

that a different settlement so that we do not scuttle or slow up anything that is now in process. As I say, this has gone on for quite some time. The inquiry also took a fair bit of time. As I say, if I were one of those people and finally, after all of this time, I saw some sort of conclusion coming, I would be extremely upset if all of a sudden this memorandum of understanding were scuttled and put into a whole fresh set of talks, so I just simply make that comment that if for—this would be my reason. As I say, I am concerned about the wording, that if we have something that is settled and everyone has agreed to it, let us stick with that and let us go back now, if this is what the question is, to look at people who were infected before 1986.

However, the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), about 10, 15 minutes ago, also made a couple of very good comments which I will just touch very briefly on and that was, you know, what is it we are discussing; what happens if this just turns into a game of politics; are we going to say, well, let us put \$300 million on the table, let us put \$800 million on the table. Then pat ourselves on the back and say, well, we have done our good deed for the day; we have settled this question. The whole idea of settling a question in a committee room or on Legislative Assembly floors when we do not even have a grasp of the numbers that we are talking about, we do not have that overall picture in mind, I just think is really playing politics and politics at its worst.

So I think we have to be careful that when we are looking at the people who have been affected before 1986, we do it in a proper fashion. I guess that brings me to the second point. Again it disturbs me that each of us, and I say each of us as provincially, not each of us sitting around this table, are talking about this at a provincial level. To me, this is something that has to be discussed at the national level. I think it was made very clear that the federal government must assume the lion's share of responsibility, so for any of us to be discussing this in our own Legislatures, in isolation from the other provinces, from the other territorial governments and mainly from the federal government, I just do not think is a proper way to go.

The Canadian Red Cross was operating under rules and regulations that were set by the federal government, and the federal government simply has to be at the table. We should not be making suggestions without

doing this in concert with the rest of the provinces and with the federal government. I think a very valid concern, and it is certainly one that was raised before, is the fact that if each of us do this on our own, what happens with the provinces who have lots of money? Are they going to put a lot on the table, and they are going to be seen as the best guys? What happens then with people who are, say, from the provinces who cannot put as much money on? Do they pack up and move to the province which seems to be offering the best deal?

Mr. Chairman, again, I just do not think that is the way to make policy, and this is why it is absolutely imperative that when we sit down, we sit down together. Now our Premier (Mr. Filmon), our Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) are on record a number of times as saying: we are available at the call of the federal government. That is correct, but somebody has to make that call, and that somebody is the federal government. As I said earlier, the Canadian Red Cross is operating, was operating under rules set by the federal government, so the federal government simply has to take the initiative and make that move.

One of the things, too, that I think all of us tend to forget because most of us know of someone who has been affected by this, but I think sometimes we sometimes allow our heart, our compassion to overrule some of our other thoughts that we must bring into this picture. Again, I hate to talk about dollars and I hate to talk about numbers, but it is absolutely vital that we talk about it.

* (1640)

We have in the health care system many aspects really which are risk-taking. You can go into the hospital and an anaesthetic, you could have an allergic reaction to it. You could be paralyzed. I know somebody who is paralyzed at the throat and it was apparently from an anaesthetic that was given to him.

I am just going to quote from the, I guess it is a news release. I see the words Saskatchewan Health at the top, so maybe this is coming from the Saskatchewan government, but I think there are valid points, Mr. Chairman, and I am quoting here: There are potential risks and benefits associated with virtually every aspect

of the health system. Risk must be balanced against the often lifesaving benefits of the various medical procedures that are performed in the health system.

It goes on to say: It would be unrealistic to expect governments to provide financial assistance to individuals for risks associated with the health system, risks for which governments have no control.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) mentioned just a short while ago that I guess what we may have to start doing is telling patients about every conceivable risk and perhaps patients are going to have to accept this kind of a responsibility. But again, do we—I can think of people, as I say, who have been tragically affected by things that are no one's fault, just something has gone wrong or an allergic reaction that nobody had anticipated.

So the discussion for the patients prior to 1986 who have received this virus, as so many people have now put on the record, is a very complex discussion. When we move into that discussion, I think we have to make sure that we move into it properly so that we are ensuring that we cover all aspects of it.

Something that I had not thought about and which was on a talk show, I believe it was, was the fact of do we compensate on income. Is that going to be the criterion that somebody gets money? Do we compensate on how devastating this illness is to somebody? What happens if that person's whole lifestyle, their whole way of being is just knocked right out? But what happens if that person is very well off? Do they still get compensated? So it is not an easy thing. Do we compensate strictly on the quality of life, the loss of quality of life? Do we compensate strictly on topping up the finances? Do we say there is a cutoff, if you earn \$50,000 or more you are not eligible? There are just so many questions that need to be asked. Trying to make a decision in a hurry, particularly if there are some politics being played, I think, would be very, very detrimental to the people who have this disease. I think they deserve to have the whole subject treated in a proper manner. Again, I will just repeat it, it needs to be done in unison. It needs to be done with the call of the federal government. It needs to be done with all the provinces, the people from the provinces and the territories sitting there at the table

so that we are not going to institute something that perhaps could be a two-tiered health care system.

Just a couple of things that I want to mention. Again, I am just reading it off a briefing paper. I think it is worth noting that the provinces and the territories, under the understanding that we have right now, will be providing medical, hospital, home care, drug, social assistance and other services that will cost governments an additional \$1.6 billion over the next 30 years.

Now, again, picking up on the question from the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) when he was asking the minister: do we have any sense as to the kinds of numbers that we are looking at? The minister has been very clear about the fact that, you know, what happens if we put a number on the table and then we run out before we have done our duty to these people. As I say, Mr. Chairman, having a quick answer for political reasons I just think would be doing a disservice to people who deserve better than just trying to look good in the short term.

There is one other point that I wanted to make, and I guess it is that some people out there have the feeling that these victims, if they do not get any money, are going to be just totally right out of the loop. I do not believe that is correct. I believe that this is more—I think the proper word would be sort of a top-up. They may already have a Canada Pension Plan; they may already have a disability plan; they may have other forms of compensation. So I think it needs to be clear that no one is suggesting that these individuals do not have any kind of a safety net at all. My understanding is that there is an overall safety net, but again—and I know that there are others here who want to speak, so I will sort of conclude my comments.

I think the main thing is to make sure that we have all of the governments at the table and in particular the federal government because this is a national problem. We cannot just say, well, you know, Ontario has most of the victims so let Ontario make their own deal, or Manitoba has X number of victims, let Manitoba do their own deal. This is a national problem, and we have to treat it in the proper manner, which means all governments come to the table including the federal government.

I think that is about all I have to say, Mr. Chairman. I think all of us, as I say, feel—it is just terribly devastating for anybody at whatever time they contracted this, whether it was before 1986 or after 1986. I guess all I am saying is that the motion, as it reads now, to reopen—if I were a victim between 1986 and 1990, I would hate to have an understanding reopened. I would want to get what I have settled, because going back before 1986, I think that could take a fair bit of time to get that settled, and I would not want to prolong the agony of those who think that they have a settlement on the table right now. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Would one of the opposition members wish to speak?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Chairman, I too want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few comments on record regarding hepatitis C. I have not been able to be a part of this discussion throughout the last few days; however, I have had an opportunity to read in Hansard some of the comments that were made. Also, in the course of the debate that has been taking place, I have had opportunity to read in numerous magazines of people or victims who have hepatitis C, who are victims of this and certainly there are many heart-rending stories out there. You know, I am compassionate, I feel for them and I am concerned as to what we can do, what we can do as governments to assist them. The stories out there speak of lives that are disrupted in their family units, children whose parents are affected. Certainly, this is something that I feel badly about, and this is something that has taken place over the years. I guess my response to the resolution, as we have it here, is the same as my honourable colleague for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) has indicated, that to reopen something that already has been put in place is dangerous, I believe reopens the whole discussion again. What does that do for those who now feel that they have come to some sort of resolution? Are they needing to now go and rethink what they are doing? So I have grave concerns about that.

* (1650)

Certainly there are other concerns that I have; again, as many have mentioned here, regarding the dollar value that is being placed on this, and certainly, you know, how can you put a dollar value on life? You

cannot do that. Life is fragile. Life is delicate. You cannot put a value on it.

However, as governments, we look at this very seriously and we say: what in fact does this do? I know that the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) in his concluding comments talked about the fear that he had regarding our whole health care system, and something that I think very often we take too for granted, but what does this do to the medicare system as we have it? Does this put it at risk if, in fact, we are going to be paying out many, many dollars?

With this, Mr. Chairman, I want to relate a personal experience that I had back in June of 1996. I believe it was June 7. I am going to use this illustration just to try and emphasize some of the concerns that I have in reopening the issue. It was on a Saturday afternoon, and I had the opportunity to help my wife as we were serving at a wedding. It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and I felt a tingle just below my knee. Within an hour, I had excruciating pain, and of course this continued. To make a long story short, by eight o'clock in the evening I was on the operating table.

What actually happened here was that, again, the prognosis by the doctors was that I had in some way contracted necrotizing fasciitis, which is a form of the flesh-eating disease. It went extremely rapidly. It moved extremely quickly. In fact, it moves at a pace of about one inch an hour, and it eats your flesh. This is what happened to me. Again, I had no open wound. There was no indication that this should have taken place. My concern and the reason I am bringing up this illustration is the fact that to date I do have problems with my knee when I do extensive jogging, but am I going to go back now and blame the doctors or those who were involved in the health care system? Will I blame them for something that they did?

They did what they felt needed to be done, and they did it very quickly. The diagnosis was correct. I firmly believe that they did the right thing, but this is going to be something that I will be afflicted with for the rest of my life. I am quite prepared to take that. I am very happy that I am here today. The minister made a comment before: what are the options? What would

have been the options for me? The options for me would have been that I guess I could have lost a limb. I was chastised with having the political disease. We know that the member from Quebec, Mr. Bouchard, in fact, did lose a part of his limb due to that. I mean, that was said in jest and that is fine. I take it the same way.

But what would the alternatives be, and I believe it is the same thing when we start talking about hepatitis C. What are the options? Are the options that I do not have a blood transfusion. I remember very vividly when I went into the operating room that I needed to in fact sign a paper stating that they would—they being the physicians—do what was necessary in order to try and resolve the problem that I had, but that ultimately I would not hold them responsible for it. If by some error in judgment they would have removed the limb and later on found out that it was not necessary, that I would not be back there and holding them responsible for this. It could very easily have happened.

The minister just indicated that this could happen, and I am sure there are times when that does happen. Consequently it is the same thing with receiving tainted blood. Is this something that people knew? Certainly, as has been illustrated here time and time again, in the period of 1986 to 1990, the government or the Red Cross was aware of it, that there was some tainted blood out there, and certainly they did have a responsibility. I believe that is exactly what the illustration is given here. Also, read the resolve of it, that the government is taking responsibility for it during the period of time they knew that there was a problem. But the resolution here states now that we want to reopen this, and we want to reopen it to a period before, we want to open it to a period after, forever and a day. Is this forever now that when something goes wrong, that immediately we go back to government and ask them to compensate? I do not believe we can do that. I think that somewhere there has to be a finality to what we can do as government. The treasuries are not limitless and so they cannot continually compensate.

I want to come back to the other point again. I think that is something that as individuals, as people in Manitoba, in Canada, that we take so for granted, and that is the health care system that we enjoy from day to day. I drive, and I do a lot of driving, but certainly we know too, that statistically the opportunity to be in an

accident is there, that possibility is there, so I would want to have a health care system out there, one that is responsive, one that can meet my needs when I need it.

So, Mr. Chairman, those are some of the concerns that I have regarding the reopening of what we had felt was something that the province had agreed upon. The governments have set aside, and I think it was indicated before, between \$1.1 billion and \$1.2 billion, where the federal government will provide up to \$800 million and the provinces and the territories would be putting in up to \$300 million.

The other area of responsibility I believe that we so often overlook, and that is that are we not assisting these people. Certainly, I believe that we have a responsibility to them, those who are prior to '86 and after 1990, and I believe that we are also supplying or giving them assistance. We are giving them assistance packages in the provinces and the territories. We would provide medical for them, we provide the hospital care for them, the home care, the drugs that they need, social assistance and other services. This will cost governments an additional \$1.6 billion over the next 30 years. Now I would assume that is an estimate, because I also heard the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) making the comment that, yes, we are looking at anywhere from 20,000 to 22,000 persons, but it could go as high as 60,000. So where does this stop? Where do we finally have conclusion to this?

So, Mr. Chairman, these are some of the concerns that I have regarding the resolution that has been put on the table here, the amendment to that resolution, and I just believe that we cannot go and reopen this issue again for several reasons, one being that we are concerned about the people who feel that they have finally had a resolution to their problem. They have been waiting for this and waiting for this for many years, and now to ultimately have this reopened again makes it very, very difficult for them and for their families. So we need to deal with the one area first.

