



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

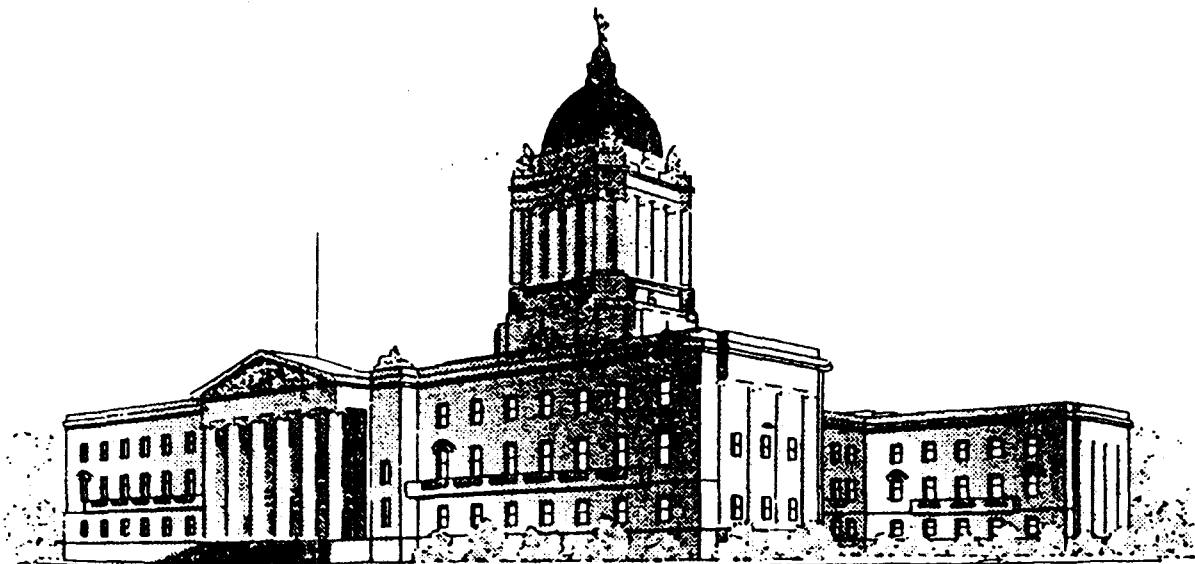
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 2, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the Departmental Estimates for the Department of Urban Affairs.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. Luc Devolder, the Consul-General of Belgium to Canada.

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Pediatric Ophthalmologist Waiting List

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, we have raised numerous questions in this House about waiting lists in terms of

specialists. But nothing can cause people more concern than when you see children in this province having to wait an extensive period of time for important medical treatment.

One of those children is a four-year-old, Kaela Kostiuk, who is here today accompanied by her mother, Miranda, and by Dwayne Hain. She has been attempting to access the services of a pediatric ophthalmologist. In terms of ophthalmology in this province, there is only one specialist. It takes upwards of six months for someone even to get a check-up to see this doctor who is performing a tremendous workload in terms of dealing with this.

Indeed, I would like to ask the Minister of Health when this government will take action to ensure that children like Kaela will not have to wait those extensive periods of time for this very important surgical procedure to deal with, in this case, a chalazion that does affect very much her eyesight.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, I am certainly prepared to look into this individual situation. I think, as the member for Thompson knows, we have been dedicating significant resources to reduce waiting lists in many areas in Manitoba. Today, when you look at our province in a relative sense to the other provinces in Canada, many of the surveys that are being done, Manitoba does stack up very well on an overall basis in terms of the period of waiting time, whether it be for diagnostic testing or other services.

But I certainly will look into this particular situation. As the member for Thompson knows, this budget alone includes significant additional funding for health. A significant amount of that funding is going to address that very important issue of reducing waiting lists in various areas and certainly in areas where it affects children in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ashton: I would like to ask a further question and that is what specific action the

Minister of Health will take, given the very real concern that the one doctor that is performing this, Dr. Shuckett, has often indicated, in fact he has indicated publicly that he feels harassed by the pressure, being the only doctor in Manitoba handling these types of cases and wonders what would happen if he were to get seriously sick. What specific actions will the Minister of Health take to make sure that children in this province will have access to this surgical procedure?

Mr. Stefanson: First of all, Madam Speaker, I will start by following up on the specifics that the member has brought to this House today, because the reality has been in some other cases, when we have talked about some other services, the information has not been entirely accurate. But having said that, I do take his concern that he is raising here today very seriously and I will follow up on it immediately.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like the minister to meet with the family afterwards, who have taken a courageous step, I might say, of going public on behalf of many other families in that situation.

As a final supplementary, I would like to appeal to the minister if he would not agree that instead of spending \$500,000 on the medical—the campaign they have right now, the ads which are really something that should be paid for by the Conservative Party, would it not be better to put that \$500,000 towards patient services, providing surgical services to four-year-olds like Kaela.

Mr. Stefanson: On this, Madam Speaker, this budget alone, the 1999 budget, includes an additional \$194 million, bringing our health care spending in Manitoba to an all-time record level of \$2.1 billion to address these types of issues. Again, I am repeating what I said yesterday, I am assuming that that is one of the reasons that the member for Thompson and his colleagues voted for our 1999 budget because we have dedicated the resources to address these very important issues. Waiting lists overall in Manitoba are coming down and they are coming down significantly. We have seen all kinds of improvements in our health care system, more personal care home beds, more home care programs and a number of initiatives. And

again, that is why I think they supported our budget. In terms of the very specific issue that he raises here today, I take that very seriously and I will follow up on it immediately.

* (1340)

Pediatric Ophthalmologist Waiting List

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, my questions are also for the Minister of Health. Last year the head of the Manitoba pediatric society sounded alarm bells about the shortage of children's specialists in Manitoba, with only one pediatric ophthalmologist, one pediatric dentist, too few child development doctors and a shortage of pediatricians in rural areas. Dr. Lucash stated that, and I quote: timely care for children is vital, but too many children are not even getting the help they need fast enough. Today, one year later, the situation is even worse for Manitoba children. Can the minister explain what the impact is on the healthy development of children such as Kaela Kostiuk of having to wait in many cases over six months, or even into the years for needed assessment, diagnosis, and treatment, including surgery?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, again, Madam Speaker, the specific question after the preamble that the member has put on the record which I do not necessarily accept, but the specific question is basically very similar to the question that the member for Thompson has just asked me. I have indicated very clearly in this House that I will follow up on that immediately to confirm whether or not the information being put forward is accurate. But, more importantly, the individual patient that the member has brought to this House today, I will follow up on that as I have indicated.

Child Development Clinic Waiting List

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Can the minister, who last week was unaware of the situation at the Child Development Clinic, which, despite his claims, remains without a full-time doctor, explain the gap between his announcements and his pronouncements and the

reality of hundreds, if not thousands of Manitoba children waiting months, if not years for needed health services? Not just one situation but hundreds, if not thousands.

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

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): The member refers to the Child Development Clinic, which we have discussed in this House. That clinic has been provided with additional support for one additional position which will help to address the issue of reducing waiting times in terms of that important assessment service. I have indicated again here that, in this budget alone, with \$194 million more in health care, it is allowing us to continue to improve services, to continue to reduce any waiting lists that are deemed to be excessive, to create reasonable periods of waiting time, and so on.

I can only say I am assuming that is one of the reasons that the member for Wellington supported this budget. If she had major concerns about where we were dedicating our health care dollars, the amount of health care spending we were putting in place and so on, then she should not have voted for our budget. She supported our budget, I believe, because she recognized that we were devoting significant resources to address these very important issues of waiting lists for Manitobans and particularly when it relates to the children of Manitoba.

Health Care System Pediatric Services

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Given that Dr. Brian Postl of the WHA is quoted as saying just when we settle something in one area, we lose something in another area, will the minister finally accept that it is his responsibility and his government's responsibility, not just for pronouncements for actual reality of putting resources where his announcements are, and that his actions over the last 11 years have resulted in directly jeopardizing the health care of thousands of children in Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): I acknowledge no such thing. Quite the opposite. Since 1988 alone, health care spending in

Manitoba is up by \$800 million, a 60 percent increase. This budget alone, our 1999 budget that we just voted on several weeks ago, includes \$2.1 billion, a \$194 million increase. The member for Wellington and her colleagues voted in favour of that budget. I am sure one of the reasons, beyond issues like the tax cuts and others, was because of the significant increase in spending for health care. Health care is 35.5 percent of our budget. Only one province in Canada spends a higher percentage of their budget on health care on a per capita basis.

Studies done by organizations like the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Mr. Michael Decter, and so on, show Manitoba stacks up very well in terms of per capita spending. We are consistently in the top three or four per capita. We are dedicating significant resources to health care in Manitoba to provide quality care and to continue to address the important issues of reducing waiting lists in our province.

* (1345)

Health Sciences Centre Renovation Budget—Food Services

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, yesterday, in the hallway, the Minister of Health told the media that Health Sciences Centre had been provided for in their budget for renovations required for the frozen food fiasco that is being foisted on them. The spokesperson for Health Sciences Centre said that this is not correct, that no such budget had ever been developed, that tenders have not even gone out yet, so no one knows what it is going to cost. Who is telling the truth to this House? Is it the Health minister or is it the spokesman for the Health Sciences Centre?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): The member for Crescentwood, like he did yesterday, brings incorrect information to the House again. He was wrong with the information he brought yesterday in terms of the whole logistics at HSC. We have had discussions with them. The kind of system they are putting in place is exactly what they have done at other facilities. The issues he raised yesterday were not issues that were of a concerned agency that were not being addressed

as part of the overall plan. He was completely wrong with the misinformation he brought yesterday.

In terms of this issue, Urban Shared Services Corporation, in their capital planning for all of this redevelopment, obviously included an estimate of an amount for what would be required at Health Sciences Centre. Health Sciences Centre is now going through that detailed analysis of all of the elements in terms of what are required, and they are going to be finalizing those costs. They will be obviously comparing that to what Urban Shared Services Corporation has in their budget. They will be negotiating that with them and resolving this issue.

So there is no inconsistency in what is being done. Urban Shared Services Corporation has had an estimate of what they expect this to cost. That estimate will now be stacked up against what the final numbers are based on this detailed review.

Urban Shared Services Corporation Renovation Budget

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Will the minister finally acknowledge that the budget that was allowed for by Urban Shared Services was \$1,042,000 for all nine hospitals? That is all that was allowed for patient services. Will he simply confirm the numbers in the business plan?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): No. Again, the member is wrong in terms of the information he brings. I am not sure where he is receiving his information. Maybe it is the same source as when he brought information on Deer Lodge hospital here. That, again, was absolutely, completely inaccurate. It was not even accurate 10 percent of the time. Some people are now calling him the 10 percent man. Again, absolutely inaccurate information. He has now done that, I believe, again today, continues to bring inaccurate information and portray an absolutely incorrect picture.

Information Tabling Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I wonder, Madam Speaker, if the minister would be

prepared to table in this House a document dated June 23, 1997, from Joe Sheil to the nine participating facilities, the business case and the information contained in it, and we will see who is telling the truth.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I will certainly look at what documentation I can continue to provide the member for Crescentwood, but the information in terms of the original planning around Urban Shared Services Corporation I believe showed that there would be renovation requirements of about \$2.5 million, there would be equipment requirements of about \$1.2 million, for a total of about \$3.7 million.

* (1350)

Maple Leaf Plant—Brandon Environmental Hearings

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Environment.

Madam Speaker, when the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon was announced, local residents asked for a public assessment process so impacts of the plant, including discharges into the Assiniboine River, could be considered. The minister rejected that proposal. The minister's own advisory committee recommended that hearings be held into the project in its entirety, but the minister's department rejected that as well.