* (1700)

Then also the understanding that I have from the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is that they will be continuing to meet as provincial ministers and of course the federal minister in the next week or week and a

half, I believe, and they will be discussing the issues here. But, again, I believe that as elected people we have a responsibility to advise them as to what our thinking is, you know, how far can they in fact go in dealing with compensation packages. What opportunity does this give to those who feel that they might in fact eventually show signs of having been infected? I think the Premier (Mr. Filmon) gave the example this afternoon in Question Period of an individual who found out that he had been infected, though at this point in time did not feel any consequences of it. How many more of these are out there? Where does this stop?

So, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I again want to reiterate some of the fears that I have. One is that right today we do not have a perfect health care system, not by any means, but I do believe and I know that it is getting better all the time. We are working at it. It is something that progressively we are working at. [interjection] Yes, an honourable colleague here says under the good administration of the Minister of Health. So that is something we want to continue to value, that we want to continue to uphold. That is looking at it provincially. But then looking at it federally, the whole area of our medicare system, I really feel that it is something that again we value, we want to retain.

Just another comment I would like to put on the record is that I have a sister-in-law who is the administrator of a 400-bed hospital in the U.S. It is a large hospital, and certainly they meet many people obviously coming in and people who need to have their needs met there. Their system is not a perfect one either. I know that many times in our Question Period, we have been talking about and questions have been asked: is this the direction that we want to go? That is when we look south of the border. It is certainly not. They have their problems, and they recognize that they have their problems there as well.

So I think continually as Canadians, as Manitobans, we value what we have, and certainly I would like to see us do everything possible to retain and to keep the health care system that we have and to keep it intact as best possible. So, with those few comments, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Chairman, I would like the opportunity to again come to this table and put a few remarks on the record with regard to this new motion—[interjection] Because as the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) quite correctly indicates, I did speak previously on the prior motion of the honourable colleagues opposite and I put a few concerns and issues on the record. But, as the resolution has changed—

An Honourable Member: The Clapham omnibus.

Mr. Radcliffe: Ah yes, quite rightly, the honourable member for Osborne—I must have made an impression because she recites that she does recollect that the rationale of the reasonable man on the Clapham omnibus is, in fact, a pervading principle of law, and I will ask—[interjection] The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is making some aspersions about filibustering. Recollecting his record in these halls in days gone by, he is perhaps somebody who could be somewhat of an expert on that, and I would never think that I would come close to his record or his skill in oratory, but he is perhaps one who knows well about what he speaks. It is an old saying that people who live in glass houses should not throw rocks, but I would not want to be deprecating of the honourable member opposite on that issue.

However, to the point, Mr. Chairman, I do not want to review what I have already said about writs of action, which was the original basis for compensation to individuals. In fact, originally at law in the Queen's Bench up until about the 1890s, if one were run over by a train or run down by a horse, at common law one had a cause of action against the individual object, and one could seize the railway carriage in question or seize the horse and sell the horse to follow up with one's remedy. However, we have come a long way from that, and as I recited to my honourable colleague opposite, the snail and the ginger beer—[interjection] Well, the snail and the ginger beer did change the course of litigation in the British common law, but we now are looking at an issue which I think the honourable Minister of Health has indicated we are touching on strict liability, and this is the slippery slope to perdition, because as many individuals have stated to date, we do not know the

nature and extent of the problem which is under discussion at this point in time.

While the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) was attempting, through some very skilled cross-examination of the honourable witness here who had been brought forward by the Minister of Health, to minimize and limit and put some certitude to the issue, I would suggest, with the greatest of respect, although her attempts were well skilled, that in fact she did not achieve the object of which she was attempting to address herself which was to put limits on the numbers on the issue.

But I think that what we must do is address oneself to the actual motion at hand which the honourable colleague for Osborne has put on the table. While at the outset I would like to say that I commend her for her compassion, I commend her for her interest in this subject, and I think that it is admirable that members opposite should have feeling and sensitivity on the issue, but we must bring reason and regularity and some sort of control to the good feelings which the members opposite are bringing.

I think that it is quite proper, and the object of the opposition is—perhaps their role is that of bringing in blue-sky concepts and challenging the status quo, and I think that the honourable member for Osborne has done that. But, having said all of that and admiring her for her creativity and sensitivity in the issue, I think that we must then address what it is she is actually saying.

The first part of her motion says that she moves that the committee commend our Legislature to support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly.

I am advised, Mr. Chairman, that the Quebec National Assembly, after having come to the table with all the rest of the provinces, territories and the federal Government of Canada to adopt a very specific compensation package in response to threat of class action, have widened their perception, their perspective, and they have asked that—or challenged really. They have challenged the federal government to compensate all individuals who have suffered from hepatitis C, not only directly but through their spouses, through indirect actions, through hemophiliac victims. This motion, I

would suggest, with the greatest of respect to our colleagues in Quebec, although it may be based on good will and concern for victims in our community, may well imperil our health care system, imperil our fiscal probity, and, in fact, I would suggest is premature. We are being told that our honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) will be discussing these issues further with his colleagues in the other provinces and the Minister of Health.

We must be very cautious, and I am sure we would urge our colleague, our Minister of Health, that he is not to do anything that would jeopardize Manitoba's standing as a modest province in the Confederation of Canada that would result in a two-tier medical health care system, that Quebec being a much larger community come forward perhaps at the demand or the administration of the federal government and lay large amounts of money on the table that are beyond the ability of the Manitoba government to come up with. We have looked at the issue of the Ontario government, who have offered to put \$200 million on the table at this point in time, but there is a hook to Mr. Harris's offer I believe, Mr. Chair, and at this point he is saying that he wants to try and collect this money back from the federal government, and that indirectly he is saying that the entire responsibility still lies with the federal government.

* (1710)

Well, this motion which my honourable colleague is moving, I would suggest is confusing. It is premature, and probably I would speculate that if my honourable colleague had the opportunity to reflect upon what she has actually done, she might well suggest that she might want to withdraw this motion. I do not know, but I would leave that of course for her wisdom to consider in the future, because what she further goes on to say is not only does she want to get on board with the Quebec legislature in challenging our federal colleagues, but what I think the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) has so adequately and clearly articulated, our honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) wants to open up the existing settlement which has been hammered out between all the provinces, between our federal government and the territories.

Mr. Chair, we can only look back in our recent past in this country and see how difficult it has been for any

of us to achieve consensus in this Confederation. We have had two crucial constitutional discussions and better minds than ours have come to the table to try and reach consensus in this country. Both attempts have ended in failure. Here, for once, the ministers of Health across Canada and the federal government have reached a consensus on compensation on a very restricted and certain issue, and they are, I think, to be commended.

What the honourable colleague from Osborne is now recommending is that we undo this good work. I would suggest that proposal is outrageous and ought not to be contemplated or supported for one nanosecond.

We would lose for these victims, from the '86 to '90 category, the \$1.1 billion that is on the table. We would go back to square one. Everybody's agenda that comes to the table in this country of ours is often at odds. As we can see from looking right now at the reactions from the press that I believe have been playing this issue and our Reform colleagues in the House of Commons, who have been, I would suggest with the greatest of respect, getting the optimum coverage that is possible out of this, there are many different agendas at work on this issue. Perhaps all the individuals who are involved might not have the ultimate of compassion about the victims of hepatitis C prior to 1986.

However, on the motion that we are being asked to address—and that is why I felt it was important to speak again, not to review all the litigation history that I reviewed before and outlined for the benefit of my honourable colleague, but rather to address this specific issue and to say that it is very dangerous. We put the flexibility of our situation in peril if we try to bind the hands of our Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) when he goes off to Ottawa to try and discuss this matter further and reach new agreements, because what the honourable colleague for Osborne is saying is that our Minister of Health should press for the existing compensation package for victims of tainted blood to be reopened and reviewed. Therefore, I am sure that on sober second thought and reflection, quite honestly the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) might wish to review and withdraw that comment. However, I would not want to put words in her mouth at this point in time.

There are a number of other issues which I think our Minister of Health will carry to Ottawa to discuss with his colleagues. One issue, of course, is the rules or the limits or the concepts or precepts upon which compensation ought to be awarded to individual victims. The issue at hand right now which has been agreed upon by all parties was that the settlements that are given to hepatitis C victims would be reviewed and approved by the courts.

Now, it does not say, we do not have material at this point as to what court level this would be, whether it would be the federal court because the federal court covers issues involving the federal government or an individual trial court or Queen's Bench or superior court in each individual province, but under the present arrangement there is review of the settlements by the court system in our country, presumably to validate and ensure that nobody is taken advantage of.

The motion that my honourable colleague across the way has presented, of course, throws out this check and safeguard that the ministers of Health and the federal counterparts have put into the system. She does not involve herself or address the issues of what level of compensation is to be given to these victims, and as I said earlier, is there going to be an award for pain and suffering? Is there going to be an actuarial determination of loss due to diminution of wages earned? [interjection]

Well, one would seriously question that. I mean, the honourable member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) raises a very cogent point here, but nonetheless putting the best possible interpretation on the motion raised by the member opposite, I would caution our Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) that he must be very much aware of the difficulties which are involved here. He having legal background, I am sure he is very much aware of these points, that we would look at individuals who are suffering from hepatitis C, and if they are asymptomatic, which has been addressed earlier, whether they have in fact reacted positively, are they entitled to compensation, or is it only people who have suffered liver damage? How are we to discern what level of compensation should be given to these people? This motion does not address any of those issues, and I think that those are some of the real concerns that the

people of this country ought to be discussing and considering at this point in time.

So, when one is rushing willy-nilly to say that you want to extend compensation, one has to know firstly what it is that we are extending. I have always maintained that in a perfect world it would be very easy to follow the economic precepts and the political precepts of members opposite if we had unlimited purses, if there was money growing on every tree. But in fact we live in a real world, Mr. Chair, and I would suggest, with the greatest of respect to members opposite, that these principles, while perhaps idealistic, are a little bit unrealistic in the real world that we have to deal with, with the budgets, with the rules, with the limits to our laws that govern compensation for individuals. As I say, I go back to the original precept which I think members opposite, although they have not articulated it, is an underlying principle in this motion, which is that they are proposing that there be strict vicarious liability for victims of the health care system, that the people who run the health care system, who are responsible for the health care system, ought to compensate people, and this is somewhat hazardous, Mr. Chair.

* (1720)

The other thing, of course, is that the provincial ministers of Health have worked out a ratio of compensation. The Red Cross have been at the table, and they have participated in the existing transaction. Are we now to rip up this settlement, which is what this motion suggests, and walk away from it?

I believe that we are starting to reinvent the wheel. I do not think that this is in the best interests of Manitobans with hepatitis C, and I do not want members opposite, or anyone, to construe from the concern that my colleagues and I are bringing to the table that there is any lack of concern or compassion for individuals who are suffering from this affliction. But we have got to look at this motion on a realistic basis. I look forward to the advice which our Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) will bring back from Ottawa, when he sits down at the table with the Minister of Health for the country, with all his colleagues from the other provinces, and also I believe members of the public who have an interest in this issue, and see what

sort of consensus they are able to reach. But, in the meantime, while we do not want to fetter our good minister's ability to reach any consensus that is in the best interests of Manitoba, we must be very wary of not getting carried away with emotion on this issue, with falling prey to the—[interjection] I am sorry, there is no chance that the Minister of Health will fall prey to his emotions—[interjection]

Well, Mr. Chair, there is a place for emotion, and there is a place for passion; but, when we are handling the finances of our nation, this is really trust money that we are challenged to handle. We have to make sure that we are eminently just and eminently fair to all our citizens and that we do not get carried away with emotion on one particular issue, however well intentioned it may well be. I would perhaps characterize the motion of my honourable colleague opposite as being well intentioned, but perhaps she has not thought—

An Honourable Member: But misguided.

Mr. Radcliffe: Misguided. There it is indeed. Out of her own mouth comes such eminent wisdom that I would commend the member opposite and then perhaps after this discourse is finished she may well want to readdress this issue and perhaps withdraw some of the motions and rethink it and perhaps even give some advice to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) that may be of benefit to him when he does go to Ottawa to meet with his colleagues.

An Honourable Member: I look for good advice.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, indeed. And so in conclusion, Mr. Chair, I would say that we must be very careful that we do not create a two-tier system, that we do not undo the good work that our Minister of Health has reached to date, that we define or address our minds to the extent of compensation that is going to be discussed, the process by which compensation is going to be awarded, that we encourage our minister to work assiduously to reach consensus with his colleagues, that we come back with a clear picture as to what we are being asked to vote for and to endorse. But just to willy-nilly dash off and tilt at windmills, to tilt at windmills, I would suggest with the greatest of respect

might be castigated as a feckless and inopportune action.

Therefore, I was unable to support the member's previous motion and, for the reasons stated, although well intentioned and compassionate, I feel that I cannot support the current motion which she has brought forward to try and amend her previous position. I would suggest to the member opposite that perhaps the smartest thing to do would be to withdraw the motion completely, give her best wishes to our Minister of Health, and await his return from Ottawa. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, in the spirit of trying to get this as a statement that reflects the concerns of members opposite, we are quite willing to amend a rather innocuous section of the motion, which seems to have been picked upon as a debating point for members who wish to nitpick, I think. I look at the member opposite and I do not know why nitpicking comes to mind, very eloquent nitpicking, but I digress.

I think the concern is, and by the way, I do not know how anyone can read a motion that says that the package be reopened and reviewed with a view to extending compensation in some way, shape, or form restricting existing compensation in the package. I say that, Mr. Chairperson, because—

An Honourable Member: Let me respond.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I do not think the minister will have to respond because, quite frankly, we are quite willing to take out the words “to be reopened and reviewed” and put in a provision that clarifies it to deal with the supposed concerns of members opposite. I say that I think the last four or five speakers have all picked on this point as if somehow by saying you want to extend compensation that you would somehow tear up the existing agreement. That is not what anyone anywhere in the country has argued, nowhere, not a single legislature, not certainly in the House of Commons. Rather than get down this blind alley, we are quite prepared to take out the words “to be reopened and reviewed.” I think we would consider the suggestion as a friendly amendment, and we are quite willing to move a further clarification by way of

amendment, which we would also take advice from members opposite.

Mr. Chairperson, I would like to start by suggesting that we are quite prepared to delete the words "to be reopened and reviewed," accept that as a friendly amendment.

Mr. Chairperson: Has the honourable member for Thompson moved an amendment?

Mr. Ashton: I am suggesting, by agreement of the committee, we consider this a friendly suggestion from the other side.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister would like to ask a question?

Mr. Praznik: Well, Mr. Chair, I would just like to comment on this, because I would like to just see the member—if he could provide me with his proposal in writing. The concern, of course, there is that by asking to reopen the existing agreement, and it is a very—[interjection] No, no, no, I am just saying to members that I—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Before we go on, I would like to get this off on the right track, if I may. Do we have unanimous consent?

Point of Order

Mr. Radcliffe: A point of order. I would ask members opposite if they could read the phrase with their proposal the way they are proposing to amend it, so that it is clear as to what the amendment is going to be.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to pose a question or a comment.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, no, I am not here to pose a question; I am here to make a comment. The fundamental concern with reopening the existing agreement, quite frankly, is where we currently have an \$800-million federal commitment to a \$300-million provincial commitment. If we are urging the federal government to reopen that, my guess is Mr. Rock will

come back and say, all right, I will throw in a couple hundred million more, where is your billion? That might bring me up to a billion, where is your billion?

An Honourable Member: That is what we are saying we will take out.

Mr. Praznik: Exactly. So if members are proposing that we take out any reference to reopening the existing agreement—and that is why I would like to see their exact wording which I would be prepared to comment on before we give consent to that change—we would certainly be prepared to entertain it.

The principle here is that members opposite are asking for a further package for those outside the excluded group, and I think it is very fundamental here that the existing package remain intact, not be reopened, not be dealt with, that what members opposite are saying is that we should provide—their advice would be to provide a package for those people who do not have a negligence claim, and that in essence is what members are suggesting. If they have some wording along that line, I would certainly be prepared to entertain it on behalf of the government.

* (1730)

Mr. Chairperson: If the honourable member for Thompson would put forward a copy.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, if the minister has a copy in front of him. We are essentially dealing here with this in two stages: one is we are trying to get common ground on that which is something that five members in a row from the government side have expressed concern about, making it clear that we are talking about not reopening the existing agreement to reduce coverage to any of the people who are covered from '86 to '90. That can be accomplished by taking out the words "reopened and reviewed." I mean I do not see that as being a problem, but if it is a problem, we can actually strike out "with a view to extending compensation."

I suggest we deal with that first one by unanimous consent, because I do believe there is consensus on that. There may not be consensus on the second amendment we wish to move, but if the minister prefers

we can move to delete that and add the second section as part of a motion which can then be debated.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I did not follow what the member is proposing. He is saying that they are prepared to take out the words "reopened and reviewed." So what he would be asking us, then, is to press for the existing compensation package to be extended. I think the member may—you know, if the member would like to take a few moments to give some consideration to his wording, I think the committee would—

An Honourable Member: I suggest, Mr. Chairperson, we recess for about two minutes and we can accommodate the minister..

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. It is agreed to take a few minutes while the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) thinks about his amendment? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 5:32 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 5:44 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Is there unanimous consent that the honourable member for Thompson move an amendment—

Mr. Ashton: It might be easier, Mr. Chairperson, if I might be of some assistance, if the member moves it as an amendment to her own motion and I think there may be some consensus on hand.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there unanimous consent for the member for Osborne to amend her motion? [agreed]

Consent has been allowed for the member to move her amendment.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have listened to the members opposite and taken their advice seriously. We certainly wish to protect the initial package, and therefore I move, in the original motion, that everything after the phrase "tainted blood" be

deleted and that the following be substituted: "be maintained, and that an extension of the existing agreement be entered into which would provide compensation for all victims of hepatitis C infected by contaminated blood or blood products."

Mr. Chairperson: The amendment is removing the words "to be reopened and reviewed with a view to extending compensation" and replacing it with "be maintained, and that an extension of the existing agreement be entered into which would provide compensation for all victims of hepatitis C infected by contaminated blood or blood products."

The amendment is in order.

Mr. Ashton: I think there might be a consensus to allow the original motion to be amended and this be accepted as a friendly amendment. We are not asking the government to necessarily agree to all of the amendment but just allowing the motion to be amended by leave, so that essentially what we will be debating is the original motion as amended by this motion without, as I say and I want to put that on the record, that this is not indicating the minister or the government necessarily agrees with this, the content of the amendment in full, although they might agree with part of it. The advantage of this, though, is it allows us to focus the debate on, I think, what are some of the key issues, and I can get into how we can continue that in a few moments if there is leave on that.

Mr. Praznik: I thank the member for Thompson for his comments on this motion. I think this does refine an issue that is evolving rather quickly. I thank the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) for this motion, and I believe the Chair will find that there is unanimous consent of this committee to have the original motion amended as proposed by the member for Osborne.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the amendment agreed to? [agreed]

The motion is amended, and as such, now there is discussion or can be discussion on the motion as amended.

Mr. Praznik: During the course of our recess, we had opportunity to talk, some of us, and just to update

members of the committee, the federal minister, Mr. Rock, has requested, as well as Mr. Serby, the provincial co-chair, that we meet some time next week to discuss this matter further. As our Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicated in the House today, and as I have indicated on previous occasions, whenever ministers of Health meet to discuss issues, I try my best to be there, and it is our intention to have me there. We will be making the appropriate pair request of the opposition, which I do not believe will be a difficulty, but we may as a committee, given the way in which this is evolving—and I think we have made great progress in this committee in discussing the intricacies of a very complex issue. I really do thank sincerely the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) for bringing it on to the floor of this committee.

* (1750)

I know at times one may think that we want to get to a vote quickly, but there are so many matters in play across this nation over which we have no control, and positions are developing and changing. We are, again, as we all recognize here, only a 4 percent player in any national package, and we have also all recognized the need to have a national solution. I have heard that from members of the New Democratic Party and the importance of having a national solution to any of these issues.

We certainly have one for the negligence area. Is there some extension or package to be made available in the nonnegligence area? And if there is, I think we have all, listening to this debate, recognized the importance of a national position. Manitoba has always taken the position, I think, through a variety of governments, to be part of national solutions to issues and problems. So I might suggest that this committee may, because we have been going over in great detail—and many of the comments made by members have been instructive to me as Minister of Health and helpful as this has developed—we may, in fact, want to consider putting over our debate until we have seen this matter develop somewhat further on a national basis. So I look to the member for Thompson, who is also the opposition House leader, for some advice.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I would suggest that what we do is, first of all, in a couple of minutes,

call it six o'clock. I would suggest we also look at the scheduling of Estimates. There are some other issues involved. It may be advisable to not only adjourn today but perhaps continue in Estimates probably after the meeting that the minister will attend, not just for the reason of this particular issue but for other factors as well, including the availability of our critic. But I think that will continue, in terms of discussion, probably with the government House leader, who, I understand, will be returning tomorrow morning.

I just wanted to put on the record before we do adjourn for today that we might not be coming back into Health Estimates immediately. Certainly, I want to put on the record, too, if there is anything that we can do to help the minister go to that conference in the best possible position—and I think everybody knows what our intents are in this, and I think for the government as well, we are certainly willing to accommodate that. That is one of the reasons why we may not be continuing with Health Estimates until probably after that meeting. But it is not the only reason. We are not just holding up the entire Department of Health, but we may have some further advice in the House on that tomorrow afternoon.

I would suggest we call it six o'clock right now.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

Committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time. We are on Resolution 16.2. School Programs (c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I thought a question was coming first, so I was sitting waiting for that. But I have some tablings

ready that were asked for yesterday. The relocation of the Manitoba School for the Deaf, the actual expenditures that were requested I have available. As well, I have A Thinking Framework: Teaching Thinking Across the Curriculum document, a resource for schools for kindergarten to Senior 4 that was asked for. I have three copies of each for the Chamber.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Okay, moving on then. Item 16.2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,089,500.

* (1440)

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I have been reading Hansard for yesterday and, I think, probably should formally say that Hansard seems to be doing a stunning job. This is the first time—and I have been a number of years in the Legislature—in which they are keeping up with the legislative committees. Not only that, this year we have three legislative committees, and Hansard is providing us the very next day with, it seems to me, a very full record. I have only found a couple of errors and quite understandable. So I was able to read what the minister had said yesterday. I wanted to come back with a couple of questions on what the minister had said, but I did, first of all, want to congratulate Hansard for what, I think, is really a herculean effort.

The minister has said, in answer to a question from my colleague, that—[interjection] Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask the minister about the math curriculum, and I understand she has the right staff at the table today. The minister had said that the math curriculum that was being tested so far was the old math curriculum.

I am curious about that, particularly in the context of the Grade 3 math exams—well, in fact, both; we should really say both—because I had understood that the approach of the new curriculum and the approach of the tests were congruent and that the response and the goals that both the tests and the curriculum had was to stimulate problem solving.

This had not been the case in earlier curriculum. The problem solving is a new kind of way of both teaching and learning mathematics, one that I understand is well supported by people at all levels of the educational

system, but I am curious as to why the minister said that it was the old curriculum that was being tested when I understood that especially but not exclusively at the Grade 3 level it was, in fact, a very different kind of testing.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am really glad we are going to have a chance to clarify that for the member because clearly, then, a lot of the questions she has been asking for the last two sessions have been based upon a faulty assumption. I am really glad we are going to get the chance to clarify this for her, so that her questioning in the future can be based upon something more accurate than a misunderstanding of how this all works. Maybe we can do it here in Estimates, but it may be time that the member received a thorough briefing on what we are doing with tests and standards, so that she has a better understanding than that which has just been revealed here.

I fault myself to have not made her better informed. As critic, I just assumed she knew, and it may explain some of my frustration with the questions I get asked from the member opposite during Question Period. I thought she knew some of these things, and, clearly, her questioning here reveals that I have not provided her with information over time that might have helped her understand better. I just thought with her own research, she discovered these things.

I believe the member would like to interrupt, rather than just heckle, and I am quite willing to have her interrupt if she would like to. I know a few moments ago she expressed dismay that it seemed to be there was some conversation on this side, but if she wishes to put what she is mumbling onto the record, that is fine. I am prepared to pause and let her do that, but I do have some more documents to table and an answer for her question. I am very pleased she asked it, and I am just apologizing that we did not make her aware of these things earlier on the assumption that she knew based upon the way she has been asking questions.

Just before I provide that answer, I have some documents that are here for tabling that the staff has just provided me. They are the documentation on the Grade 3 Mathematics Standards Test; the Senior 4 Language Arts and the Senior 4 Mathematics Provincial Examinations; the Provincial, Division and School

Summary Reports; Division and School-by-School Report. I have three copies, and, as well, I have the January 1997 Senior 4 Language Arts and Mathematics Provincial Examinations Division School Results and Summary Packages, and I have three copies for the House. This is information the member requested that staff has put together for her.

In response to the question, first, the member indicates the right staff are here now. They were here for a portion of yesterday. As the member recalls, we went and got the staff yesterday and brought them in for her. The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) yesterday posed questions to that staff such as where we were taking Senior 2, when, in fact, we were not and are not, but this led to questions about curriculum and a different budget line than assessment, and that caused us to bring into the Chamber not only the curriculum staff but also the assessment staff. So they were introduced yesterday and they were here yesterday. I just did not want the record to show that we did not bring in the appropriate staff at the appropriate time when requested.