Madam Speaker, my question to the minister: can she now explain, given that her department is now only finding out that high levels of ammonia will be discharged into the Assiniboine River, which could delay the opening of the plant, why her predecessor rejected an assessment process over a year ago, and what the impact of the decision is on the delay of the plant opening?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): I thank my honourable friend for the question. The member has in his preamble said some things that are not quite correct. Having said that, I will indicate to the House that the process in Brandon is working exactly as it should be working. It is incredibly

open, incredibly transparent. There are public meetings at each stage along the way of the development in Brandon. It will be sustainable development.

There will be a hearing tonight at which some of the information the member alludes to will be presented by people who are interested in what is going on in Brandon. They will bring forward their thoughts, ideas and concerns, as has been scheduled for them to do. Then the scientific experts will take a look at those, as they are expected to do, and will determine in the end what needs to be done to ensure that, before any licence is granted, the environmental concerns in Brandon are adequately addressed.

That is the process that has been put in place. It is an extremely good process. It is one of the best in Canada, and it is working as it should.

Sustainable Development Act Guidelines

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my question to the minister: can the minister explain why her department, in the case of Maple Leaf and other developments, is not implementing the guidelines set out in The Sustainable Development Act?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): The people who work in the Department of Environment are fulfilling their obligations under the law according to The Environment Act, according to the policies and practices of the government of Manitoba and according to the sustainable development initiative that has been put forward very carefully and thoughtfully by this government, unfortunately ignored by the previous government who had a terrible record in terms of environmental, one of the worst in Canada.

So, Madam Speaker, I categorically reject the allegation that is apparent in his question. It is implied and it is wrong.

Water Quality Assessments

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, she is violating The Sustainable Development Act. Will this minister ensure that

a comprehensive assessment of all water quality issues related to this plant and others will take place so the health of the local environment is maintained and the plant will not be faced with any further delays?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I did not hear exactly what the member said—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I did not hear exactly what particular insult the member put in his preamble, but I did hear the last part of it. I believe he said at the beginning that we were violating The Sustainable Development Act. If that is what he said, he is incorrect. He did ask about the Brandon situation, and in Brandon there is a river study being done, there are public hearings being held at each stage before licences are granted. There have to be public hearings held such as the one being held tonight that is bringing forward the very information that he is quoting. It has not even been brought forward yet, and already it is transparent and open for all the people to see, to talk about, to discuss, and that will eventually come to the expert scientists in the Department of Environment who will do their review and analysis of the information they have not yet formally received from the public. But the processes that are laid down are very thorough, very clear and very much in keeping with leading towards a pure and sustainable development for Brandon and indeed all of Manitoba.

* (1355)

Medical Laboratory Technologists Training Program

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): My question is for the Minister of Health.

In 1996 the training program for medical laboratory technologists in Manitoba was cancelled. It is one more example of the present government's inattention to the skilled needs of Manitoba since we now have a skill shortage in this area. Given that a so-called major priority

of the present government has been the development of the health industry in Manitoba and that this industry has major needs for laboratory technology, it was clearly absurd to end the program for training medical laboratory technologists. When will the absence of this training program be addressed?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I believe that is an issue we have discussed at some length during our Estimates process. Health is currently in Estimates, as we all know. Starting next fall and the fall of 2000, there will be a new integrated baccalaureate program for technicians and lab technicians done, I believe, at Red River College in conjunction with one of the universities.

Mr. Kowalski: When will the first graduates of a sometime-in-the-future new program actually graduate to help alleviate the current shortage and to build the industries which the government has indicated are important?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Madam Speaker, I think it is important to remember that this new program is being put in place with the support and co-operation of employers first of all who require these services and these skills to meet the needs of patients, are being put in place with the co-operation with the associations themselves representing the individuals employed in these areas. Again, I had an opportunity just last week to meet with one of the associations that are extremely pleased that this new integrated program will be introduced in Manitoba as early as next year.

Self-Governing Body

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): When will the present government introduce legislation to implement the self-governing body for the medical laboratory technologists to help with better planning for this important group of health professionals?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, as I indicated, I have had a chance to meet with some of the groups, some of the associations affected by this. Certainly one of the most important issues was the whole introduction of the new integrated education

program which is being acted upon. It is being done with the co-operation of all parties. We discussed other issues, including potential legislative changes and those are under review.

Mutual Life Insurance Department Studies

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I would like to ask my question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

Madam Speaker, as the minister knows, five mutual life insurance companies have proposed to convert from mutual companies owned by the policyholders to publicly traded companies owned by shareholders. I would like to ask the minister: would the minister table any studies that her department has done on the benefits of this move to the public of Manitoba?

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): As I am sure my honourable friend across the way knows, Manitoba has no provincially incorporated mutual companies, so this is really a federal matter, and I will just leave it at that.

Mr. Maloway: I think the minister should check her facts. She will find that there are provincially registered mutual companies.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member, this is not a time for debate. The honourable member was recognized for a supplementary question.

Mr. Maloway: I would like to ask the minister, while she is checking out her facts, whether she would also check and see whether she has any studies that indicate whether insurance company investment would decline in Manitoba as a result of this move.

Mrs. Render: I will definitely check my facts and get back to the honourable member.

* (1400)

Mr. Maloway: I would like to ask the minister: does the government support this move by the insurance industry? I would like to know what

she has done to make sure that Manitoba is not a loser as a result of this process.

Mrs. Render: I just really want to remind the honourable member that, to my knowledge, Manitoba has no provincially incorporated mutual companies.

Education System Addiction Counselling Services

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, we have received letters from hundreds of Manitobans in the southwest part of the province, from the student council of Nellie McClung Collegiate, from the parent council in Holland, from Pilot Mound Kinsmen club, from municipalities and many churches, all of them extremely concerned about the Addictions Foundation survey that indicates a significant increase in the number of students reporting alcohol and drug use as the biggest problem they face as young people.

Madam Speaker, the Prairie Spirit School Division is asking the Minister of Education for a commitment from this government for an increase in counselling services for these young people. Could the minister tell us what response he has made to these hundreds of letters?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, as the honourable member knows, the budget this year for the K to 12 part of public education has been increased by, first, the announcement of 2.3 percent by my predecessor over last year's levels, and to that I was able to achieve the additional \$2 million, bringing the total for education up to 2.6 percent over levels of last year. The \$2 million I referred to was for children with special needs.

In reference to the specifics of the question, I am sure we can discuss that a little later this afternoon as we get into the review of the Estimates. We are just very happy to have the support of the honourable member and all her colleagues for the level of funding for education in this year's budget.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister confirm that one of the consequences of the last decade of

education funding and the cuts in actual amounts to public schools has been a significant decrease in the number of counsellors in public schools? Could the minister tell us what that reduction has been?

Mr. McCrae: Well, I certainly could not confirm that because levels of funding for education, at 19.8 percent of total spending this year, is quite significantly better than the level of commitment on the part of the previous New Democratic government at 17.7 percent. So, Madam Speaker, I do not think the honourable member can very well stand there and make that kind of a case especially in light of the fact that this year she and her colleagues so gleefully supported the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Ms. Friesen: Would the minister undertake to recognize that these drug and alcohol problems facing young people in southwestern Manitoba are extremely serious, and will he bring to the House a long-term plan of prevention and support that will help these young people in southwestern Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: Well, Madam Speaker, I can certainly understand concerns raised in areas like southwestern Manitoba. Obviously, coming from Brandon, I am very aware of those types of concerns and support for doing something about them. If there are concerns like that, they would be in places other than southwestern Manitoba, as well.

But I say to the honourable member, the partnership that we have with educators and with the school divisions is a strong one. I know the honourable member and her colleagues would like to get rid of school boards, but we have school boards. School trustees are elected people, and they also raise money through taxation. Through this partnership, we all attempt to do the very best we can for the students of today so that they can be successful citizens of tomorrow.

Penned Hunts Department's Awareness

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Natural Resources.

In 1998, we raised the issue of penned hunts with this minister in the context of a committee struck by his department and the Department of Agriculture to consider penned hunts for elk. At that time, the minister stated in this House and in Estimates that he and his department were opposed and that he was upset that that spectre was raised in this House.

Can the minister explain, given that the minister reiterated his position in a letter to the editor claiming penned hunts were illegal, why his department was unaware of penned hunts in Manitoba until we on this side requested an investigation?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Well, Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the member for Dauphin is sitting pretty close to 10 percent of the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), because, in fact, the Department of Natural Resources is well aware of the situations that the member is raising, and they are investigating them.

Mr. Struthers: And the minister still allows animals to be released into a pen and shot for money.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin was recognized for a supplementary question. Please pose your question now.

Mr. Struthers: Given that the minister has now learned that penned hunts, including the hunting of our provincial bison, do exist in Manitoba, can he explain why he now says that penned hunts are, in fact, legal in Manitoba?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, one of the situations that the member refers to is where there are wild boars that are offered for hunting, they in fact are not controlled under The Manitoba Wildlife Act, and they are not protected. In fact, if they are found in the wild, we would encourage people to eliminate them.

Mr. Struthers: And he still allows the animals to be led into a pen—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin, to pose his question, please.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that the minister expressed strong opposition, stating that penned hunts did not reflect true sportsmanship, can he explain why he has now flip-flopped and now will allow penned hunts to continue in this province?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, if the member chooses to misrepresent the situation, that is his choice. But any animals protected under The Wildlife Act in this province will not be a penned hunt.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): A point of order, Madam Speaker.

The minister's use of the phrase "chooses to misrepresent" is clearly unparliamentary. I point out that it has been this member who has brought this issue to this House on a consistent basis, and it was only the facts put on the record by this member that made the minister even aware there was a problem.

I would urge you to have the minister withdraw those unparliamentary words.

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

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order.

The opposition House leader takes umbrage at the term "misrepresent," but I would remind him that if he were to read the letter that was referenced earlier in the question, it specifically references The Wildlife Act.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I indeed will take the matter under advisement to carefully check the actual context of the minister's words and bring a ruling back to the Chamber.

* (1410)

Ministers of Housing Meeting Homelessness—Government Position

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I am concerned that the minister in

Estimates has not received any information about the new federal minister for homelessness, Claudette Bradshaw, about her role, her programs, her funding to deal with homelessness in Canada.

I want to ask the minister if he has had a chance to reconsider his approach, his wait-and-see attitude from Estimates when he said: We look forward toward the federal government defining its role and objectives and its criteria, and that we will make a response we feel is appropriate for Manitoba, implying that they are going to wait and see what the federal government is going to offer, and then come forward with the Manitoba position—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member, to pose her question now.

Ms. Cerilli: I want to ask the minister if he has had a chance to reconsider this approach and tell us what position he is going to bring to the federal meeting with the minister and the ministers' meetings of Housing from all across Canada with respect to the means in Manitoba for housing and homelessness to make sure the—

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

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, yes, reflecting back to some of the conversations during the Estimates period, there was a fair amount of discussion in regard to the recent announcement by the federal government with their new minister responsible for homelessness. The federal government made that announcement, but they did not give any type of indication of what this minister was responsible for, what her directions were, what her involvement was, whether there was a budgeted allotment to it or anything of that nature.

So we had made some contacts, as I mentioned during the Estimates, through our senior bureaucracy to get some more information on this because one of the things that we did want to put on the agenda for the ministers of Housing's conference was exactly to find out what the federal position was and what this minister was actually responsible for

because we had no information. In fact, we did not even have the phone number or an address for this minister of homelessness from the federal government.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I am wanting to ask the minister if he will consider a quote from consultations that the New Democratic Party has made on homelessness where it says: I had a case in Thompson of a new-born baby. The baby was put into care voluntarily because they had no furnace, no stove and no water. The baby is still in care because they did not have any housing to take the baby to.

Consider that quote and consider the position that you will take to the minister of homelessness federally, and will you confirm for the House or commit to the House that you will make public the needs that you are going to present to the federal minister on behalf of Manitoba?

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, let it not be said that this government is not concerned with the social problems and some of the homelessness that is involved with not only Winnipeg but in all areas of Manitoba, and we consider it a very, very serious problem in trying to address the needs of all peoples and all Manitobans.