But with reference to the issue of new test to old curriculum, with Grade 3, the Grade 3 curriculum that was in use this year is a new curriculum that was built upon a curriculum the previous year and the previous year and the previous year. The new curriculum that was brought in for Grade 3 this year contained in part some of the material from the curriculum in the year before and the year before, but gradually modified and upgraded until it was fully fleshed out as a brand-new curriculum.

It was building incrementally on previous curriculum. We have indicated, and I keep repeating that the new curriculum does not totally discard the old. In mathematics in particular the skills that are there are skills that have been taught for many, many years in our schools, and we build new modules with updated ways of teaching those skills and of bringing in technology, et cetera, but it builds incrementally, so that the children do not go one year and the next have a completely and totally different curriculum unlike anything that any Grade 3 class has seen before.

From the teacher's perspective, the teacher has had experience in many instances. By the time the full, new

curriculum is before him or her, the teacher has had experience in various modules of it. But in Grade 3 this year it was a new curriculum completed. The new curriculum was completed this year and all the revisions had been done. As a matter of interest the portion of the curriculum this year which completed the whole new thing was about a 3 to 5 percent difference from the 1992 curriculum.

* (1450)

Revisions were started prior to the western provinces outcome. We here in Manitoba had already begun our work prior to the Western Protocol in the Grade 3 math. Hence it was easy for us to be the first province to have the fully developed new mathematics curriculum for Grade 3 based upon Common Frameworks developed by the Western Protocol. The Common Frameworks for Grade 3 mathematics for the Western Protocol was developed two years ago and, from that, we were able to finalize our curriculum.

So to back up, last year in Grade 3 the students in Manitoba piloted the fully developed new curriculum which was put in place as a permanent structure this year. That "new" curriculum was, in fact, only 5 percent different from the curriculum taught in 1992. The parts that were upgraded were made more rigorous and more relevant, and they are significant, but the member should not believe that the old curricula were as different from the new curricula as chalk is from cheese. That is not the case and we have repeatedly tried to state that for members opposite.

The Senior 4 mathematics test is based on the old curriculum. The test that we took a couple of years back that showed students having trouble with problem solving was based upon the old curriculum. It was not new material the teachers were teaching. It was the same curriculum that they have been teaching for many years in Manitoba.

So the member does a lot of talking about how hard it is for the field to keep up with all these changes. In some instances, the only change is that they are having a standards test on existing curriculum.

New curriculum is being introduced incrementally so that there never is a great shock to the system. The old

math curriculum for 40S and 40G, regarding Senior 4 provincial exams; the new curricula for Grade 3 for provincial standards exams; pilots currently in place at Grade 6 and Senior 1 for standards tests; and as we move to completely new curriculum at Senior 4 in the year 2001 and 2002, we will move to Senior 4 standards tests based on the new curriculum. So we are piloting, as the member may have heard yesterday, mathematics standards tests in Senior 1, which is the old Grade 9, and Grade 6. We are off pilot now for new curriculum in Grade 3. We are moving on standards tests at Senior 4 as we introduce the brand-new totally completed curriculum in the year 2001.

The old curriculum in summary, then, remains old until it is revised. When it is revised, obviously it is then new, but it is seldom, if ever, totally different and totally new. We retain much that is still relevant. We retain much that is still appropriate. The "new" aspects are usually in the context of math, and they would revolve around areas such as these: more problem solving, more emphasis on literacy and communication, more integration of the math topics, more connections, for example, between number and problem solving.

So we say that in the traditional curriculum there are many good things. We are not throwing out the baby with the bathwater, but we are taking a look at it to ensure that it is relevant, to ensure that it is rigorous, to ensure that it is current, that it is updated, and that will involve actually changing a percentage of that curriculum. We are also saying that it will be in synch with the Western Protocol, that it will have clearly defined outcomes and goals, not ones that are left to the imagination of any particular school division, but ones that the province says by the end of Grade 3 students should know, and then we will list what they should know. These are our outcomes, and here is a framework within which the four western provinces and the two territories can develop curriculum and modify it to be regional, keeping the best of the old and introducing the benefits of the new.

So the member expresses surprise that some of these new tests are based upon curriculum that is not yet totally new but that has been published. The schedule of these things has been published on many, many occasions, and all educators in the field know this. The timetable and the blueprint for New Directions is really

well known, and I would ask if staff has any more information that might help the member be included amongst those who know this. Seeing as she is Education critic for the official opposition, we would feel it would be imperative that she be brought up to date and be given this knowledge.

Standards tests are based on—okay, just to sum it up again to make sure I have not misstated in any way, by the early 2000s, all the new curriculum and all the new standards tests will be in place.

In the meantime, we currently have in place the brand new curriculum for Grade 3 mathematics with the standards test that applies to it. We are using tests currently that are being developed as standards tests would be, but they will not be true standards tests until they are actually measured against the new curriculum and have that weight of a grade of percentage mark applied to them. Right now, while they are developed centrally, marked centrally, follow all the format of the standards tests as they will be, we are not classifying them as true standards tests until they are actually based upon the completed new curriculum.

In the meantime, those tests that we apply are based upon the curriculum that has been in place for some time. New curriculum in Grade 9, et cetera, in mathematics, for example, applied math, some places now are piloting curriculum, but it is still at pilot status. It is not the fully implemented new curriculum. I hope that helps. I will try to clarify more as we go on because it is important.

The deputy has just passed me an example that may help the member. This June, for example, we will introduce Grade 6 math and language arts pilot standards tests based on new curriculum, new curriculum pilot test. Concurrently we will have Senior 4 exams on old curricula, and they will not become modified standards tests until that curricula is new.

* (1500)

Ms. Friesen: Perhaps we could look at the Grade 12 test then. As I understand the minister, she is saying that the Grade 12 math test was based upon old curriculum.

Mrs. McIntosh: The Grade 12 science?

Ms. Friesen: Math. The Grade 12 math test was based upon old curriculum, but that what the test is looking for—and this is my assumption that I am looking for clarification on—is more problem solving, a problem-solving approach to the calculations and to the information that has been taught in the Grade 12 curriculum. It is looking for greater literacy and communication, in particular, and these are good things. I think that everybody in the system is looking at as well, and what I was asking the minister was is the test congruent with what has been taught? It seems to me, from what I am hearing from the minister, is that we have old curriculum, but we have a test which is looking to examine literacy and communications and problem solving.

Is that the case, or was the test done in accordance with the kinds of things which have been taught under the old curriculum? That was the question that I asked last time. I do not think the minister perhaps interpreted it appropriately, but that is what I was getting at.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member is asking essentially is our testing curriculum congruent? Absolutely, yes, Mr. Chairman. When I say that we are using a standards test format to test the existing curriculum and these tests will not be bona fide standards tests until they are being based on new curriculum, I am talking about a way of testing, and, absolutely, these are curriculum congruent. That is the very basis of fundamentals for fair assessment. You never test for what you have not taught. That would be grossly unfair.

The current mathematics curriculum has a section on problem solving. When we did our first testing on this, our first testing using a format for central development of a test, central marking for a test, curriculum congruent, we noted that there was trouble with problem solving. So we said the next fall, field, be alerted to the fact that we have noticed that while students do well in calculation, they are having difficulty with problem solving. Therefore when you go through this year's curriculum which has problem solving in it, we would like you to pay special attention to that aspect of the curriculum because it will be given a heavy emphasis on this year's test; this year's test,

then, developed centrally, administered and marked centrally, following a standards test format but not yet a full standards test, because it is not yet based on the new curriculum, and it does not yet have the weighting of grade attached to it that they will when the whole system is completely developed. So we say that it is very definitely curriculum congruent that is based upon what is being taught

At the Senior 4 math, the member is specifically asking is it congruent. I guess, I should say it is congruent with the curriculum. You know, if people are not teaching the curriculum, well, then, obviously it is not going to be based upon what has been taught. But on the assumption the curriculum is being taught, which is what I think we should be able to safely assume, the tests are based upon what should have been taught if one had used the existing curriculum because the existing curriculum has problem solving, communications, et cetera, in it. What it does not have that the new curricula will have is more specific illustrative examples of standards of performance and a stronger emphasis on the mechanics of problem solving, et cetera.

That is why at this stage, the centrally developed tests are using the format and the rigorous application of centralized marking but not yet being given the full weighting for grading purposes that they will be once the whole system, new curricula, new frameworks, new standards test, everything in place. At that point, then, the final mark will include that percentile weighting that New Directions calls for.

But all of these things come in stages, and the curriculum is being phased in that way, incrementally, so the impression the member had that one day students are learning a certain kind of math, and the next day it is all thrown out in the garbage and a completely new, different kind of math comes in is wrong. It is a more relevant way of teaching the same skill.

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Just for the record, that was not my impression. It is the impression the minister has.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Is this on a point of order?

Ms. Friesen: Yes, it is a point of order. I think the minister should stick to answering what she knows rather than trying to interpret what she thinks I know. I am interested in her response and I would like to ask her a further question on literacy, but that is not a point of order, I agree.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): On the point of order, it is a dispute over the facts. I would ask the minister to continue, though, with her answer, please.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: I will complete my answer. It is difficult trying to answer a question if I am not able to interpret the question. The member asked the question. I think she means something by it. I try to answer what she thinks. I appreciate the clarification as to what she is thinking. It helps me focus my answer.

The provincial examinations currently being administered at Senior 4 are curriculum matched with the existing curriculum, which has been used in schools since the early 1980s, since, in fact, the member's government ruled in Manitoba. Simultaneously to the majority of students and teachers at Senior 4 being engaged in teaching and learning related to that 1980s curriculum, Manitoba Education and Training has been developing new senior years curriculum. This new curriculum has been in a pilot phase with some students and teachers on a voluntary basis for the past five years.

So when the member hears about new curriculum and teachers and staff and parents discussing various aspects of new curriculum, critiquing various aspects of new curriculum, saying they like this about the new curriculum or they do not like that about the new curriculum, she should understand that we are talking about pilot curriculum that is done on a voluntary basis and has been for the past five years. The only one off pilot is Grade 3 mathematics and up until Grade 9.

So in the senior years, we are currently working on the development of new curriculum. This new curriculum has been in a pilot stage, as I say, on a voluntary basis for the past five years, and when this new curriculum is implemented system-wide and is being used by all teachers and students as the basis for teaching and learning, standards tests will be

administered at that time based on the new curriculum. We will have changes re Senior 2 to 4 new curriculum as compared to the old currently used in every place except where they are piloting 1980s curricula.

* (1510)

The old curricula had two choices for students: 40S, 40G; 40S is a high-level course with an emphasis on preparation for the study of mathematics at university; 40G is basically a watered-down version of the 40S. So you have 40S and a watered-down version of 40S. Both emphasize problem solving using a set problem or more rote methodology. The new curriculum will, of course, have a better way of teaching that and there will be different sets of curriculum. We will have four choices at Senior 4: Applied Math 40S; Precalculus Math 40S; Consumer Math 40S; and Accounting Systems 40S. They will all be 40S, but they will be offering different understandings of math from different perspectives.

The changed emphasis on problem solving will be that it will be investigative in methodology. Communication and literacy will be essential here. Data management, statistics and probability, spacial relations through four different courses for different purposes, all with articulation arrangements worked out with universities, colleges and business, et cetera. So our tests are congruent with existing curricula and, to ensure that we are using fair practices, I have some information on this that I could provide.

Just as a concluding statement on the actual process through which we are going, there are three final reviews done on each test before it is used. Those three final reviews consist of the department curriculum consultants, the test development committee, the independent external review committee or panel, and they are vetted through those people before they are piloted. They are piloted for a very long period of time, but everything we do, whether we are basing the new way of testing on old or new curricula, we use the principles for fair assessment.

I want to thank the member for her question about curriculum congruency because I would like to describe the principles for fair assessment and state for the record unequivocally our very strict adherence to and

belief in the principles of fair assessment. If I could just for the record indicate what those are, Mr. Chairman, they are found, I should indicate, under Reporting on Student Progress and Achievement: A Policy Handbook for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents, which we put out for the field under my signature as Minister of Education and Training. Every school in Manitoba has these principles that the Department of Education mandates as essential for proper assessment. You can find this on page 19 in that booklet.

It says that assessment methods should be appropriate for and compatible with the purpose and context of the assessment. Methods should be developed or chosen that directly evaluate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours of students so that interference and possible misinterpretations can be minimized. Methods should be clearly related to the learning goals and outcomes and standards and be compatible with the teaching and learning experience. Methods should be comprehensive, systemically applied and an integral part of teaching and learning. When developing or choosing methods, consideration should be given to the consequences of the decisions to be made in light of the obtained information. A wide variety of methods should be used to ensure comprehensive and consistent measurement of student knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours.

Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Methods should be suited to the background, prior experiences, and special needs of students. Content and language that would generally be viewed as sensitive, sexist, or offensive in nature should be avoided. Instruments translated into a second language or transferred from another context or location should be accompanied by evidence that interferences based on these instruments are valid for the intended purpose. All aspects of the assessment process should be open to review and scrutiny.