The address mentioned in regard to the recent appointment that the federal Liberal government has announced regarding the minister responsible for homelessness that we will definitely be wanting to see what the parameters are. We feel that there is a need to address some of the problems of homelessness, and we look forward to the meetings with the ministers to discuss these things on a wide range.

So we do take the meeting seriously. We do take the fact that there are people in need in Manitoba, and we will try to address those once we know actually what the directions and some of the parameters that the federal government has come out with. But, to date, they have not even sent us correspondence to this nature.

Ms. Cerilli: Finally, on my supplementary to the minister, I want to ask if this minister, in his preparation for the meeting of Housing ministers from across the country, if he and his

government will support the proposal by the federal NDP to ask the new minister of homelessness to include a 1 percent increase in the federal budget for housing and homelessness in the country.

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, we are always interested in any type of initiative that the federal government comes out with in regard to the expenditures of funding that can be of benefit to Manitoba. If there are fundings that are made available for expenditures in housing or any other programs in our social envelope, naturally we will want to be there and we want to be a part of the discussions to make sure that Manitoba is well represented and that there is an apportioning and a sharing of that funding that does come to Manitoba. So we will certainly lobby to that effect if the federal government is coming out with new funding or an allocation of funding whether it is in housing or in any other type of social envelope.

Brandon University Funding

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a question for the Minister of Education, the MLA for Brandon West. Brandon University has been underfunded for the past several years by this government and now again this year is being provided with insufficient funds. As a result, and as the minister should know, it has been announced that they are going to have to raise tuition fees substantially and to cut back on the teaching staff. Tuition fee increases will not only affect the level and number of courses offered but also will discourage enrollment.

Madam Speaker, will the minister review and adjust the level of government funding of Brandon University, which I know he holds dear in his heart, to ensure that that university can remain an affordable and important institution of higher learning in Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Well, the honourable member is certainly right that I hold Brandon University dear in my heart, Madam Speaker. I also, in my responsibilities, hold all post-secondary education in Manitoba dear in my heart, and that is why there is a 5 percent increase in this year's

budget for the various activities that take place in post-secondary education. That is why I am sort of joining the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who has taken a leadership role in Canada, in attempting to get the federal government to do the right thing for post-secondary education in the next federal budget. So I do indeed feel very strongly about these matters. I think that the increase in expenditures will indeed help the post-secondary sector in Manitoba keep ahead of the needs that are going to be there for a well-trained and well-educated future population.

I guess I can only thank the honourable member for Brandon East for his generous support of the budget this year which indeed does have 5 percent more for education.

Mr. L. Evans: Madam Speaker, will the minister acknowledge that tuition fees have increased by 35 percent in the past four years at Brandon University and that the lack of sufficient funding this year will result in another 8.5 percent in tuition hikes, and as such is creating a serious obstacle for students, especially from families of modest means, to be able to afford and attend Brandon University?

Mr. McCrae: I do indeed understand the challenges that students face at a time in their lives when they do not have high incomes and they do have fairly high expenditures. Maybe you cannot feel very sorry for me, but as a father of five and dealing with post-secondary education for them, even at the level of income of a politician, I know that there are difficulties for students across the system. Knowing that, the Province of Manitoba is pleased that our overall cost of education at the university level is third or fourth best in Canada, that our college entrance tuition overall in Canada is best anywhere in the country. That is why I am happy to be supporting a government that brought in a 7 percent Learning Tax Credit. That is why I am glad that our Finance ministers have been supporting quintupling of the contribution to the scholarships and bursaries program, leveraging some \$40 million, I believe it is, over four or five years. All of these benefits taken together, along with a tuition policy that makes some sense in Manitoba, does assist students in getting through that time of their lives.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pediatric Ophthalmologist

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, earlier today in Question Period I raised the situation facing Kaela Kostiuk. I would like to outline to members of the House the specific circumstances that she, a courageous four-year-old, has been faced with. Kaela has a lump on the inner or outer surface of the eyelid. It is caused by an inflammatory reaction to material trapped inside the oil-secreting gland in the eyelid. Kaela, when she was less than a year old, had her first operation for a chalazion and in fact had the surgery well before the normal time in which children have that operation. This was because Dr. Shuckett, the one pediatric ophthalmologist in this province who performed the operation, said it was one of the worst cases that he had seen and in fact that he operated considerably ahead of schedule because of that.

Kaela's mother, Miranda, has been attempting to see Dr. Shuckett, our only specialist in this province, and was told she would not be able to get an appointment until mid-December. The sad part, Madam Speaker, is that this is a procedure that is day surgery. This is day surgery, a 45-minute operation that could make a huge difference to children such as Kaela.

Now Kaela is in the position where, through other means, she is hopefully going to be able to get an operation done by an individual who is not a pediatric specialist, but it should not come down to that, and her mother, a, today when I met with her, said one of the main reasons she wanted to go public on this issue affecting her daughter directly was because this kind of thing should not happen. We need more pediatric specialists in this province, and we need the government to recognize that after 11 years we see the efforts of their mismanagement in health care specifically when it comes to waiting lists and shortage of physicians and specialists, and I say, as someone who is a parent, I think all of us feel for Miranda, for her daughter Kaela. I urge the government to please, please take action to make sure that Kaela and other children do not

have to wait months and years for this kind of very basic surgery that can make a huge difference to Kaela's quality of life.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Whyte Ridge Community Centre

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, May 25, 1999, I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Westridge Community Centre, Whyte Ridge Satellite Site. For the past few years, many residents in the community of Whyte Ridge have spent endless hours volunteering in order to help make the Whyte Ridge Satellite Site a reality. There are two phases to the centre. Phase one consists of the community centre as well as a hockey rink. The second phase of the community club will include a regulation-size soccer field. The Whyte Ridge Community Club will truly become an important community facility. Not only will it be used for summer and winter sporting activities, but it will also be used for community gatherings.

There were many people from Whyte Ridge who were involved in the development of the centre and I would like to thank Mr. Rick MacMullan for all his hard work and the many hours that he spent co-ordinating the efforts of others in establishing the Westridge Community Centre, Whyte Ridge Satellite Site.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Health Care System—Pediatric Services

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, today the issue of waiting lists for children in health care and children with major health problems was raised in the House by the opposition. We talked about the waiting lists for a number of surgeries, a number of diagnoses, a number of assessment procedures and the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) in his response showed one of the major lacks in this government in their planning and their philosophy when it comes to health care.

Madam Speaker, Kaela Kostiuk's case is serious, but it is not the only case that we are

dealing with here in the province of Manitoba, children who have to wait months if not years to see a doctor just to get an assessment, never mind treatment.

The Minister of Health stated today, as he has on many occasions in the past: bring the specific situation to me and I will look at the specific situation. Madam Speaker, health care is not a privilege for the people of this province, it is a right, and for the Minister of Health to stand in his spot day after day and say I will deal with this one particular issue without the recognition that it is a systemic problem that is based on 11 years of underfunding and cutbacks to the health care system in the province of Manitoba just shows how far out of touch this minister and his government is.

Madam Speaker, when the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) first raised this issue today, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) said from his seat that the member for Thompson was grandstanding. Now that would not hit Hansard, but I heard it, and I want to make sure it is on the record because the member for Thompson, the members of the opposition, do not grandstand in this House. We bring serious issues to this Chamber, and the issue we brought today was serious. It was serious for the young girl whose case we were talking about; it was serious for the hundreds if not thousands of other children who have had to wait weeks if not months for health care. It is not grandstanding. We are raising vital issues.

* (1420)

Cervical Cancer Screening Program

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak about a very important initiative that was announced today at which I had the honour to attend. The Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation will establish a Cervical Cancer Screening Program with the support of over \$1.1 million this year from the Manitoba government. The Manitoba Cervical Cancer Screening Program will be phased in over the next year. The new province-wide program will identify at-risk women, encourage regular pap tests and increase follow-up with individuals who need to be retested within an appropriate time frame.

Cancer of the cervix is the 11th most common cancer in women. Sadly, in 1996, 12 Manitoba women died from cervical cancer. Cancer of the cervix is often preventable and can be treated successfully if diagnosed at an early stage. Research shows that regular pap tests and follow-up with at-risk patients has steadily reduced the death rate from cervical cancer.

This is a very important announcement and an important day for women in Manitoba. A co-ordinated screening program for cervical cancer is a priority in our comprehensive health care plan for all Manitobans. It is essential that we educate Manitoba women about cervical cancer and provide them with the appropriate care in a timely manner. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to make this wonderful announcement.

Homelessness

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I want to recognize the work of my federal colleagues, in particular, the M.P. for Vancouver East, Libby Davies, in their efforts to raise the question of homelessness and the government's response to homelessness and housing for low-income people across our country. They have prepared a report, after consultations across the country, called Homelessness: An Unnatural Disaster.

There are a few references to Manitoba's situation. I want to read the comment by a father from South Indian Lake who said: We live in a crowded house. My kids live here. That is what I am scared of. It will pass on. It causes a lot of mental stress.

The report goes on to make recommendations in eight areas, including such things as housing as a human right; addressing the fact that we are the only western developed country not to have a national housing strategy; beginning at the grass roots and rebuilding communities with the nonprofit sector; housing as a health issue; having national standards in housing and having a national housing plan that incorporates housing partnerships; implementing and extending the federal recommendations from the mayors' task force on homelessness; and, finally, implementing the Liberals' task force on

homelessness that was chaired by the now Finance minister when he was in opposition, which reads quite differently than they now act when they are in government.

I want to emphasize that in the upcoming months, as the provinces prepare for a Housing ministers' conference from ministers from across the country, that they also adopt the motion put forward by Libby Davies to increase the spending on housing and homelessness by 1 percent of the federal budget, which would amount to, as recommended in her report, \$2 billion to \$3 billion over five years. This is what is needed to address the cuts that have occurred under—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, as I indicated yesterday there would likely be another committee being called for next week. I would therefore announce that the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs will meet on Monday, June 7, 1999, at 10 a.m., in Room 255 to discuss the March 31, 1997, progress report for The Forks-North Portage Partnership. So that will take place on Monday.

I would then move, seconded by the honourable—

Madam Speaker: One moment please. I will put the announcement relative to the standing committee on the record before I entertain the motion.

The Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs will meet Monday, June 7, at 10 a.m., in Room 255 to consider matters related to The Forks-North Portage development.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and this House

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

Before I do that, Madam Speaker, I would ask if you would canvass the House as well to see if there is a willingness to waive private members' hour.

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 16.2. School Programs (e) Program Implementation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 48 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask about the piloting of the program review process for special education programs and services, which is one activity identified for this year for this section of the department. We have spent some time already on the special education programs and services. I am interested now particularly in the review process and where it is going to be piloted and whether this—how many divisions or classes will be involved in the pilot? That is, is it going to be done in one area or will it be more diverse?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): While we are preparing to respond to that, I think I could respond further to some matters that were talked about yesterday in the committee, as we have been trying to keep up with the commitments that we have been making. Yesterday I mentioned the agreements reached between MERLIN and Corel and the

agreement that we referred to between MERLIN and Microsoft. With respect to Microsoft, this agreement overall has three aspects to it. The first aspect deals with MERLIN and Microsoft. This is the master agreement, and it does not involve any financial outlay for MERLIN, but MERLIN is the administrator—or this master agreement—but MERLIN is the administrator of the terms of the agreement and is ultimately responsible to fulfill its terms, such as monitoring whether schools and/or divisions who have entered the agreement are not using more of Microsoft products than they have licence to do.

Secondly, the aspect between MERLIN and the school division or the school, this is an indemnity agreement wherein the participating schools and/or divisions agree to indemnify MERLIN for any violations of the master agreement.