Then it goes on, and there is another section that lists eight critical points for collecting assessment information. Students should be provided with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills being assessed. Students should be told why and how information is being collected and the purpose

for which this information will be used, and assessment procedures should be used under conditions suitable to its purpose and form.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

In assessments involving observations, check lists or rating skills, the number of characteristics to be assessed at one time should be small enough and concretely described so the observations could be made in an accurate manner. The directions provided to students should be clear, complete and appropriate for the ability, age and grade level of the students. In assessments involving selection items, the directions should encourage students to answer all items without threat of penalty.

When collecting assessment information, interactions with students should be appropriate and consistent. Unanticipated circumstances that interfere with the collection of assessment information should be noted and recorded, and a written policy should guide decisions about the use of alternative procedures for collecting assessment information from students with special needs and students whose proficiency in the language of instruction is inadequate for them to respond verbally or in writing in the anticipated manner. The procedure should be guided by an individual education plan.

Then, to save time, Mr. Chairman, perhaps I will not read the next two pages, but I will indicate the heading of them is Judging or Scoring Student Performance, and this outlines six points; Summarizing and Interpreting Results outlines seven points. These points indicate procedures for judging or scoring student performance as to their appropriateness for the assessment method and how to apply and monitor them consistently. It also outlines procedures for summarizing and interpreting assessment results in a way that should provide accurate and informative representation of a student's performance in relation to the learning goals and outcomes for the reporting period.

Those can be found of pages 21 and 22 of the Reporting on Student Progress and Achievement: A Policy Handbook for Teachers, Administrators and Parents published under my name, the Minister of

Education and Training, for Renewing Education: New Directions.

So everybody who teaches in Manitoba has this information. It is in the schools, it is everywhere, and now it is provided for the Education critic of the official opposition so that she too can understand what we mean by fair assessment. I encourage her to read it when she has time.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister to tell us where or to point us in the direction in the old curriculum that was tested at Grade 12, where the emphasis was or where the instruction was on literacy and communication. I can understand the group does not have it here, but if they could forward it next time and perhaps outline the sections that have dealt with that. It is obviously an issue in the summaries, at least at the 40G level, something that is new in emphasis and one area that the evaluations note students need improvement in.

So I am wondering again, since this was testing an old curriculum, where this was emphasized in the old curriculum, how much it was emphasized, essentially trying to look at why students fared badly on that. I think it is in the 40S one. So I am looking at that for next time, perhaps.

* (1520)

I wanted to ask the minister some questions that have been drawn to my attention by people outside of Winnipeg, and that is the relationship of the Copernican system to the testing program. There are some concerns that in some divisions who are perhaps newly adapt to the Copernican system that the exams have come at a time when the full curriculum has not been taught, two weeks, for example, before the end of the course. Possibly 10 percent, 20 percent of the course has not been addressed in the classroom.

Is the minister aware of any situations like that? What kind of responses has she given to schools which have encountered difficulties in that area, and could she tell us what her plans are for the future in that and in enabling schools which have a variety of approaches to timetabling to be treated fairly in the examination system?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member had asked a question about the mathematics curriculum and the literacy and language across the curriculum, and we do have that. I can provide that information now. It does not have to wait until another day because it is just something we are that familiar with because, you know, in working on a fair assessment, of course, these are things that are at the top of our minds, so staff has that information which I can provide her now. Her second question was on the Copernican calendar which I would also address for her.

We began working with schools and school divisions on literacy and language across the curriculum in the '80s. In fact, the department had begun to do that in the mid-'80s prior to us coming to office, and that increased emphasis has built on literacy and language across the curriculum with an increased emphasis on this kind of implementation activity in the late '80s as it became clearer and clearer that literacy and communication would be the emphasis of new curricula and also the new math curriculum.

To indicate how the Math 40S curriculum and exam are broken down, the math curriculum in 40S has these following components: polynomials and rational functions form 25 percent, circular functions and trigonometry form 38 percent, analytical geometry 12 percent, exponents and logs 13 percent, sequences and signs 12 percent. Under the linguistic aspects: for knowledge 5 percent, for comprehension and application 65 percent, for analysis, synthesis and evaluation 30 percent.

For the Math 40G, the core objectives: consumer math 36 percent, algebra 38 percent, trigonometry 13 percent, statistics 13 percent.

Cognitive levels: knowledge 7.5 percent, comprehension and applications 75 percent, analysis, synthesis and evaluation 17.5 percent.

Departmental staff are working with schools as far as the Copernican system is concerned, using the Copernican system for timetabling, and, in fact, they have a meeting coming up with these schools later this month. The Copernican timetabling is a quarter system. The schools that follow it accommodate the test schedule by scheduling the testable subject in the

quarter in which the test will be administered. Schools that have not done so are strongly encouraged to do so.

Just to give you an example, in September, the second quarter on the Copernican timetable, the students be encouraged to timetable math and write the provincial exam for the second quarter in January, and similarly, to timetable English language arts and write the provincial test exam in June.

There are only a handful of schools using this type of scheduling: Miami Collegiate, Ashern collegiate, are two that come to mind. But that is how they can get around it, and departmental staff are working with those schools interested in that, interested in going to quarters, to find the most comfortable way of doing this and achieving this for those who are utilizing that calendar. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the first part of the question on literacy and communication in mathematics, the minister's answer dealt with literacy and language across the curriculum—fair enough. My question is specifically oriented towards the congruence between the curriculum and the testing. What I was asking the minister is where in the old curriculum is the communication and the literacy of mathematics dealt with? I assumed that the minister did not have the curriculum documents with her.

What I was looking for was some direction as to where that was contained, so that the percentages of knowledge 5 percent, comprehension application 65 percent, really were not answering the question. The question dealt with where in the curriculum is this pinpointed. Again, I am getting back to that issue of congruence. So maybe we can start there, and I do want to come back to Copernican system, because I have had some concerns raised with me from another part of the province.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just with the two questions, just back to the first question, I was, in fact, referring to the use of language in the math exam. I did talk across the curricula, but I was also being specific to the math exam. Just to repeat it, using the 40S exam as an example, I indicated that in addition to the

mathematical components which I had identified, we also had in terms of use of language and communication 65 percent based on comprehension.

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: It is not a point of order, but I want to clarify for the minister. I am not talking about the test. I have used the word “curriculum” over and over again. Where in the curriculum? What page in the curriculum document? What chapter of the curriculum document?

I know that you do not have it here. I assume you do not have it here, and I am quite prepared to look at it next time, but that is what I am looking for is how in the old curriculum were people instructed, encouraged, advised on how to teach. So the testing, while it is interesting, and I understand what the minister is saying, what I am looking for is what the curriculum says.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member was correct. She did not have a point of order.

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Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to conclude.

Mrs. McIntosh: I appreciate the opportunity to indicate that I am talking about the curriculum here. But if the member is asking, the things that were showing on the test, standards test, is it curriculum congruent? In other words, does the curriculum contain comprehension? Does the curriculum contain the ability to use language to do analysis, synthesis and evaluation? I am saying to the member that 30 percent of the curriculum utilizes the way in which you use language to analyse, to synthesize and to evaluate.

Mr. Chairman, 65 percent of the curriculum deals with the ability to comprehend mathematical language used in problem solving, et cetera. Five percent of the curriculum indicates an ability to use language to express knowledge of some sort. Now I do not have a page number and I would suggest that the curriculum may not have a statement that would say at three o'clock on September 4 everybody will turn page 20 and do this, but if the member wishes to go back and

bring more detail than we can do that. But what I am wanting to say to her is that when I explained about those percentages in those areas I was talking about the curriculum and the percentage of emphasis you would find in the curriculum. Inasmuch as all our tests reflect the curriculum and are developed using the curriculum as a base, then I can state that the aspects of the test dealing with mathematical, literacy and communication are a direct reflection of the emphasis placed on this in the curriculum.

I may need to get into some more detail about mathematical literacy and communication. Literacy and communication refers to the role that language plays in learning across the curriculum, not just across curricula like language arts and math and science, et cetera, but within a specific curriculum. Language and thinking are inextricably linked. In math, this linkage occurs in two areas. The language of mathematics as a symbol system, and using language, words, numbers, graphs, pictograms, charts, diagrams, all now known as the area of communications, and always have been communications but not understood as such necessarily in years gone by, to demonstrate an understanding of mathematics as both a language and a symbol system.

* (1540)

I am not sure if the member understands the intricate connection between the tests and the curriculum, or maybe does not want to accept that the linkage and the intertwining of curriculum and test are as tight as they are. We will do as we were challenged to do with the aboriginal aspects in math. At the aboriginal one, at a later sitting, we tabled an analysis. We can do this with math, table an analysis of one of the Math 40 courses to demonstrate how the emphasis on mathematical communications is bedded in the curriculum and inextricably intertwined.

So you can bring her back additional information, but I think those aspects of comprehension and analysis that are in the test are also in the curriculum and would not be in the test unless they were in the curriculum. I have given her the percentages you will see in the curriculum, and we will bring back more information for her, using, we will pick one as an example and bring it back to help her understand what we mean there.

Ms. Friesen: I look forward to that, because I do not think we are going very far with this discussion. I wonder if the minister could address the Copernican system.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: I do believe that the member has raised a couple of points of order already today to ask that the rules be adhered to on the assumption that my answers were not to her liking and in her opinion did not adhere to the rules. Certainly the comment that the member has just made absolutely is against the rules in every way, shape, and form, and I would ask that she withdraw it. She said we are not going anywhere. If we are not going anywhere we might as well all leave.

I am sitting here trying my best to explain to her concepts that seem to be beyond her grasp, and if she feels we are not going anywhere, then let us leave or she could withdraw the statement and we will stay and I will continue trying to explain to her that which she seems to have trouble understanding. If she does not want me to make it clear, I can give short, one-word answers, and then she will complain that I am not giving detail. Let us be honourable members here.

Ms. Friesen: On the point of order, well, it is not a point of order, I guess, the same as others, and I look forward, as I said, to the minister bringing the material to the Legislature, because I do not, and I repeat, I do not think we are going anywhere with this discussion. I am not making myself clear to the minister and I am not getting the answers that help make it clear to me, so I look forward to the material coming and maybe I can look at it and we will take it from there. I do not know what the minister is so concerned about.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Ms. Friesen: I want to go back to the Copernican system. The minister indicates that her staff is working with divisions so that they can deal with the issue of the timing of the exams and their ability to cover the whole curriculum. I have heard from schools in the Dauphin

area who are new to the Copernican system that the exams for them came early. They were not able to complete the curriculum. Now, has the minister heard that? Has the minister dealt with that issue in specific terms?

Mrs. McIntosh: No.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us whether she believes that the Copernican system is adaptable to the testing system that is in place at the moment? Are there any adaptations that the minister is looking at making that would help a situation such as has been described to me?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes and no.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us what yes refers to and what no refers to. You know, really, the minister is being not very helpful on this. It really does not read very well in Hansard, but that is her choice.

Mrs. McIntosh: The first response is a response to her first question. The second response is a response to her second question. She asked me two questions. I answered both of them in the order in which she asked them.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to get some information from the minister for the benefit of the citizens of Manitoba who have particularly applied to me and asked this question. I gather that the question has not been raised with the minister but she does feel that some adaptations can be made. Is that the case?

Mrs. McIntosh: No.

Ms. Friesen: I am sure the minister is aware that I will be sending out this Hansard to the people who have raised this issue with me. I wonder if the minister would care to be more specific for those people who have raised the issue?

Mrs. McIntosh: Perhaps the member could ask the questions in such a way that I can give an answer that is more than just a yes or a no.

In the rest of this session, as the member knows, when I have said yes and given an explanation, she has

expressed displeasure with the explanation in almost every instance and has asked that we get on with the business. So we are actually going to be more specific. Would she like to ask me—

Points of Order

Ms. Friesen: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, the minister is putting on the record that I have expressed dissatisfaction with all of her answers. That is not the case.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, I am pleased to hear that, Mr. Chairman. It sounded like that, the sarcasm, the tone, whatever, but—

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

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to conclude her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member had asked a couple of questions. One required a yes; one required a no. No, I have not had those specific concerns raised to me. The other question was: do we think this can be adapted? The answer to that is yes, and I believe I answered that with yes. The member has asked: will we be adapting our scheduling to suit that form of timetabling? And the answer to that was no. I believe I answered all of those with the straightforward yes or no.

If the member wants to go back and review Hansard or Question Period, you will find many occasions when the member has said: would the minister please stop giving detail and just answer with a simple yes or no. There are many times in Hansard the member has insisted that I answer with just a straightforward yes or no; yet, when I do it, I am criticized for not providing detail. When I provide the detail, I am criticized because she does not like the detail.

The answer to this question—I am going to give some detail and hope the member will not object to me doing this. My staff will be meeting—as I told the member in an earlier answer today, less than an hour ago—this month with the schools that use this system. It is just a couple of schools to help them with their scheduling, so that the schools will be able to write provincial exams. I answered that question less than an hour ago with that information to this member, and I am now repeating it because maybe she was engaged in conversation or something and did not hear my answer earlier.

Schools using the Copernican system have written the Senior 4 math and language examinations in the past two years. We believe that with the current testing schedule, the scheduling is possible for the handful of schools using this. The schools have been communicating with my staff, and they are aware of some of the things that need to be addressed in order for this to be accomplished—and I did state this same information, as I say, less than an hour ago. If the member has a different question on this topic, I would be pleased to answer it.

Ms. Friesen: The minister mentioned two schools, Miami and Ashern. Are there are other schools that her staff will be meeting with in this system?

* (1550)

Mrs. McIntosh: As I indicated, the staff is in constant communication with schools using the Copernican system, and there are many advantages to the Copernican system that schools have found to their liking. No system, of course, is perfect. Some prefer a double semester, like fall and spring, and some prefer nonsemester. So the Copernican system is fairly new, but then the member has been in communication with all of them, so she will know that.

Now, the member I presume knows the schools—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would not want the minister to put false information on the record. I have not been in touch with all of them. I am asking the minister who she will be meeting with, or who her staff will be meeting with in this?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order, just a clarification.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, I did not mean anything by that. The member had said the schools had been contacting her. I did not mean to imply that she had been reaching out to them. The Copernican schools have contacted the member as she indicated, and she will be forwarding this Hansard to them, and through this Hansard I greet them and hope that all is going well with them, especially places where they are using distance education—Miami, et cetera. So hi Miami, hi Ashern, through Hansard to you at the expense of the member for Wolseley who can afford to mail out this stuff.

I just want to state for the record—I do not mean to tease—that those schools have adopted a particular form of timetabling known as the Copernican system. This was a local decision and was done for administrative reasons or timetabling reasons that they thought would be of maximum benefit to their students, and we respect and appreciate that and acknowledge the benefits of this system for some people.

In developing timetabling, divisions need to also bear in mind the context of the requirements of exam administration, and to do otherwise requires the province to be the one to change the exam scheduling that is suited to the overwhelming majority for a few, or else to create separate exams and sittings for the few, which as the member has repeatedly said is costly, and the member is feeling that we spend far too much money on exams as it is. So I know—and I am not imputing anything here, because the member has categorically stated it very clearly that we spend too much money on the exams. The member has said that very clearly on numerous occasions. I can assume, I think safely from that, that she would not want us spending yet more money to develop a set of exams for a few.

Having said that, we do believe that by scheduling, for example, in the second quarter the math exam to be written, scheduling math for the second quarter so the exam can be written in January or scheduling LA for

the fourth quarter so the exam can be written in June, will coincide with the completion of the course and the provincial exam. As I have said twice now, my staff will be meeting with these schools later this month, and the member has asked for the names of these schools, although since they have communicated with her, I think she must know them. Nonetheless, I am pleased to state for the record: Norway House, Ashern, Miami—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, if I could make the same point of order that I made last time, I did not indicate anywhere that all these schools had communicated with me, nor did I say that I had communicated with them.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts, I guess.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the member, I was certain, earlier today said that schools operating on the Copernican system had expressed concern to her about the scheduling of exams. [interjection] Oh, a school. Okay, the impression we gained here was that there were many schools. So I am grateful to have that clarified. The member now wishes to have the names of the other schools, which I am pleased to provide her: Norway House, Ashern, Miami, Dauphin, Gimli. These are people who have confirmed their attendance at the meeting with my staff. Only Norway House has yet to confirm. The others have confirmed that they will be meeting with the staff to work out a schedule that will be mutually acceptable without having to incur the cost of extra exams and meet the needs of the students and the divisional staff.

We can provide the member with names of those school divisions for her mail out if she would like them, so that she can send them the Hansard because we do have those mailing addresses in our office for her information. Mind you, they know that information already, but she may wish to have them note that it was discussed here in the Chamber.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask the minister about a comparison of results for those

students who are on the semester system and those who are on the full-year system. It has, I think, been a common commentary in the national exams that those students who work on a semester system are not—I think I have it right—doing as well in examinations as those students who are on the full-year system. Has the minister conducted an evaluation of her own exams along the lines of that comparison?

Mrs. McIntosh: No.

*(1600)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I understand the minister is saying, no, there has been no evaluation comparing students who worked on the semester system compared with those who were on the full year. Is that correct?

Mrs. McIntosh: That is correct. The answer is no.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister explain why, given the analysis of national tests, such an evaluation has not been done? Is it because there are not enough results yet of both types to be statistically valid? Is it something that the minister intends to do in the future? Does the minister have a position on looking at those comparisons between semester students and full-year students?

Mrs. McIntosh: There are several questions there. I will try to answer each of them clearly and briefly. We do not collect the data by type of school. Schools would be analyzing their results and consider many different factors with respect to their results. We are looking at only one factor here which could be limiting the analysis. As the member indicates, we are also looking at an indicators project that would put a whole series of things into context such as semestering, et cetera.

At the present time, we do not have that nor do we consider it our place to tell divisions what kind of timetabling to do. The school divisions have the authority and the ability to make decisions regarding timetabling. It is called local autonomy. We support it very much. We will provide well-researched, well-developed, well-prepared examinations that are curriculum congruent. We will provide good curriculum which is in the process of being developed

and, in some cases, is complete or nearly complete. We will ultimately have a series of indicators that we can publish along with test results. At the current time, we do not have a lot of the indicators nor, in some cases, do we feel that it would be our place to attempt to change any of those indicators by virtue of dictating to school divisions how to timetable their subjects.

The literature and the research to date on the Copernican system has had mixed reviews. I am sure that the Manitoba schools are looking to enhance the strength that they have been cited in that. So schools on this system, or any other system, would be responsible to analyze their own data on our exams to see whether there is a cause and effect relationship between the exam results on a school-by-school basis and the type of scheduling scheme or any other factors that may, in their opinion, influence test results.

Then they can plan accordingly after they get—we will provide, as I say, the high quality, world class standards tests. We will provide the best marking schemes possible. We will base it on curriculum, we will send back school-by-school profiles. The divisions can then assess their social demographics, their timetables, their teaching ability, their ethnocentric makeup, all of those things, and decide which of those are impacting their test results and put in place school plans which we have said they must do to try to change the results, if they wish to change the results and we presume that divisions would always seek to improve.

SAIP is an indicator's program, and that is good. Our provincial testing program has a student achievement focus, and that is good. We will ultimately have an indicator's criteria for ourselves, which will be good. The student achievement focus in and of itself is good. We will not, at least at this stage, we have no intention of interfering with school divisions' ability to set their own schedule as far as semesters are concerned. That will be up to them and they will have to weigh whether or not they feel it has a positive or negative impact on their examination results.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to pick up one other thing from yesterday's Hansard, because I think it left perhaps a misunderstanding on the record. The minister said—and I am on page 2561 at the bottom, if the minister has it there. She left the impression, I think, that Year One,

the new Year One at the University of Manitoba is a remedial program. I can quote: “we have year one in place at the University of Manitoba, because this problem was not addressed years ago. Everybody knows it and everybody is challenged by it.” Did the minister mean to leave that impression that Year One is a remedial program?

Mrs. McIntosh: We are off topic a little bit, but I was talking at that point about the types of things that have occurred because the standards in high school were not good. Year One at the University of Manitoba is not a remedial program per se, although it does certainly help address the remedial aspect that the university currently has in place.

* (1610)

The University of Manitoba, as you know, has had to put in remedial courses in English and maths for first-year students at the university. Those have been in place for some time. The member also knows that the university for some time has been talking about having to bring in remedial programs for first-year students. Many people refer to Year One mistakenly as the remedial year, but the fact is that Year One does cover off the problems that would not have been addressed had they not had Year One.

You just have to look at how Year One works to know that its existence has done a lot of really good things for the university and, in addition to all of that, in an incidental way has provided a solution to the problem of those students who required remedial work, although the university still has the remedial courses available for Grade 12 students who are not able to do the first-year work. But Year One is not a remedial program. Many people believe it is a remedial program because, for the better part of a decade or longer, the university has talked about the need to do something like have a remedial year.

An Honourable Member: Actually, several hundred years it has been talking about it—[interjection]

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, certainly since the demise of provincial exams because—[interjection] When I was—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the honourable ladies, but could I ask members to wait until one is finished before entering into the debate. We might get the answer's conclusion that way. The honourable minister, to conclude.

Mrs. McIntosh: When I was a student, we had to take provincial exams in high school to go into university. There was not the same concern about people not being ready to take first-year university that there was in years after the provincial exams were dropped. You could see that change quite dramatically over the last couple of decades, because to pass a provincial exam you had to have a certain standard. They were 100 percent pass-fail exams. To pass them you had to have a certain amount of knowledge which was a prerequisite for first-year university. Once that was lost, there began a steady decline, culminating in universities saying we need remedial courses in English, we need remedial courses in math, and they put those remedial courses in place.

There then followed many years of discussions at the university and in the general public, where people were saying you know, really what we need to do with these kids is just take them in and have them repeat their whole Grade 12. We need a whole remedial first year.

When Year One came in, a lot of people initially thought this is finally the remedial year that the university has long threatened to bring in or long said that it needed. It is not, of course. It is an attempt to provide a base year, out of which other disciplines can flow. So it is a base year, and from that, you can then enter in many cases into second year of certain other disciplines. At the same time, however, it does give tremendous assistance to those who come in who need extra work in language arts or math. They are forced to take those before they can proceed on to other disciplines, and it gives them some extra time on task on those subject areas to ensure a better performance in second, third, and fourth year.

So, no, I did not mean to imply that it was a remedial year. What I did mean to imply—and I maybe did not state it clearly—but I did definitely mean to indicate that discussions about having that were in place for a long time, and there are many who still believe that Year One is a remedial year or was put in place to address

the perception of meeting the needs for remedial work at the university, and that is a fact.

Ms. Friesen: Well, Mr. Chairman, I gather you are suggesting a recess, and perhaps it would be better if we came back to this when we get to the post-secondary education area, because the minister is right that there is a perception that this is a remedial year. It is not a remedial year, and I would have hoped that the minister would have been able to clarify that. Perhaps when we get to the post-secondary area we can clarify that more precisely.

It is my understanding that University One has not begun yet, that it begins this fall. The minister was, I think, switching tenses, so I am not sure if she meant to or whether she wanted to clarify that.

The issue of universities being dissatisfied with the quality of their students on entrance I think is an age-old one. It goes back hundreds of years. I do not think you can open a book on this subject without finding an introduction that talks about the 17th Century and professors saying the same thing about the lack of preparation.

I think the minister also might want to feed into her discussion the impact of mature students upon the universities and mature students who come in quite often without recent educational experience and for whom the universities generally across Canada—I am not speaking here particularly about University of Manitoba—but universities have made a tremendous effort, particularly since the 1940s, to welcome mature students, to welcome returning students and to welcome students who have not necessarily had the formal requirements for universities. All of those have had an impact upon the nature of the universities, and it is certainly a change from the 1920s and does require some remedial efforts in some areas.

As the minister said, yes, there are still and will I believe into the next century be university professors who will not be satisfied with the preparation level of their incoming students in some or perhaps all disciplines.

So my intent in asking this question was to try to clarify what University One was. The minister has

really given both perspectives. She is giving the one that I think is a common one and I think a misleading one, and she is also saying, yes, it is one that leads into second year, it is one that is not a remedial one. So it seems to me that her response has simply muddied the waters a little more. I was simply looking for the minister to make a clear statement. Perhaps it is better done in the post-secondary area when we have got a longer time to discuss this.

Mrs. McIntosh: I agree, but I think it is important for the record to note before we go off this topic that the answer I just provided, I do not know how much clearer I can make it than saying it is absolutely not a remedial year. I stated in two or three different ways, this is not a remedial year, it is not a remedial year, it is not a remedial year, and then the member says she hopes that soon I can clarify that it is not a remedial year. I do not know how much more clear I can make it. It is not a remedial year. I have said it now about 10 times, and I hope the member will not come back and say she is going to ask me again to clarify what I mean by it is not a remedial year.

What I mean by that is it is not a remedial year, but, and this where the member takes exception, it also has the advantage of ensuring that students who come to university without good grounding in English, for example, will take an English or first-year English before they go off into some other discipline. I do not mean just a first-year English, but they will take some courses that they might not otherwise have taken that serve to enhance skills that may have been somewhat lacking. That is not the purpose that it is there for, but it does provide that good grounding and it does address concerns about students coming without a thorough grounding in the basics before they go off into their specialties.

It is not a remedial year, but it has more functions than just one. It is a multifunctional initiative and, like any initiative, it has side effects that are of great benefit that the member maybe does not want it identified that this could be really helpful for students who might otherwise have had to take a remedial course in something. I do not see why she is afraid to acknowledge that. It has nothing to do with whether or not Year One—

* (1620)

Ms. Friesen: Afraid to acknowledge what? Ridiculous.