Thirdly, between the schools and divisions and Microsoft, schools and divisions can make a direct agreement with Microsoft to purchase a stated minimum amount of software over a two-year period, i.e., 500 units. In exchange, it receives extra product or use rights. We are exploring with legal counsel whether the actual master agreement between MERLIN and Microsoft can be made public by myself. We are informed, since there are two parties to this agreement, one being Microsoft, we need Microsoft's concurrence to make the agreement public. It may be some of the agreement, all of it or none of it can be made public. Nevertheless, I am able to table the generic agreement and general information between MERLIN and any school or division participant.

* (1440)

With respect to Corel, there are two aspects to this agreement. The first one is between MERLIN and Corel. This is the master agreement, and there is no financial outlay by MERLIN where it is the administrator of the agreement and is responsible for the implementation of the terms of the agreement, including being responsible for schools and/or divisions fulfilling the terms of their agreement.

Secondly, the MERLIN school and/or division indemnity agreement. This provides

MERLIN with protection should school and/or divisions not fulfill the agreement as not licensing all the Corel software they use. The key difference then between the Microsoft and Corel agreements is that in the latter, there is no provision for schools and/or divisions to sign with Corel to receive extras as there is with the Microsoft one. We are exploring with legal counsel as with the Microsoft agreement to determine whether we can make public the master agreement. We will table the generic agreement and general information between MERLIN and any participating school or division when it is available. As the master agreement has just been signed, no other agreements have yet been written. However they will be very similar in content and structure to the MERLIN and schools and/or divisions generic agreement that I am tabling. This is the Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Networks agreement. This is a sample agreement, and I will table that.

The honourable member and I talked about curriculum-developed curricula and school-initiated courses related to computer/information technology education. The information I am tabling today identifies department-developed curricula related to computer/information technology education and the Table 2 identifies school-initiated courses related to computer/information technology education. So it is Table 1 and Table 2 in these documents which I am making available now.

We talked about citizenship in social studies curriculum projects and the role of citizenship in the existing social studies curriculum. An overriding intent of the existing kindergarten to Senior 4 social studies curriculum is to provide students with the resources they will need to participate actively and effectively in our changing society and to become knowledgeable, purposeful and responsible citizens.

Specific citizenship goals include things like developing in students the knowledge, skills, understandings and character traits essential for effective and responsible citizenship in Canada and the world; allowing students the opportunity to preserve and extend a democratic way of life in the context of a changing Canadian society; providing understandings to help students

participate constructively in the economic, civic and legal life of Canada and the world; developing informed students who are able to function effectively within a rapidly changing society, that is, to criticize it constructively and to work to improve it where necessary.

These goals are reflected in the curriculum guides for different grades in the context of a variety of topics. For example, Grade 3 students examine their roles and responsibilities as citizens within their own communities. At Senior 1, the Canadian Studies focus is intended to help students gain a greater understanding of Canada, their roles within our society and the role of Canada within the world. Students explore the question who is a Canadian and examine the concept of citizenship in multicultural Canadian society and in the broader world community.

Now, there is a foundation document, role of citizenship in the Western Canadian Protocol foundation document. The concept of citizenship is of paramount importance to the Western Canadian Protocol foundation document. As stated in the vision, the common curriculum framework for social studies K to 12 will meet the needs and reflect the nature of the 21st Century learner and will have the concept of Canadian citizenship and identity at its heart. The framework will ultimately contribute to a Canadian spirit, a spirit that will be fundamental in creating a sense of belonging for each one of our students as he or she engages in active and responsible citizenship locally, nationally and globally. Citizenship is woven into every section of the foundation document and is the primary statement in the sections entitled Role of Social Studies, Guiding Principles and Social Studies Organizers. Active and effective citizenship is the *raison d'être* of social studies, the reason for learning the knowledge, skills and values of history, geography and other related disciplines. How the foundation document will influence the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework and Manitoba's curriculum is that following jurisdictional consultations on and revisions to the foundation document, the document will provide practical and philosophical directions for the development of the common curriculum framework. Manitoba's social studies curriculum will be based on the common curriculum framework and will

incorporate the learning outcomes related to citizenship.

How will the Pan-Canadian citizen project intersect with the Western Canadian Protocol Social Studies Project? The Pan-Canadian framework of learning expectations for citizenship education is intended to define citizenship expectations and provide direction for their integration into curricula for all subject areas and grades. The Pan-Canadian project, dealing as it does with citizenship alone, has a considerably narrower focus than the Western Canadian Protocol Social Studies Project. The Western Canadian Protocol project will create an entire framework of social studies outcomes for K to 12 with citizenship as one of the major areas of emphasis. The Western Canadian Protocol project will reflect the Pan-Canadian citizenship expectations but will go beyond those and define K-to-12 learning outcomes related to the teaching of history, geography, and other social science disciplines required to achieve citizenship expectations and other social studies expectations. So there is some comment on the issues related to citizenship that we talked about yesterday.

The honourable member asked about the piloting program review process in special education. First she asked where. There are 13 divisions and one independent school who are interested. Here they are: St. Vital School Division No. 6, Turtle Mountain School Division No. 44, Western School Division No. 47, White Horse Plain School Division No. 20, Evergreen School Division No. 22, Fort la Bosse School Division No. 41, Dauphin Ochre School Division No. 33, River East School Division No. 9, Portage la Prairie School Division No. 24, Antler River School Division No. 43, Swan Valley School Division No. 35, Frontier School Division No. 48, Lynn Lake School District, and an independent school, the Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary School.

The other part of the question was really something we discussed at length previously. The program review process involves identifying interest, working with those who express interest to develop the process, focusing initially on Level II and Level III categories of programming with the intent to expand to other

portions of special education later. The lead for all this is the special education policy and program development group, who were with us previously. The program implementation unit will participate as team members, but not as the lead.

The Supplementary Estimates and activity descriptions for program implementation were written prior to the decision to establish the new special education unit. Hence, the activity description for program implementation is not current, since those portions about the program review are transferred to the new special ed unit. I thought it would be good to just point that out to the honourable member.

Ms. Friesen: I want to follow up on questions I asked in Question Period about the alcohol Addictions Foundation and southern Manitoba. The minister received the same letter as I did. They represent hundreds of people, if you include the people whom the parent councils represent, whom the churches represent, whom the municipalities and service clubs represent.

The impression was in Question Period, although it is a very narrow environment, my impression was that the minister was not familiar with the issue. The minister now has his staff here. I wonder if he could tell me what kind of specific responses he has given to those groups and individuals who have written to him. His answers in Question Period were very broad and related to broad budgeting issues rather than to the specific issues of the increasing number of young people who say that the biggest problems they face are derived from alcohol and drug use.

* (1450)

The main points that many of the writers of the letters were making was that in smaller schools in Manitoba there is not the same opportunity to have access to counselling and that the kinds of programs that the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba has been able to launch, both in terms of prevention and in assistance, in rural Manitoba have tended to deal with, perhaps quite naturally, the larger schools in larger centres.

The concern particularly relates to the Prairie Spirit School Division. The minister, I

know, has received many of these letters. I wonder if he could tell us what specific responses he has given. I think he is aware or certainly the department will be aware that this is not the first time this has been raised. The same issue was raised, I think, by school divisions in the central part of Manitoba in the Interlake about a year ago, not perhaps in the same number and not as widespread, but certainly the same basic issue was raised.

How does the Department of Education, how does the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba meet the needs of these young people who are increasingly saying that this is the biggest problem they face?

If the minister looks at the survey that was in the newsletter for fall '98 of the Addictions Foundation, increasingly students seem to say, and it is hard to know how specifically worded the question was, but they seemed to be saying that even knowing the dangers, they will continue, they will perhaps even initiate, perhaps not even having used such substances before, that they will begin to initiate that. The interpretation that the Addictions Foundation attaches to this is, of course, the common one amongst young people that they think they are immune. They think it will affect other people but not themselves; obviously a great area for prevention work in schools, not just the Addictions Foundation but school counsellors, schoolteachers, school principals, as well, obviously, as the youth movements and support services that exist in these areas.

But what the letter writers are saying is that small schools, rural Manitoba, are not well served and that this is a problem which is increasing.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member would be quite incorrect in her impression on this occasion. I do have background in the Health department for nearly three and a half years, and the Addictions Foundation was part of my responsibility. That is where these questions are more appropriately asked, in the Estimates of the Department of Health, but they certainly are related to our schools system, and the concern is certainly real and well-founded.

Even though my children did not attend a small school—and neither did I when it came to high school—some of the concerns are the same in places like Brandon and smaller places for sure, that given the infrastructure of your average rural community, the opportunities for a whole lot of recreation are—you could say limited, certainly not as extensive as you would find those opportunities in somewhere like the city of Winnipeg. But, interestingly, in cities where there is ample opportunity for constructive activity, there are still the incidents of students getting involved in substance abuse and alcohol abuse and addictions issues generally.

But I know that in some places where there are fewer more constructive activities that students can engage in, this becomes quite a concern. I am very aware of that, and I am aware of the programming the honourable member was referring to because the AFM was bringing that in back in the days when I was Health minister. I met with principals and teachers back then and received mail back then about the popularity, if you like, of the program or the usefulness of it, and I was made aware that it was not everywhere.

I guess it is based on—you would have to ask the Health minister of today more about the program requirements and that sort of thing of this program, but I know that governments and school divisions do the best they can to meet all the needs that they can do within available resources. So I do recommend that the question be raised with the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson). When the honourable member asked it today in Question Period, I leaned over to my seatmate and told him that he might expect to hear a question of this nature coming his direction.

I know the Addictions Foundation does the best it can with the resources that it has at its disposal to prevent, to educate, and to take part in appropriate activities, activities that studies demonstrate are the most likely to achieve some level of success in preventing addictive or abusive behaviour, self-abusive behaviour. I know that we should not close our eyes to the fact that even the young among us get themselves involved in substance abuse. We know that there is a lot more of that than we

would like to have, and so we have to remain vigilant and challenge the Addictions Foundation to use its resources as best it can to achieve the maximum level of service with the available resources.

* (1500)

So I cannot really get into a lot of detail. The mail that I have been getting I am sharing with my colleague the Minister of Health so that he can be aware of the concerns that are being raised and be aware, I think, of the—I used the word "popularity." It is probably the wrong word to describe a useful program or a valuable program, but being valuable, I guess, that is why I can use the word popular, because it certainly is relevant to the needs. I know it is maybe a part of Canadian rural life that exposure to substances such as alcohol is something that happens. I think a lot of people can bear me out on this that sometimes abuse is the result of experimentation with various substances. Sometimes even just the experimentation is the abuse. Sometimes it is illegal, especially if you are under age when it comes to alcohol, for example. So I have already made the Minister of Health aware of the issue. I know he heard the questions in the House today that were raised by the honourable member. I invite her to raise those questions with the honourable Minister of Health as well.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, one aspect of Education's responsibility in this matter is the health and physical education curriculum which has been delayed. It has been delayed, I think, now at least 18 months. I know that there are draft curriculums which are being evaluated, and I wonder if the minister could tell me how the draft curriculums for health and physical education at each level in the school system are going to address this issue.

Mr. McCrae: The health and phys ed curriculum, both the old one and the one that is the subject of work presently, the new one, both address issues related to addictions at appropriate levels in the school experience, and I am not as familiar today with the actual content in a detailed way. I assume the new one being worked on, with the addictions issues being treated very similarly or identically with the old one, must be felt by the professionals that are

involved in the development of curriculum, must be felt to be relevant and appropriate to deal with the issues that this matter raises for students and teachers in the education environment. Work is underway. I just do not know if the new health and phys ed curriculum, if we do not get that in front of the teachers early enough, I do not want to impose on them a burden that is not reasonable. It has been suggested in the past that with New Directions in Education that we may be asked more than, in the view of some at least, what might be reasonable for the field to address themselves so that they can prepare themselves. So I want to make sure that this is not imposed and rushed through in a way that places an unfairly heavy burden on an already very busy teaching profession.

Just by way of additional information, the Child and Youth Secretariat has an audiotape and a teacher manual which has gone out, respecting fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect. This is for teachers to assist them in dealing with fetal alcohol students. The Special Education Review references the need for K-to-4 counsellors, and, of course, that is something that we are working on. I think that is as much as I can say at this point.

Oh, yes, the students-at-risk formula grant can be used to support children who themselves are addicted or involved with drugs and alcohol. So is not like there are no supports at all, but I know the value that is recognized in the Addictions Foundation program and I can understand why everybody would like to be able to have that in their schools. There are, by the way, in the funding formula some consideration for small schools. That may well be part of the consideration of small schools and divisions in the handling of their budgets. So that is a number of points made in response to the one question.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister tell me about another part of this department which is going to create a process—and I am quoting on page 61—that links categorical funding with student outcome data? Can the minister tell me what areas that will be directed at?

Mr. McCrae: I can give the honourable member a couple of examples of the linking of

categorical funding with hoped-for or expected outcomes. We could talk about special education—no, we will talk first about the English language development for native students. That is an area where it might be appropriate to link categorical funding to some results, because the honourable member was asking questions about that before, and I wonder myself. I mean, if we are going to have English language development for native students and we are spending X number of dollars, this is not unlike the whole system of testing, too, to try to ensure that we are getting value for our education dollar.

I do not think the department is all that convinced yet that the English language development for native students dollars are getting the kinds of results that one might reasonably expect. I think that is an observation that representatives of the department might make, and I think we need to try to find out why that is the case.

A second example would be the linking of our Special Education Review and linking funding for that with outcomes. We have spent, I think, a fair bit of time discussing what it is we want to do and how we want to do it. We do need to know that we are not just spinning our wheels, not just spending valuable resources without knowing that there is any hope of a good outcome. I know that the challenges in special education are very significant, and I know that the needs that present at our schools seem to be coming more and more volume of need all the time and more and more diversity of need. We really need some talented people, which may really be the key, and yet we will let Ms. Loeppky and her group get on with this work.

* (1510)

Simply, I know that we are spending double the amount of money we used to spend for the special education requirements of Manitoba children at \$111 million, and we do not have sufficient assurance that we are getting the best results for those \$111 million because I think that it has not developed that way. It is time that we did turn our attention to that through our categorical funding. We simply need to know that our kids are getting absolutely the best that is possible with the money invested because we

know that they can do so much better given the appropriate intervention during their school years and before that even.

That is part of what we are doing with special education and the work that is being undertaken, which we have discussed at some length. We do want to know something about outcomes. We want to develop the practices that are best able to bring about those outcomes and to be as consistent as we can given the diversity of problems that Manitoba's children are presenting to the schools as they enter the system.

The staff from the Program Implementation Branch are working with the indicators unit to investigate outcomes for students who are at risk not to succeed. So I think the honourable member is right to raise the issue in this way. We simply do need to get some results that we can somehow measure and assure ourselves that we are getting value for the money. It is a lot of money, \$111 million is a lot of money, and we know there is an extensive challenge there. It is double the money we spent 10 years ago, and we need to know whether it should be double or whether it should be more. We think it needs to be more. We know it needs to be more, and we have invested \$2 million additionally this year to get us going on our special education challenges.

Hopefully, as we move through the process of implementation, we will identify some practices that can be applied to large numbers of special needs kids in our system. Even after we have done all the best we can and identified all the best practices, there are going to be children for whom none of the programs would seem to have been appropriately designed. I know that is going to happen. So we are going to have to rely on professionals in the school system and help develop their skills, their maximum. If they have some skills that they can pass on that are useful in helping our kids, then that is going to have to be part of it, too.

I have no illusions that we can have a one-size-fits-all system for the children in Manitoba who have special needs, because, as I have said, those needs are quite diverse indeed.

Ms. Friesen: The minister has framed his response in the context of a remedial program as well as the special needs program. In the Estimates book it is actually phrased very broadly: linking categorical funding with student outcome data. Is it the minister's intention to link student outcome data on testing with categorical funding?

Mr. McCrae: There are a number of indicators that are being looked at, or will be looked at, as we continue with our work. Graduation rates, of course, are relevant to any study of our system. Truancy trends, a very important issue. Student performance on a school basis, on a provincial basis. All these things are relevant. I know that there are other systemic issues that we need to look at, not only in relation to our funding and our programming for special needs. I am becoming more and more alarmed by the truancy that I have come across as I visit schools in Manitoba. I know I had to go to school every day, or else I was in big trouble. I do not know if that is the case in every circumstance. If I was not in school, I had to have a pretty good reason for it. I am not sure that what I am seeing follows that particular tradition. That is an issue that is of concern to me.

In various places in my travels, discussions with teachers and parents, the issue of decorum in the classroom is really a matter of concern for Manitobans, the way people conduct themselves. I am hearing more and more complaints, and from teachers too, about their ability to maintain order and decorum in the classroom so that they can carry on and have a positive learning environment. That is something that is of concern to me. The word "respect" comes up. There is a lack of respect in some quarters. I am concerned about that. School safety, the safety of our schools, is important, too, as we address the indicators that tell us whether we have a successful education system under our direction or not. I know we have an excellent education system and excellent people in it, but attention to all of these things is imperative if we are going to continue to be a successful society.

* (1520)

A number of indicators are being looked at, like graduation rates and truancy trends and

student performance on a school basis and provincial basis, linking categorical grants like special needs and students at risk and English language development for native students and early literacy and intervention, linking those grants to indicators and to outcomes such as graduation rates, attendance, truancy, behaviour, student performance, both school and provincial. All of that kind of a linking is something that certainly should be looked at and examined and re-examined.

I do not think we should forget, though, to remember to be mindful of what school business people tell me. I am speaking of superintendents and their secretary-treasurers and people like that and directors who suggest that we have to pay attention to the base funding level for school divisions, too. They are quick to be very grateful to the government for the various categorical funds that are made available for things like professional development and technology development and Reading Recovery and those sorts of categorical things, yet they say that now we need to address this again next year because you have to be mindful that you have appropriate levels for the base operations of school divisions, too.

They are absolutely right. You need to draw the appropriate balance each and every year in working with our school funding advisory committee, which has representation from school divisions, the independent schools, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, trustees, superintendents and parents. That is a committee that we need to have looking at funding issues each and every year, because it is probably true to say that you do not need to have the identical mix every year. That is why in a given year the government through its consultations will become aware that there is lot of money needed for wiring and cabling in our classrooms and in our schools. There is money needed for more professional development because of the demands that curriculum is making on teachers, that New Directions calls on teachers to be developed professionally a little more or a little less or whatever, but certainly more is usually what we hear and in recent times for good reasons because of changes in the system. So we need to listen carefully to what the funding committee tells us.

We are always, all of us as—I do not think I call myself an educator, but I guess technically that is what I am now as minister, but, Mr. Chairman, I am very interested in graduation rates. I am very interested in attendance. I am getting more and more interested in that all the time and issues related to truancy. What are those kids doing if they are not in school and if they are not very, very sick or have a broken leg or something like that which was my excuse for not going to school, and I never was fortunate enough to have a broken leg.

So I think that we need to get back to that kind of attachment to education on the part of parents and children, as well. I am talking about truancy at extremely disturbingly young ages. This is really bothersome for me to know that there are parents in Manitoba who, for whatever reasons, do not see to it that their children are sent off to school. I visit classrooms and I think, well, we sure do not have a teacher-student ratio problem here, and that is because so many kids are absent. Sometimes it is for good and legitimate reasons, because there is a flu bug going around or something like that. But I am quite concerned when I am told by teachers that, oh, well, it is actually quite a lot larger class but a lot of the kids are not here today, and maybe that was the case yesterday, too, and maybe that will be the case tomorrow.

It is a certain type of issue for a kid in Grade 11 or 12 to be skipping school for whatever reason. It is quite another matter for a child in Grade 3 or Grade 2 or Grade 1 who, simply through neglect or whatever reason, is not even sent to school. I find that extremely discouraging and calling for some kind of attention on my part but also on the part of the Partners in Education, including the members around this table, including the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed). I do not know what the rate of truancy is in Killarney or somewhere like that, but I am assuming, if there is any truancy, that it is a matter of concern.

We need to analyze all these linkages to see possible cause and effect or no effect. We need to understand that, and we certainly have excellent education professionals in this province and in this department of government and others, including the people in the field, who

can help us examine those linkages to see how improvements can be made.

What if we find, for example, that grants for English language development are shown to have no effect? The days are over when we can measure our success by the amount of money we spend. This has certainly characterized the past in Manitoba, and we were never more poorly served than when we simply measured the value of our efforts by the amount of money we spent. There are actually people living, alive and breathing in Manitoba, who think that the more money you spend on welfare, the better your antipoverty program. There are people like that in this province, hopefully, not very many, but I know there are some. I just think that that is the wrong-headed approach that got us into so much trouble. You know, cumulatively in the last 11 years, we have spent over \$6 billion to pay our creditors on interest charges alone, over \$6 billion wasted for programs that were long since bought, paid for, enjoyed and discontinued.

You know, I can understand doing that, to borrow money to buy your house. I can see that; you need a roof over your head. But, as soon as you start borrowing money to pay for the groceries and to pay for the things that you consume on a daily or weekly basis, and you are borrowing money to do that, you know you are going into the hole. Well, I wish that we had, I wish we were in a position to spend another \$500 million in various priority areas in the last few years when federal shortfalls of funding have been such a problem.

We have had to backfill all that. We did it and it was hard, but we could have used more. We could have used more, but, no, our hard-earned taxpayers' dollars that were spent years ago are now still having to be raised through taxation to pay for the excesses of more than a decade ago. I genuinely regret that. I was here for part of that. Certainly, I did not support it, but I was here for part of that. For that, I feel ashamed as a Manitoban that I was close enough to that sort of decision making, and yet I had no opportunity, no power to do anything about it.

* (1530)

An Honourable Member: How do you sleep at night?

Mr. McCrae: Well, I sleep at night knowing—the honourable Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) asks how I sleep at night. I answer by saying: I sleep at night by knowing that good solid stewardship has replaced that particular approach to governance, and we now are able, in an orderly way, to discharge that horrendous debt, which really only was raised over the period of about seven years, but it was a seven-year spending splurge, seven years of profligacy, and it is going to take us 30 years to come out from under it. Thanks to the people of Manitoba, I guess I should say, for having the wisdom to go along with a system that understands that you cannot live outside your means, you cannot live beyond your means. You certainly cannot do it for very long. We did it too long as it was as a provincial jurisdiction. I regret it very much, but I am very happy that we are on the road to a better way of doing the business of the people of Manitoba.

You certainly do not do the kids with special education requirements any favour by frittering away all the resources of the province and sending it off to New York and Tokyo and places like that to some people we do not even know, who do not live here, who just have a lot of money to lend us so that we can pay them back at usurious rates of interest. Well, I just think that, if we had not done that, today we would have \$500-million worth of flexibility. To the extent that that \$500 million is sent off to the creditors, that is how much democracy we have been deprived of. We go into our budget year with no choice whatsoever about that as a priority. Our democracy has been assaulted to that extent.

I simply wanted to put that on the record that it continues to bother me. It is kind of like a hangover that I have, having seen so many of my own personal tax dollars being used, and I still do. It is not just my dollars; it is all my fellow Manitobans' dollars that are being spent to pay for things that we have long since finished having as a society. I really find that regrettable.

The government I represent here has been taking very responsible steps to try to straighten out that mess that was created in this province. It has not been done, we are on the road, we have the plan, but, as I say, it takes so many

years, I could have great-grandchildren by the time the leftover of that binge has been discharged. I cannot think of anything more irresponsible to future generations. Talk about caring. Anybody who cares about children would not get us into such a mess. That being said, we have got ourselves on the way to getting ourselves out of that mess, and in doing so, we do need to analyze linkages to look at causes and effects and whether we are getting value for the money. So we do need to make decisions when we find that dollars spent for things like English language development, when we cannot see that we are getting the kind of effect that the level of funding suggests we should, then we do need to look at it pretty hard and make some decisions about it. So I hope that is helpful.