Mrs. McIntosh: You know, Mr. Chairman, I hope that the member will never again make any reference to me interrupting after the kinds of displays I have been getting this afternoon. I am tired of them, and maybe it is time for a recess because the flinging of the hands and the great dramatic thrusting of the hair and the muttered comments we really do not need in this Chamber from someone who purports to be a dignified person. It is perhaps time for a recess. Let her catch her breath and pull herself together and come back and we can have some—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, my response was because the minister was again putting words into my mouth. She was putting on the record things which I have not said, I have not expressed. I have tried to do it fairly consistently.

I have tried also to correct the member when she has put statements on the record that I have not said. I have tried to do it calmly and coolly. The minister continues with that kind of argument. It is quite unwarranted. It is unnecessary and, yes, it does lead to frustration. So maybe, Mr. Chairman, it is time we took a break.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order, and I do believe it is time we take a 10-minute break.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, the honourable minister, to conclude.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just to very quickly conclude the answer here. The university, in conclusion, University One is not a remedial year. It is, in fact, an approach to give a more common initial foundation without causing delay in the overall granting of a degree and its entry to later faculties of choice into, in many cases, second year or some other level. I am supportive of the leadership of the University of Manitoba. I want that to

go on the record as well, as they strive to change and alter approaches to their administration and governance.

University One may not be appropriate for all universities, but I do know that it is an approach that seems bold and I think will be sound for the University of Manitoba. Some of the public do interpret it as a remedial year. It is not, but it will help people having to take remedial courses. That is a side effect that maybe was not intended but one that I see as beneficial. That is my response to that until we get to Post-Secondary.

Mr. Chairperson: Maybe we will take a 10-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 4:23 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:42 p.m.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about the SAIP tests, the Achievement Indicator Program. There has been certainly at least the mathematics one in Manitoba in the last year, I think with results in January, and the results were not that different than they were in the previous test. I wonder if the minister had an explanation for that.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member is asking about the SAIP tests, and why the incomes are similar and what thoughts we might have on it. We have taken a look at that, and there are several factors that spring to mind. None of these things will be totally conclusive because much of it is subjective in nature, but we take a look at the fact that the tests were administered four years apart, one in 1993, and then again in 1997, and they are testing 13-year-olds and 16-year-olds.

We may discover that with the 13-year-olds, for example, that with our New Directions coming into being around 1995 that the 13-year-olds will have had the benefit of one year of new curriculum. Some 16-year-olds, because it is on a pilot status still, may have had one year of new curriculum, not long enough to

really judge the full impact the way that we will be able to judge once we are administering SAIP tests to students who have had the benefit of those first three years of learning, building a really solid foundation.

One thing that we do know is that where the first three years of learning have been really strong and rigorous and relevant that over time they will do, in a cumulative way, better and better. These students have not yet had that benefit. We may see some changes in future SAIP tests. We are expecting to. It is too soon to be conclusive because, as I say, it is hypothetical at this point, but they have not had that extensive exposure to new curriculum that we hope will affect changes in the results.

* (1650)

The others, of course, will be who writes the test, what is the sampling, et cetera. We do know that the test results were slightly different but, as the member has said, similar. In '97, for example, 59 percent of 13-year-olds in Canada, right across the nation, were able to perform at Level II or above, but in Manitoba 52 percent of the English program students and 62 percent of French Immersion and Francais students performed at this level.

The proportions are slightly higher for Manitoba students than in 1993. In 1993 we saw that 64 percent of 13-year-olds in Canada achieved that, 48 percent of English program Manitoba students, and 61 percent of French Immersion and Francais. So we see that the Manitoba students had improved slightly but, again, the comparison to Canada falls short.

In the mathematics problem solving—that was the math content that I have just been referring to—for 13-year-olds we saw some different statistics emerging. Mr. Chairman, 45 percent of the English program students and 52 percent of French Immersion and Francais were able to perform at Level II or above. That level was attained by 52 percent of 13-year-olds across Canada.

But because only four problem-solving questions were common to '93 and '97, it is not a direct comparison. The questions were different. The 1997 SAIP mathematics II assessment does not provide the

data necessary for comparing student problem-solving abilities to the 1993 levels of achievement at the provincial level.

They only had four problem-solving questions that were common to those two exams and there was a four-year gap between them, so there we cannot do the same kind of direct comparison that we could with the content, for example, where you can achieve a more direct comparison. So those are some facts that we have taken a look at and we know that we have to continue, as we have been, emphasizing the problem solving and making sure that people understand the rationale and the reasoning for emphasizing those various aspects of problem solving.

As good, solid bases are built, and we believe you will see these test results begin to move upwards, but we do not yet have a track record of students who have begun New Directions and moved through right up to the age 13. Everything is still new.

Ms. Friesen: Saskatchewan had somewhat similar results to Manitoba, and the minister in Saskatchewan, I believe, planned to initiate some research on it. I wondered if the minister had done the same, or whether the material that was put out at the same time as the press release, some of which the minister has repeated here, is the basic analysis that has been done or is intended to be done on these tests, the comparison between the two.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, yes, Minister Atkinson has expressed concern about testing, the SAIP tests in particular, and has some questions about them, particularly as they apply to small schools. She is asking that they take a look at that component for Saskatchewan, and I respect her desire to do that.

We, as ministers of Education across Canada, through the council support the SAIP tests, notwithstanding that a particular minister at a given point may wish to question aspects of the test and analyse their impact for her particular province, which is her right and her responsibility if she has concerns.

We do not share those same concerns. The other ministers and the minister from Saskatchewan, as well, are constantly, through the council, asking the council

to ensure the integrity of the SAIP tests and the samplings that are done. I am sure that Minister Atkinson, in asking for her sampling, will bring that information back to the council, if she feels it validates any of the concerns that she has expressed as they apply to Saskatchewan. We support her in that, although, as I say, we do not share the same concerns that she has.

We do not have the technical data yet from the last go around, so the analysis is not yet possible. But we will be interested in what Minister Atkinson discovers, if anything. I am sure she will share those ideas and thoughts with council. I know the deputy ministers across the provinces meet regularly, as do the assistant deputy ministers. They share thoughts on these issues as well, and information, particularly, information that they think might have national relevancy or relevancy to provinces other than their own.

So we will be continuing our program of bringing in relevant and rigorous curricula with standards exams and expect that over time we will see our own provincial results on the SAIP tests show improvement. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in the SAIP tests and believe that they are very useful for us, and we do not share concerns about their validity with Saskatchewan. We rather are supporting this concept along with the other ministers in council.

* (1700)

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask some questions again about Desktop Services. In this section 16.2. (c), there is \$79,000 allocated for Desktop Services, and yet we have employees numbering eventually 61.5. Now, if I look at the other, \$79,000 for 61 employees is a much lower ratio, much lower per desktop, I assume, charge than we are finding elsewhere. For example, in Human Resource Services there was \$26,000 allocated for 12 people, leaving aside, let us leave aside the whole issue of the School for the Deaf one. That seems to me rather low, and I wondered why. Are there not desktop services being used in assessment, or is some other system being used?

Mrs. McIntosh: We are going back, and the staff that was here at the time is no longer here, but I can indicate to the member this one very simple, clear fact that I think should make it clear, and that is that an annual

per-seat or per-workstation basic cost of \$2,385 was calculated for the desktop management initiative. That basic cost includes core services for school program divisions, workstations to be transitioned into the managed environment, the standard office software suite and the provincial data network, and that is the cost. It is the same percent as the per cost was before. The total is as the member indicates, and those are correct figures.

Ms. Friesen: So it seems to me a considerable portion of this section of the department will not be covered under the Systemhouse contract. Will they have e-mail addresses? Will they be having computer services? I mean, at \$2,000 per station we are not coming close to covering 61 employees.

Mrs. McIntosh: I never said that. I told her what the cost was, and that includes e-mail and training and costs. That is the basic cost per unit. It is not high cost. It is \$2,385, and that is the cost. I never said they were going to have e-mail or any of that.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the point I was making was that the \$80,000—let us call it \$80,000, the line actually says \$79.6. It is \$2,000 per desktop, though we are not actually covering the 61 people that the department is estimating will be in place at the end of this year. So I am wondering if the other staff are covered in some other way for services like e-mail, et cetera, and for other desktop services.

* (1710)

Mrs. McIntosh: All of the existing 45.5 assessment staff that are currently there are covered for e-mail, for training, et cetera, out of that \$79.6, and so will the 16 new staff be. But in addition, new equipment will be bought for the 16 staff out of the capital line. So ultimately then, the 61 people will be receiving e-mail, training, et cetera, out of that \$79.6, and they will have equipment as well but the equipment will come out of the capital line for the 16 new people.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me whether the 16 new computers are part of the Systemhouse contract, and if she could, could she tell me how many in total new computers will be provided under the Systemhouse contract?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, I have some information here that I can provide. We are going back to an area that was already covered, and the appropriate staff, our systems person is no longer with us. We had Mr. Greg Baylis here as you recall the other day to answer questions on this line. So he is our systems person. That subject was concluded. He left, and we now are back to answering questions about it. So we will not have the same detail as we would have when we were actually doing this line with the appropriate staff person here.

Nonetheless, the Assessment people know what they will be receiving, and we can provide that to the member. We may have to go back and recall our systems person to get specific answers. I have to emphasize, as well, that this contract does not rest with the Department of Education. It rests with Government Services. This is a Government Services contract, not an Education contract.

So the details of it are probably better asked in the department which is responsible for it, which is—[interjection] Well, I would hope, if that is the case, then we are not playing games here. The member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has just informed us that the Education critic already has the details in her possession, in which case, why is she asking the question? I presume he is making a joke, I would hope. Otherwise it is a terrible abuse of the \$10,000 a day the taxpayers spend to run this Assembly on a daily basis.

The member asked why do we not get informed, from his seat, and I say to you that I brought the proper staff here when we were doing this line. This line has been passed. We are going back over it for additional information with that staffperson not here. Now, I can take him away from his duties again and bring him here, but I remind the member that if he is playing games, this is most inappropriate. It does cost many thousands of dollars to run this Assembly every day. We are not here to play games. We are here to provide what information we can and, given that we are off line and that we are actually talking about a contract held in another department, the member's witticisms are ill placed. He would be well advised, if he is here to observe, to simply observe and not to be interjecting, as you have cautioned us not to, these extraneous comments.

I can provide this information to the member in answer to her question, and it is this, that all 61.5 staff will have a computer; 41.5 of them have one now that were purchased previously, and we will now be purchasing 16 new computers, which will be made available. We believe they will be via Systemhouse, but we will need to confirm that with our systems person or with Government Services. But the computers will be there and we are fairly positive that the 16 computers would be provided as part of the SHL contract, since to our knowledge the only exception outside of that contract is the Manitoba School for the Deaf, as we indicated the other day. We need Mr. Baylis here to confirm that since that falls under his duties and his expertise. What we have here with us right now are the assessment people.

* (1720)

Ms. Friesen: I may have missed this in an earlier response, but are those 16 computers being paid for out of this line Desktop Services, or are they coming out of a different capital line?

Mrs. McIntosh: They are coming out of the capital—they are part of that \$354,600, line 6.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Friesen: Then I am still a little puzzled. They are coming out of that capital line, but they may well be part of the Systemhouse contract, as I understand the minister to say, and she may want to confirm that later, and I understand she does not have the appropriate staff here. If that is the case, then what I had assumed earlier, that the line Desktop Services applied to all of the Systemhouse contract, it is not only that line which applies to the Systemhouse contract, so that in each section of the department we should be looking at other lines which are also part of the Systemhouse contract.

Mrs. McIntosh: Perhaps we could pause and we will bring Mr. Baylis back. We can go through the systems right across the whole department. It would have been appreciated if we could have done that while we had him here rather than this leaping back and forth, so we will, yes, we do not have the—

An Honourable Member: E-mail him.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, if that is how you wish us to contact him, then we can do that. Is that how the opposition wishes us to contact him? We had been thinking of phoning.

Ms. Friesen: I am not quite sure how to proceed. I would be happy to wait until Mr. Baylis was here or whenever is convenient tomorrow or whenever we can make that appointment. But then I will need to go back over a variety of lines. We do have a formal process of passing individual lines, so whichever is most convenient.

I would suggest for the purposes of this afternoon that we continue with this line, move away from Systemhouse but come back to it. The minister can advise me whether we will be dealing with it with Mr. Baylis on Thursday—which I think is the next time we meet—or whether next week is more convenient. But I would reserve the need to come back to individual sections of, for example, in this case, a line that we may well have passed by then.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I think that would be more conducive to being able to provide the information the member wants because, as I say, the people who are here today are program experts. They know what services they are going to be receiving. They know, for example, they are all going to be getting computers, but that is not their area of expertise. They spend 60 hours a week or more on programming. So, if we could bring Mr. Baylis back, and if we could get all of the systems questions to him while he is here, because it is very hard having staff running back and forth. I am sure the member appreciates that. The impact on the department of prolonged periods away from assigned duties is quite dramatic.