Ms. Friesen: The outcomes that the minister has mentioned, some of them are measurable, some are not. Decorum in the classroom, lack of respect, safety of schools, those are many a parent's concerns about schools but very difficult to measure them when one is determining funding. Graduation rates, yes, measurable, and the minister actually has that information. Tests, the minister has that information.

I was very interested when the minister raised truancy because that is an issue I have raised with previous ministers, and I have been essentially told that is the division's responsibility, that the minister did not know what truancy rates were and did not have any comparative data across the province and had no means of getting it. So any Minister of Education in a tight corner always resorts to the partnership argument that, yes, that is the division's responsibility. So I commend the minister for being interested in that and for raising that as an issue because I think in a number of divisions and amongst parent councils that is certainly an issue.

Some divisions, of course, have restored truancy officers that they had cut at various times as faced with the difficult budgets with which they had been presented. I do think that is something that I look forward to getting some information from the minister next session in Estimates should there be a next session. I do not know whether we are having a fall election or a spring election, but if there is another

Estimates with this government, that would be one of the areas of data collection that we would be interested in looking at.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to pass this line if he is ready.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 16.2. School Programs (e) Program Implementation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,082,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,253,800—pass.

16.2.(f) Student Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,930,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$697,000—pass.

Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,045,900 for Education and Training, School Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Item 16.3. Bureau de l'éducation française (a) Division Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$143,200. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Friesen: We are generally looking at Bureau de l'éducation française here, so I think if it is agreeable to you and the minister, Mr. Chairman, I will ask the few general questions that I have on the bureau, and then we can pass all of the bureau lines.

Mr. McCrae: I am happy if the honourable member asks the questions. I cannot guarantee that she will get full and complete answers until I have indicated that I feel I have answered the questions, but as long as she is okay with that. If she has questions that I cannot answer today, I will undertake to—

Ms. Friesen: Absolutely.

Mr. McCrae: Fair enough.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 16.3.(a) Division Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$143,200—pass?

Mr. Ed Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Friesen: No, what I meant was I will be skipping across lines, but we will pass the whole block.

The areas I want to ask questions then on the bureau, I am looking for an update on the federal-provincial agreements and French language education, including the Collège St. Boniface if it is convenient to do that at this stage. I am interested in the court case. Obviously there are limited issues that can be raised here about the court case, but if the minister has some reflections on this that he is able to put on the record, I think I would be interested in knowing what the government's position is on this. It, I would say, came as a surprise to me. I had understood that there was agreement between the government and the division scolaire over the issues of the apportioning of French language instruction.

* (1540)

Thirdly, I am interested in the increase in the amount of funding for this section of the department, and there certainly is a considerable increase, much of it I believe allocated to the preparation and marking of tests. So I wonder if the minister could give me some update on what is anticipated as the outcomes for that section of the department.

Mr. McCrae: Just recently, last week I think it was, maybe a week before that, I joined the Honourable Ron Duhamel at the St. Boniface College to announce the five-year agreement that we have with the federal government through the department headed up by the Honourable Sheila Cops. That \$6 million is the provincial part of that agreement. It is to help them with their programs and to develop new programs and to increase enrollment programs like business administration, multimedia program.

This five-year agreement ends March 31, 2003, and sets the foundation for the sustainable future of Manitoba's only French language university and community college. It is designed to enable the college to ensure access to complete and high-quality programs, develop new programs in French, improve services to students, carry out special teacher support projects, develop and enhance teaching tools by

using multimedia technology, and increase recruitment efforts to attract more Francophone students.

As I said, a total of \$12 million will be provided on an equal cost-sharing basis over the duration of the agreement. The flow of the funding was determined by the resource requirements as set out in the business plan of the college, which forms an integral part of the agreement.

In 1998-99, there was \$521,000 from Canada under that and \$763,700 from Manitoba. In this fiscal year, there is going to be \$1.675 million from Canada and \$1,043,700 from Manitoba. In 2001, there will be \$2 million from Canada and \$1,397,500 from Manitoba. In 2001-2002, there will be \$1,275,000 from Canada and \$1,397,500 from Manitoba. In 2002 and 2003, there will be \$529,000 from Canada and \$1,397,600 from Manitoba, in total \$6 million from each of the two jurisdictions over the five-year period.

The newly signed Canada-Manitoba subsidiary agreement on the development of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface provides operating support only. Canada and Manitoba are expecting to negotiate separate cost-sharing agreements that will provide capital funding for the addition of a student centre and a multimedia centre as well as for the upgrading of the college's heating system. The combined costs of these projects were estimated to be in excess of \$3.2 million in 1998, but we made some progress. I know that we could always wish we could make more progress. We have made some significant progress. Those are pretty significant levels of funding.

With respect to the Official Languages Programs and Administrative Services which is part of it, I think part of the question—yes, it is part of the question raised by the honourable member. For the Bureau de l'éducation française, there is an expansion of standards testing activities, including the development of testing for français immersion at the Senior 4 level. That is \$502,800. There is money for the development of a sciences humaines framework of learning outcomes under the Western Canadian protocol project and the preparatory

work leading to the national conference on the interchange of Canadian studies to be held in Winnipeg in May 2000, and that is going to cost \$77,400. The development of independent study program, teacher-mediated program for distance delivery education in français langue première, Senior 3, and français langue seconde immersion, Senior 3, that is a \$40,000 issue; the translation of various educational renewal curriculum documents and other materials from English to French, \$269,700; general salary increases and adjustments and other factors for \$241,200, which represents a total of \$1,131,100.

Now, I cannot talk a lot about the court case the honourable member referred to, simply for the obvious reasons. I am advised that the parents' association has filed a Statement of Claim in the Court of Queen's Bench claiming that the province has failed in its legal commitments as set out under the Supreme Court ruling of March of '93, wherein it instructed the province to create a Francophone government structure. I guess the best way to describe things when you have things before the courts is look at what is available in the courts or listen to what is said in the courts. That is about the best I can do. I do not want to do anything or say anything that will have an impact, because nothing I do or say should have an impact on that particular case.

The claim makes certain assertions and talks about money. We obviously do not see it that way, and we make our case according to our pleadings and through our legal representation. It has not proceeded to court at this time, and, as a matter of fact, certain of the legal papers are still being exchanged, I guess, through the discovery process that is part of a lawsuit.

* (1550)

Ms. Friesen: So I am understanding on the last issue from the minister that the government has not yet written and deposed its claim?

Mr. McCrae: I understand we have put in our Statement of Defence. I do have some background in the court system. It is very often the case where at the initial stages a plaintiff will make certain specific allegations in a Statement

of Claim and the defendant, just in order to be part of the whole thing, will simply put in a Statement of Defence basically denying everything. From there, things get refined through the pleadings, through discovery, through the exchange of information. Defendants very often want to find out exactly, in a more specific way, what it is they have to defend, and plaintiffs very often try to get defendants to be more specific, too.

I guess that is the process that we are in at this point.

Ms. Friesen: I have a few more questions in this area. The minister mentioned \$269,000 for the provision of materials in French for new curriculums. This is certainly one of the areas that I hear constantly from parents and teachers, is that in both the immersion programs and the Français programs, that there simply have not been sufficient resource materials available in French to keep up with new curriculum.

Could the minister then perhaps be more specific on what materials have been prepared, and is there a schedule for the preparation of further materials over the next 12 months to meet some of those issues that people have been raising? I know they have been raising them with the minister as well.

Mr. McCrae: I am sensitive to that concern whenever I hear it raised, and I am trying to get a really good handle on at what point we are at, because I think initially that certainly came out, and as we move further along into implementation in almost all of the different areas, I am hearing less and less of that type of complaint as materials are being made available and teachers are trying to become familiar with it. As they get more familiar with it, the criticism just subsides more and more all the time. In respect of the whole testing thing, I note in the papers yesterday that the honourable member is quoted in there as, you know, getting a little more specific. Grade 12, you kind of tend to favour Grade 12 tests now, and 6 and 9, I am not so sure about. I would have to get the paper out to get the exact words. But, you know, we keep going in this direction, we will have you demanding more tests out of us before you

are done, and we will look at that request if and when it comes forward.

However, with respect to the \$269,000 question that the member asked about materials in French for new curriculum, these are all in French, but I will do my best to translate for myself since I am a little more respectful of my Francophone compatriots than to abuse them by having them listen to my French.

So there is a policy document for the course offerings via the Internet, if I am translating correctly, which is a 50-page document, and it is anticipated that that would be translated for use by July of this year. How is that? Not bad, eh? There is another one called IMYM, which is an interdisciplinary multimedia document, and it has 250 pages. That one is expected to be available for August 1999. Another IMYM one, this one is an IMYM 7, 2000-page document expected to be Services de traduction. I take it that means translated by that time, by October of 1999. Another one, Sécurité en éducation physique, 200-page document for November of 1999. IMYM 6, 250 pages for January 2000. Collaborating for Growth, 50 pages, and that is ready January 2000. S1, half-a-credit transition course, 150 pages, November of 1999. S1, another transition one, 150 pages, for November 1999. Applications 30S.

Ms. Friesen: What are we transitioning from, to and from?

Mr. McCrae: It is for struggling grade niners, this Cours de transition. It is in mathematics, and there are two of them, one half-credit and another one that is a half-credit. One hundred and fifty pages each, and they are both going to be available November 1999. Then there is another one called—I will stick with the French since I am not sure always what it means—Appliqué 30S Programme d'études, 300 pages. I know the honourable member knows what these mean. May of '99. Programme d'études. What is that? Mathématiques. Appliqué 30S exercices, 300 pages, for April of '99. Same course, mathematics. Pre-calculus, 40S, 350 pages, March of 2000. Pre-calculus, 40S Exercices accumulatives, to go with the one I just mentioned, 300 pages, January 2000. Pre-calculus, 40S Cours autodidactiques, self-taught,

450 pages, April 2000. Appliqué 40S Programme d'études, still math, 300 pages, March 2000. Appliqué 40S exercices, 250 pages, February 2000. This is all for math when we are talking about applied math, pre-calculus math, and appliqué math.

* (1600)

This is for consumer math; all the rest of them are for consumer math. Consommateur 40S, programme d'études, 250 pages for March 2000; Consommateur 40S, guide d'élèves, it is a student guide, V, 180 pages for February 2000; Consommateur 40S, another student guide, VI, 180 pages, March 2000; Consommateur 40S, another student self-directed, V, 250 pages, February 2000; Consommateur 40S, self-directed, VI, 250 pages, March 2000; The Learning Equation, that is a CD-ROM; and then there is Mathématiques Pre-calculus II.

What we have here is a total of 6,910 pages. Okay, that is \$672,550, and \$270,000 of that is new money. So that is a lot of information for the teachers. There is no doubt in my mind that they are going to be busy with this and challenged by it, but that is the information and schedule that is expected that this information can be made available.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make sure I am understanding it correctly. The department, then, has focused on the preparation of documents in mathematics for français and immersion programs. I wanted to ask further to that: how much of this material is translated? How much is prepared in French? Of the translation, how much is done in-house, and how much is contracted out?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, math, then science. The honourable member asked about the translation. All of it is in English and needs to be translated, and the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship looks after that. I guess you would have to ask them how they do it, but some of that is done by the department itself, some of it is contracted out.

We do know that this year the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship's (Mrs. Vodrey) department is getting under this

budget four new staff years. I am sure some of that resource would be used on the projects that we have been talking about. [interjection] They are a dedicated staff for us, for Education.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to track the cost of that. Where would I find that in these Estimates? Is there any allocation of funds for translation of the materials we have been talking about in these Estimates, or is it simply handed over to Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and it appears in their budget?

Mr. McCrae: Culture, Heritage and Citizenship is doing the work. They bill us for it, and we have the \$675,500 in here for all of that. It can be broken down better this time next year actually.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I have, I think, only two or three more questions in this area, if the minister is scheduling his staff, and then we can move to the next section.

I am interested this year in the extension of French language bursaries to Grade 11 and Grade 12 students. I wonder if the minister could tell me what impact that has had on the number of bursaries granted. I am speaking of the summer language programs. [interjection] That is one. The second one is longer. I want to deal with the decline of Basic French, which we have raised in Question Period.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member asked about bursaries in French language for Grades 11 and 12. I remind the honourable member that this is through the Official Languages in Education Program. It is all federal money but here is some information about it. The summer language bursary program, the improvement of linguistic skills of post-secondary students through participation in the summer language bursary program.

* (1610)

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I will elaborate. Yes, I know it is a federal program that is administered through this department. What I

am interested in is that this year, I understand, the rules were changed, I assume, in consultation to extend the program to include Grades 11 and 12 students. I am wondering what impact that has had on Manitoba. Were there applications from Grades 11 and 12 students? Has there been uptake in this area? What kind of impact has it had on the post-secondary students who, in the past, have been the users of this system?

Mr. McCrae: We may be able to get more detailed response to the applications, the uptake of that before the day is out, but I would encourage the honourable member to go to her next point. At this point we will go to work on providing some answer in detail for the honourable member.

Ms. Friesen: I have raised in Question Period with the minister the issue of the decline in the number of students taking Basic French in Manitoba. This section of the department I believe keeps the records of the number of students taking Basic French. I wonder if the minister is able either today or at a later date to table longitudinal studies say of the last three or four years what has been happening across Manitoba in Basic French.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member did indeed raise this question. It is about declining enrollment in Basic French courses due to the introduction of New Directions curriculum document. I guess I cannot off the top of my head want to agree. I do not want to agree that it would be due to the New Directions curriculum document. Basic French never has been mandatory. There has been a decline in Manitoba's Basic French enrollment from a high of 90,811 in '89-90 to this year's total of 72,905. This represents a decline of 17,906 students or 19.7 percent, almost 20 percent.

The New Directions curriculum document at first reading did reduce the possible allocation of time to optional supplementary courses, such as Basic French. However, that was not the intent of the new policy. In a letter to superintendents and principals in February of 1996, the minister at that time indicated to the field that any school offering Basic French or other second languages could reallocate a small portion of English language arts time to meet the required time

allocation to the Basic French course. The Province of Manitoba is concerned about all its students and their language needs as they meet the challenges of the 21st Century. However, the reduction in Basic French enrollment can be attributed to factors other than a perceived change in curriculum policy.

The honourable Minister of Housing and of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) is acutely concerned with language and the ability to use the English language in a constructive and extremely clever way. He has demonstrated in the House virtually every time he has had opportunity to speak his own proficiency, certainly in the English language.

An Honourable Member: Jack, I think there is an element of irony here. I think we should talk about German and expanding German, at least not letting it decline from where it is.

Mr. McCrae: Well, at least he does not pretzelize, I know that much.

The reduction of Basic French enrollment can be attributed to factors other than a perceived change in curriculum policy. Do not forget the decline in federal funding for French education has undermined our efforts to fully support this program. The offering of other optional supplementary courses, such as technology-related subjects at the junior high level, influence choices that students make. While Basic French courses steadily increased in the '80s, in the '90s there has been a shift away from French courses to other language courses. We have seen an increase in popularity in Spanish and Asiatic languages as our province and our country become more involved in commercial ventures in Central and South America as well as in Asia.

The whole search for unity in our country has had something to do with this, I am sure. The province continues to work with the federal government to reinstate previous levels of funding for minority language education. It is simply not fair, true, accurate to say that New Directions is the culprit here. In fact, New Directions, here we go again, I do not know how this comes up. Well, I do know how it comes up, and I feel like I need to make a response.

New Directions are very, very supportable. I do not want to go on with this for too long, because I know the honourable member has other things she wants to get on with, but it is certainly important to note the difference in approaches that are offered to the people of Manitoba respecting education. Maybe I will just leave it at that.

Ms. Friesen: I want to follow up with that in two areas. One is that the minister's argument is that students are making choices, so essentially it is the market argument that Spanish and Asiatic languages are taking up student choices in languages, where French is losing. So I wonder, first of all, if the minister could tell me which Asiatic languages, which high schools, and how many students that are taught, similarly in Spanish. Are these new courses, or should we say what we would need to do is to look at the increase in the teaching in those areas since '89-90 to see in fact if that does offer evidence for the minister's argument?

Secondly, I am interested in how the decline in the number of students choosing French has affected the grants to Manitoba from the official languages agreement.

Mr. McCrae: I am not going to answer the last part of the question until I am satisfied that I would not in any way jeopardize the outcome of proceedings that might be going on before the courts, that being grants to—is that the question, or are we talking about something different?

Ms. Friesen: No, we are talking Basic French. We are not talking français. It is Basic French. I am wondering if the decline in enrollment in Basic French has had an effect upon the grants from the federal government or the agreements with the federal government for second language education.

My other part of that question was essentially: where is the evidence on Spanish and Asiatic languages? I would be interested in looking at that.

Mr. McCrae: I am going to table, I understand I can make a list of new enrollments in Asiatic languages and Spanish. I understand I have some

information about that. If that turns out to be true, I will be tabling it.

I do, yes, I do make the market argument as it has been characterized by the honourable member, but I do not make the case that French is losing out to the Asiatic and Spanish. I think that if there is a decline in Basic French language enrollment, I have no science here that can link it up directly with those types of choices. I mean, it may be that it has to do with other things too, choices being made about technology or choices being made about other subject areas. I would not make a direct point that French is losing out to Asiatic languages or Spanish. I do not think that you can do that, not with precision at least. I do not think it can be done with precision. It may be the honourable member is right about it to some extent. To what extent, I am not able to say. It is quite possible, I suppose, although we just do not have a clear way to know that the 20 percent, we think it is quite possible that the federal funding has hurt Basic French enrollment, but again it is very hard to say.

* (1620)

Let us say there are four or five reasons for this happening. I do not know how much of the reason is the fault of the federal government, how much is because of other choices respecting other languages or other course offerings. I simply do not know that. I know that we do not hear as much these days about the value of learning the French language as we did during the '80s. I know that for a fact. I know that in the case of one of my daughters, it was a case of, she had the Basic French from school, but not enough to be able to work in the language and felt that she may have been passed over in favour of a bilingual candidate for a job that came up in Montreal. She is now thinking of taking another run at that but sprucing up her French in preparation for it. But that is not necessarily the experience of large, growing numbers of Manitobans. If you look at what is happening in Quebec since they elected a separatist government, there are people not so much attracted to that province anymore. In fact, they are seeing a decline in people's willingness to stay around. I mean, I am not speaking of Francophone people so much as I

am Anglophone people, who are looking for opportunities outside that province.

So I think this really gets us into a larger issue that goes to the very substance of our country, which is very dear to my heart as one who has been involved in those discussions. I do not think we talk about this as much as we did in the '80s. I do not think that it is emphasized as much. That may be another reason. It may be not seen in some households as being as essential to a successful future as it used to be. I do not know. That is just some of my thinking on the point.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I raise it as a matter of concern, Mr. Chairman. I raise it as a matter of concern with the minister, because it seems to me if there is not—the Basic French is generally not enough to get you a job, but it is enough to give you the basis to go on. It is enough to give you the interest and the sense of accomplishment to go on in that language.

What concerns me is that we are not emphasizing it in New Directions, that the acquisition of a second language, be it French, German, Spanish, or otherwise, is not part of the New Directions thrust. It is one of the areas that I think is the mark of the kind of education which we ought to have in Manitoba, both as a multicultural province and as a keystone province. Very concerned that we are seeing students graduate and will increasingly see them graduate without even basic French or basic German, basic Spanish, another language.

It is an important educational tool, it is an important cultural tool, it is important for Manitoba in the global economy. It is important I think for Manitoba graduates that they not cut themselves off from seven million people. That I think is what we are saying when we create curriculum patterns which seem to discourage the acquisition of some elements of a second language.

It is not the case in other provinces. Some other provinces have what I call a narrow curriculum framework, such as Manitoba does, but not all of them do. Certainly Quebec is one that does not. British Columbia is another. Both of them have important international popu-

lations. The minister may want to think that people are moving out of Quebec. Yes, some are, but increasingly people are moving into the island of Montreal and Montreal is becoming an international community. Our students without those languages are not going to be able to participate in one of the two major cities in Canada. That really disturbs me.

The message that is being sent from the Department of Education on this I think is a serious one. It is one that I urge the minister to look at. I am not saying it just in the context of French, I am looking at the creation of international cities. Montreal is doing it, Vancouver is doing it, Toronto obviously is. The kind of education system we have here and the kind of enabling of the acquisition of second languages I think is something that the Department of Education, the minister in particular, ought to look at.

I know that from the perspective of the teachers of French language that there have been a number of proposals made to the minister about ways in which French can be encouraged in the curriculum. I assume that other language teachers have made the same case. I know that certainly the parents for German education have made this case.

I wonder what the response of the minister is, overall, to the kind of education that we are encouraging in Manitoba, the idea of a Manitoba graduate who will have some familiarity with a second language.

In many cases in Manitoba we have that fantastic opportunity to have children with three and four languages. I simply do not think we are taking advantage of it. I have raised this with numbers of ministers. It is a great disappointment to me that we see this 20 percent decline in French language. I look forward to seeing the statistics for other languages.

I draw this relationship between the kind of province which Manitoba is, the kind of province it could become, and the teaching of second and the encouragement of third and fourth languages.

I look at Gordon Bell graduation, for example, the high school in my own area. You

know, there are some years in that graduating class when there are 15 to 20 languages represented. I know that that is not an isolated occurrence. I am sure that the Chairman here also has a number of languages, particularly Spanish, represented in his constituency, Spanish, German, English, and we could have given them French.

That is a tremendous opportunity for any province. It actually sets us off to some extent from Saskatchewan, which does not have the same. It has French, and it has German. It does not have the same levels of Spanish; it does not have the same levels, I think, of Asiatic languages that we have. That is an opportunity for Manitoba. It is going to take a while to turn that ship of education around in the languages area, and I urge the minister, not just in French but in other languages as well, to take a serious look at New Directions, at the acquisition of languages generally in the Manitoba curriculum and to link that to the economic future of Manitoba.

Mr. McCrae: It is very hard to respond in any way on that one except to say that that sounds like a very important point the honourable member makes. I do not take any pleasure in any decline that would have the effect of making us less competitive, not only in a business sense but in a cultural sense. So I appreciate what the honourable member is saying about this, and I appreciate her saying it about variety and number of language opportunities, but certainly with regard to French language basic course offering and course enrollment. I think the honourable member makes good points in that regard.

Back to the summer bursary question. The expected total overall Grade 11 plus secondary is 240. The breakdown is Grade 11, 36; post-secondary 204. Given that last year the post-secondary total alone was 235 and this year will likely be 204, there is a decline in the post-secondary uptake, but we do not need to read that as a trend, I am advised, since the post-secondary total for 1997-98 was still less than 195.

* (1630)

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Friesen: No, I will not read it as a trend, I hope it is not. I just want to put on the record that I have had some experience of those programs and they are fantastic. Some of the teaching in those programs is amongst the best teaching that I think goes on in the country, and it happens right across the country. The mix of students who go to those programs is phenomenal in itself. I think it is the kind of program that I hope the minister will give thought to expanding, and I know to expanding in the sense of making known to students.