So if we could bring Mr. Baylis back on Thursday, he can answer a lot of these questions. But I still wish to indicate, because the contract does not rest with Education, there will be components of that contract that are being done by Government Services people, not by the various departments. So he may not be able to give all the answers. The contract is properly addressed through Government Services. Mr. Baylis knows the impact of that on Education. We would be quite pleased to bring him back to provide detailed information for the member on those aspects that

pertain directly to Education, with which Mr. Baylis is familiar. We could maybe carry on with something else in the meantime, understanding that the member wishes to reserve judgment on certain aspects of this other question until Mr. Baylis can be here to assist us.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask some questions, then, on one other area of Other Expenditures, and that is the almost the doubling of professional fees in this section of the department. It goes from \$995,000 to \$1.931 thousand. Normally, professional fees, I think, are for contracts. This is an area of the department which is also having a doubling and tripling of staff eventually, so I am wondering in this particular year what is the function, what is the intention of the doubling of professional fees?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have increased a number of projects from three to seven.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me what the seven projects will be, what the fee associated with each one is, and who is contracted to do them if the minister has those names yet?

Mrs. McIntosh: I just need to make a quick correction. It is actually from three to eight—miscounted here. The increase in professional fees includes payments for contract writers, for assessment designers, report writers, information technology contractors, fee-for-service costs for test development committee members for Grades 3, 6 and Senior 1 mathematics and language arts standards test of \$370,000—I just want to check this figure; just a minute—for the Senior 4 inclement weather exams of \$164,000, and \$293,000 for increased precision in marking the Senior 4 provincial exams.

The new projects are Senior 1 mathematics, Senior 1 language arts, six mathematics and six language arts and three language arts.

* (1730)

Ms. Friesen: I am not sure the last part made sense to me. The new projects are Senior 1 math and Senior 1 language arts. When the minister says project in that context, what does she mean? The last part, I did not understand at all, six math and three language arts? Six

math what? Three language arts what? Is there something missing there?

Mrs. McIntosh: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, it was six is Grade 6, three is Grade 3. I apologize for not making that clearer.

Ms. Friesen: I am still not clear about that latter part. Those are the new projects. Those are the new things that the minister will be doing in this area of the department. The actual contracts though were the areas that she indicated earlier, the assessment, the recording, the fee-for-service costs, language arts standards and \$293,000 for increased precision in language arts marking. Is that what she meant?

I wonder if the minister could either table a list of the eight contracts, if that is what it is she means by this, the eight contracts in this section of the department, with a table that shows the amount of the contract, what its purpose is for, and who will be undertaking that contract?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am not quite sure what it is the member does not understand, and I am wondering if she could clarify. I am looking at the figures here. There is an increase in professional fees, and in amongst that are monies for paying contract people to do assessment design, to write reports, to do information technology contracts, fee for service costs, test development and standards exam, like back-up exams, and increased precision. I am not quite sure how else to explain it, or am I missing something in the question?

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, well, maybe a simple way of putting the question is: could the minister table a list of the contracts that will be issued under this line Professional Fees, their purposes, the people who will be doing them, if the minister knows that, and the expected results, the cost of the contract in each case?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, I think it hit upon the difference here. The member apparently made reference to eight contracts. I am sorry I did not hear her say that. I had referred to eight projects, and I think there is a miscommunication here. When I say eight projects, that is not eight contracts. The projects, and I listed some for her, are for Senior 1 Mathematics, Senior 1

Language Arts, Grade 6 Math, Grade 6 Language Arts, Grade 3 Language Arts. Those are five of the new projects. Each of those will require some contract people to work. There are probably more than eight, but we have not let those contracts yet. That is for the future. That is what we are expecting to spend.

We can indicate to the member that we can provide her with a proposed list of the types of contracts we expect to enter into to account for the total of \$1.9 million, but we cannot table the contracts because they do not exist yet. As I say, they are not eight contracts. We do not know the exact number. The professional services include a larger number of services. Contracts are awarded for such things as test design, procuring data files, pilot testing, preparing the French language components, serving as marking leaders, writers to edit test forms, and so on and so forth. If it would help, we can provide a proposed list of the types of contracts we expect under this line in spending that money. If she would like, we could do that.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, yes, I can understand that at this point not everything has been decided upon. Perhaps, by way of comparison and looking ahead to next year, can the minister table a list of the contracts that were conducted last year under the nine hundred and whatever it was—\$995,000—a list of the contracts, the fees and the people who conducted the work?

Mrs. McIntosh: Sure, we can do that. That is no problem.

Ms. Friesen: Under the Activity Identification in 16.2.(c) is also listed the special education review, so I am wondering where the fees for that particular contract which obviously go over more than one fiscal year, where one would find that.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, the proactive information services contract for 1998-99 would be funded out of the \$1.9 million total allocated.

Ms. Friesen: Again, I wonder if the minister could explain. I asked where one would find in the budget the allocation for the special needs review, the proactive contract. The minister told me it is \$1.9 million. I assume that means the total. Could the

minister tell me where that total is, or how it is divided between years, and which line in the budget is it?

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicated that the proactive information services contract for '98-99 would be funded out of the \$1.9 million total allocated for professional fees, and the proactive information services contract would not be anywhere near close to \$1.9 million. They are out of that line, however, for professional fees, probably more in the neighbourhood of \$75,000, something like that, would be their portion. The line that it is on is 4.2. under Other Expenditures.

We can table at the next setting the contract that the member referred to. The total between the two years would be less than \$150,000.

* (1740)

Ms. Friesen: The \$150,000 approximate total that the minister is speaking of comes out of last year and this year. Are we looking at a subsequent year as well? No. Okay.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, to confirm what the member—yes, in answer to her question.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about the Expected Results section of 16.2.(c) which says “Appropriate data will be collected to evaluate the special education policies and programs.” Now, I assume that is—and I have not got last year's Estimates books with me—a version of what is normally put into this section of the department.

I wonder where that fits with the new guidelines that the minister has recently released in her 60-page document, update to the divisions, where it talks about ADAPs, and the fact that ADAPs may not be required anymore. It seemed to me that ADAPs were the main means by which the department collected and evaluated or certainly collected information on special education policies. I am curious as to how the department is going to be collecting that information if it is not going to be collecting ADAPs anymore. So maybe the minister could clarify what the intention is there.

Mrs. McIntosh: ADAPs provide a descriptive information about programs. As the new, streamlined administration process is introduced and a new program audit is introduced, the ADAPs will no longer be required by the department. The audit process will give individual divisions information about their policies, programs, growth, progress, and program changes that the local jurisdictions are pursuing.

Just to take a minute to say the difference between the ADAPs and data, the ADAPs will be a description of the programs. There is no data provided with them. They will simply describe the programs. It is like if you said, what are you going to do on your summer holidays and you described the type of vacation you are going to have, that would be an ADAP. If you asked, how much would it cost, and how much gasoline would you use, that would be data. We are talking about an ADAP which is a description, not hard data. They are different things, and sometimes they are confused, but our intention is to reduce the administrative processes, try to provide more time to focus on programming and making decisions about instruction, et cetera. I think that is where we need to focus in order to ensure more timely and correct intervention for the students.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister then tell me a little more about how the data are to be collected? Who is going to collect it? Where does it get distributed to? I think the minister, in introducing this, talked about audit. Did I hear correctly? How is the audit to be done? Who is to do the audit? Is it annual, is it biennial? Could we have some more details on that?

* (1750)

Mrs. McIntosh: The means to collect appropriate data were not and will not be ADAPs. ADAPs are for different purposes. We will collect data via the special education review, and this will not involve data collection from every school and division. Rather, it is sampled. The uses of the data are to inform the special education review, to write a report and give advice to government about special education, circumstances, practices, funding, et cetera, and they will be the members of that particular review committee to provide us with data.

I stress the ADAPs are for a much different purpose, and the audit that was referred to by the member and,

in my remarks to her, that she is seeking some information on, that was in reference to the new streamlined administrative processes, those processes for division applications for receipts of Level 2 and Level 3.

We will be auditing there just to ensure that everything is in order, and we will do that every three years. It will be done by department staff, who will have divisions and districts participating in an audit of their special needs programs for Level 2 and Level 3 students once every three years. We will begin that process in '98 and '99, in that school year. As divisions and districts complete the audit process, submissions of the annual divisional action plans, which we call ADAPs, to the Department of Education and Training will no longer be required at that point.

The audit process is intended to support divisions in developing local program information to look at continuous improvement initiatives, to support divisions in identifying strengths and areas that they want to focus on for program improvements. We believe that as we streamline, we can speed up the process, so that the services for students will be able to flow more swiftly and not be paused, checked and double-checked, and triple-checked and quadruple-checked all through the system until a whole year has gone by.

The audit process, as I say, will be conducted by the department. Some divisions have already volunteered for this. We have had some people saying: could you please pick us to be a sample department here in the first year? So we will be looking to pilot a process that is helpful and useful to divisions. As I say, we have some volunteers all ready to assist us through the first year.

I think that probably provides a response. There may be more detail the member wishes, and I am available for attempting to answer those additional details.

Ms. Friesen: I wonder if the minister could tell me how this process of audit will differ from the old process of inspection. I am sure to some people it sounds like inspection, and there are varying views on that. Some people like the old system of inspection; others do not, so I am not asking this in a judgmental

way. I want to be able to explain to people. Is it the same? Is it different? In what ways is it different or the same?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could get some clarification from the member. When she refers to the old system of inspections, I am not certain. Is she meaning like the review of the ADAP-type review or is she referring to the system of we used to have inspectors going out to schools not that long ago? I am not quite sure which one she is referring to, just for clarification.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, well, the audit system—I am talking specifically about the audit—the new system that the minister is going to put in place, which requires people to go out from the central office, from the department, to look on a rotating basis at some kind of evaluation program, some kind of audit of programs.

So I am asking how different is this from the old system of inspection where people went out from a central bureau, reported back, evaluated programs, evaluated in some cases teachers, evaluated schools? Obviously, this is more narrowly defined, but how is it different? Or is it not? Is it intended to look at the same kinds of issues?

Mrs. McIntosh: This is quite different in both degree and in kind from the old inspector system. The old inspector system would have a single individual going out, taking a whirlwind tour through the division, dropping in at schools unannounced, no defined process, no collaboration. The audit process is definitely not an inspection process of that nature. It

differs, as I said, in both degree and in kind. It is a completely different thing.

We have had six divisions, I understand, who volunteered to participate in the audit process. An audit process could include identifying an audit team comprised of managers from the Regional Teams Unit, staff of Administration and Finance, field representatives. It could involve an audit of each division—well, it will every three years—or district, identification of special education programs and services and how they respond to the needs of students and best practices, focusing on student outcomes, examination of the division or district's special education policies, their practices and procedures, assessing the quality and cost-effectiveness of special education programs, ensuring that there is a process which, in turn, ensures that funds to support special education programs and services are used appropriately and effectively, examining intersectoral planning in relation to special education.

Those are the types of items that we talk about when we talk about introducing an audit process. It is a far cry from the old inspector thing that was discarded for a reason some years ago. I hope that clarifies.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour now being 6 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour now being past 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow (Wednesday) at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Presenting Petitions

Mining Reserve Fund
Jennissen 2565

Reading and Receiving Petitions

Mining Reserve Fund
Jennissen 2565

Winnipeg Hospitals Food
Services—Privatization
Martindale 2565

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Committee of Supply
Laurendeau 2566

Introduction of Bills

Bill 46, Correctional Services Act 2566

Oral Questions

Hepatitis C
McGifford; Praznik; Filmon 2566
Ashton; Filmon 2568

Fabian Torres
Mackintosh; Toews 2569

Crown Attorneys
Mackintosh; Toews 2570

Provincial Parks
Struthers; Cummings 2570

Crime Rate
Kowalski; Toews; Filmon 2571

Daycare Policy
Mihychuk; McIntosh 2572

Fishing Industry
Lathlin; Cummings 2573
2574

Minister of Natural Resources
Lathlin; Cummings 2574
Robinson; Cummings 2574

Members' Statements

Economic Growth
Dyck 2575

Provincial Parks—Camping Reservations
Struthers 2575

Environmental Programs
Sveinson 2576

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
Robinson 2576

Hepatitis C—Compensation
Lamoureux 2577

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)

Family Services
Martindale 2577
Mitchelson 2578

Health
Sale 2601
Laurendeau 2604
McGifford 2607
Praznik 2607
Pitura 2607
Wendt 2613
Render 2622
Dyck 2624
Radcliffe 2627

Education and Training
McIntosh 2633
Friesen 2634