I do my best every year in my class to promote these. I will not say it is an uphill battle, but it is an investment of time for students, but I have never met one student who has been to those programs who has come away disappointed. That is one of the best ways of promoting it is simply to find somebody to come in and talk to other students and say, look, this is the way it was and here is what I gained from that. I think it is a very important program and I hope that the minister will find, through his contacts with teachers, whose contacts with parents and with students, ways of ensuring that they understand the opportunities that are available to them. Particularly at the Grades 11 and 12 level, I think there are some opportunities there to enhance the teaching of Basic French to encourage students to see that as a goal at the end of their Basic French education, and in fact to see it as a way of continuing and enabling themselves to become bilingual and to be able to participate in whatever profession or line of work that they choose that they will be able to do it at a national level. Because without that, we all know, we have all faced it at every federal-provincial conference we have gone to, whether it is a student conference, whether it is a conference in a professional area, that without the two languages you are at a considerable disadvantage. That is not where Manitoba should be and it is a long-term process and we have got to continue to work at it.

Mr. McCrae: I will respond very briefly. I appreciate everything the honourable member has said about this and I simply found an area where I am having trouble disagreeing with her. It is all about maximizing all kinds of opportunities not only in an economic sense but also in a quality of life and a cultural sense. I

still believe very strongly in our country as it exists today, having just had the privilege of visiting Quebec City last weekend and struggling along—I think my understanding is a lot better than my ability to communicate in French—a thoroughly enjoyable experience to go to a city where, I do not know, the overwhelming majority of people are Francophone and a very large proportion are unilingual Francophone and still to manage at my level shows that there is hope for a lot of students in Manitoba and across the country.

I still believe very strongly in the nature of this country and the way that we want to proceed, live together as a united nation in the future. I have very strong feelings about that and I think the issue of respect for language differences is really not as tough an issue as it was at one time. I think there is a lot more understanding about that today than there was a generation ago. We do not want to lose momentum in that respect. I see the numbers and I feel the same concern as the honourable member, I just simply do not want to blame any one thing for it. I think there are a number of things that come into this, but it is very hard to disagree with the honourable member, especially in the way she has put this particular matter.

Mr. Chairperson: 16.3.(a) Bureau de l'éducation française, Division and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$143,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$23,400—pass.

16.3.(b) Curriculum Development and Implementation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,347,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$835,300—pass.

16.3.(c) Educational Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,403,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$715,800—pass.

16.3.(d) Official Languages Programs and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$902,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,162,200—pass; (3) Assistance \$376,700—pass.

16.3.(e) Library and Materials Production (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$461,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$279,900—pass.

Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,652,600 for Education and Training, Bureau de l'éducation française, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Resolution 16.4. Support to Schools (a) Schools Finance (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$904,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$162,300—pass.

An Honourable Member: Whoa, go back.

An Honourable Member: He has promised to stop at 4.

An Honourable Member: Go back. We were about to ask for a five-minute break, you see.

An Honourable Member: We are going to have to revert to those two lines.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I was having a private conversation with the honourable member, and the committee was busy passing appropriations. We need to go back. I would be agreeable to doing that, going back to 16.4.(a) and agreeing to reopen the ones that have been passed while we were having our conversation.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Mr. Chair, my only concern is that if by some efforts the committee completed its work in this area today, just that the next in line, the minister and critic, would be given notice so that they would be able to be here for the remainder of the day. So that is all I was inquiring of my colleagues.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement of the committee to revert to 16.4. Support to Schools (a) Schools Finance (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits?

Mr. McCrae: Before we go through and actually pass these things, I do not know about anybody else, but I could stand a five- or six-minute break.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement of the committee that we take a five-minute recess? [agreed] We will reconvene at 4:45 p.m.? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:39 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:50 p.m.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Order, please. I believe that when we recessed for a moment that there was the will of the committee to revert to 16.4. Support to Schools (a) Schools Finance (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits and (2) Other Expenditures, although they had been passed. I think that we moved on rather quickly, so what I will do is allow open questions under that area at this time with the will of the committee.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, that was the understanding, I believe, Mr. Chairman, and I agree to it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Okay. Then we shall proceed.

Ms. Friesen: This is the area of financial support to schools. This is something that we have raised in Question Period and in other political debate over a long period of time. I think the debate is fairly well set. The opposition maintains that the actual dollars to public schools have been decreasing, and that is using the documentation of the FRAME reports of the last number of years. The minister's response is that the percentage of funding going to the Education department has been increasing.

We have also raised the issue, and I raised it I think in my preliminary statements some weeks ago, of the impact of rising costs in education, rising particularly in areas like library acquisitions and information technology and also in transport costs. Issues which for the most part are beyond the control of the department, but certainly the issue of the declining purchasing power in an educational framework of the dollars which are allocated is something that is obviously of ongoing concern to people in the education system.

So the minister may want to put some comments on the record. I think the debate is fairly well established. We have done it in Question Period a number of times.

The questions I wanted to ask were really for tabling of information on independent schools. I acknowledge the government has moved to create a kind of FRAME report for the independent schools, and I think that has been a welcome form of reporting. I wonder if the minister could give me a sense, and I do not know whether he will have the numbers with him, of the changes in enrollment in independent schools over the last, say, three years, and what kind of predictions his department is making for the future in independent school enrollments. By that I am looking at the schools which are in the process of applying or, at least, becoming eligible to apply for public funds.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member, I believe, is right. The debate respecting support to schools has indeed been established. I think that by reference to one set of data, the opposition attempts to make one kind of point, and the government makes its point. I have made it repeatedly based on percentages of total spending, as the honourable member has acknowledged.

I acknowledge that there are issues related to rising costs. I acknowledge that there are costs related to library acquisitions and information technology and transportation. I also acknowledge the difficulties that all of us face in this particular decade in relation to our very important responsibilities.

While we are on the topic, I need just once more to state that while I accept that there are certainly challenges in health care and in education and in other areas of government responsibility at the provincial level, I think all things considered, the report card has to come in certainly for Manitoba in fairly positive terms given some of the realities that we have all been struggling with during the course of this decade. Earlier in the decade we as a nation faced good—portions of the nation, I think that certain parts came through for various reasons better than others, but nationally we have been through probably the second worst financial situation in

the history of our country with the recession earlier in this decade. We also have been grappling with issues arising as the federal government has attempted to make reparations of the mistakes of the past. In terms of its deficit and its debt problem, it has done so unfortunately by means that are far too simple and means that do not take account of the priorities of Canadians. I refer of course to cuts in spending under the CHST, the Canada Health And Social Transfer, which removed from provincial coffers hundreds of millions of dollars; on an annual basis, some \$263 million.

An Honourable Member: Jim, you do not blame the feds for that, though.

Mr. McCrae: Well, you know, I know that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) in the House today took no note of that, but his former colleague, one Judy Wasylycia-Leis, the federal New Democratic member of Parliament for Winnipeg North, has very accurately pointed out where the fault lay. She has made it clear on more than one occasion that all of the difficulties that the provinces have been experiencing in health and post-secondary education for sure—but I suggest in other places too—the fault for that lays squarely at the feet of the federal Liberal government in Ottawa.

Now the honourable member for Burrows today said that we should not spend too much time blaming the federal government for these things. Well, it is not a question of blame for me, maybe it is for some, because I recognize the federal government has to get its house in order. I think that it should get its house in order in a way that still recognizes in some way, in some meaningful way I would hope, the priorities Canadians place on health and education.

Now this particular year, the federal government did make an effort to make some measure of recognition of that but not nearly as much recognition in financial terms as it should have, because it only really returned about a third, as I understand it, of the dollars that it took out of the CHST. That is the second major concern that we have had to grapple with over this past decade, the first being recessionary issues which had a devastating effect on revenues right across the country.

I know that earlier in the decade the province of B.C., under the previous B.C. government, we were struggling away with a recession and it was as if there was no recession in B.C. Things were moving along a lot better some years back in B.C. than they are today. As other provinces today are finding their way out of the financial problems that we all experienced, B.C. is now walking into them, and those are for various reasons. Governments, provincial governments and their approach to things do have an impact on these things, and I would not want to let the B.C. government off the hook for this.

* (1700)

However, there is a third major area of concern that I have had—I touched on it earlier today—and that is that well in excess of \$500 million each budget year is spent on things other than the current priorities of Manitobans which are health and education and family services. That is because over \$500 million each year is required to be spent to service our provincial debt here in Manitoba. We have managed to balance our budgets for a number of years now, which I think is the right approach because ultimately, contrary to what the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) once said, balanced books actually offer flexibility. The member for Kildonan has said that balanced budgets remove flexibility. Well, he is going to have to square that with more recent approaches taken by the New Democratic Party in Manitoba about balanced budgets, and they are going to have to explain themselves on that point.

I think 9 percent or 10 percent of our total spending is on debt servicing, and I know members, for example, the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans), who is very quick or has been at least, maybe he has changed that tune now. He has been very quick to say when it was at 11 percent of total spending that that is a manageable thing to do, to have 11 percent of your budget for debt servicing. This is a very fundamental difference of opinion I have with the member for Brandon East.

I would prefer to be operating with no debt, and that is the goal that we have because I believe that no debt provides for a greater level

of flexibility, especially when you have built into your system the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which was introduced to Manitoba by a previous Minister of Education and a previous Minister of Finance, Clayton Manness. In my opinion, that measure did more for the future of Manitobans and Manitoba students and Manitoba health care receivers than any other single decision that I can mention off the top of my head.

Fiscal stabilization is widely maligned and widely misunderstood on purpose, I suggest, but fiscal stabilization is that so-called rainy day fund whose function is to smooth out the bumps that occur in the economic life of a provincial jurisdiction. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is there to ensure that budgets can be balanced, to ensure we do not experience tax shock as we have seen in the past before we had the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, to ensure that we do not have to take out our troubles on valuable government programs like health, education, family services, highways and all those important things that Manitobans deserve and need from their provincial government. Fiscal stabilization ensures that we are able to carry on year after year with some assurance that we can do it again the next year and again the next year and again the next year.

When I say widely misunderstood and deliberately so, I say so because we have people who know better shouting out its raining, its raining, spend the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Well, that is what we do year in and year out. At each budget time, the Minister of Finance announces exactly how the dollars that are in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund are going to be expended for the coming budget year, and that is the subject also of the budget consultations which happen with citizens of Manitoba throughout the province on an annual basis, a very good thing to do. I have been watching for the last two or three years to see how the budget itself measures up to my personal experience as an attendee at these budget consultations.

If there is one thing I have noticed, it is that the government of Manitoba in recent years has been faithful to those consultations. The one that we had in Brandon, the recommendations from the people attending that consultation were very, very much reflected in the budget in that

there was a general disposition in the population, in my view, to make an investment, a further investment in health care, which is there in the budget, to continue the emphasis on education, which is there in the budget, to do some moderate tax reductions, which are there in the budget, and to place the priorities as you see them in the budget.

I think that is why, with the exception of a couple of members in the Legislature, everybody supports this year's budget. Certainly I cannot speak for everybody in the House, but we hear talk of elections and everything like that and strategies. Some pundits, Frances Russell for one, suggest the NDP flip-flop on this and the decision to support the 1999 budget was dishonest and tactically stupid. Well, it took a long time for Frances Russell to figure out what I have known for a long time, but, that being said, whether it was tactically stupid or dishonest or what, it reflects Manitobans. At least New Democrats can say: well, for once in 10 years, we are actually reflecting the will of the public. Maybe there is a link with a coming election in this regard.

I mention these three very major things and a sort of a subheading relating to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund on purpose because the honourable member has rightly set out the lines of battle, if you like, when it comes to financial support to schools. I mean, when you take into account those items, the depression, the reductions from Ottawa, and the debt responsibility that we have each and every year, then things begin to take shape.

There is no doubt but that at 19.8 percent of all our spending going to education, the commitment overall is greater today than it was a decade ago. That is a factually correct statement. It drives some people wild hearing it, because there is no better measure of a government's commitment to a particular thing than the percentage of its overall spending.

Now, I remember listening to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), who has some interesting opinions, but he made the point that Manitobans are not taxed enough. He made the point that it is no great thing to brag about that 19.8 percent of your spending is on education

and that that is a serious commitment, because your spending is down. I am very anxious to get into that debate, because the fact that spending is down is a good thing, not a bad thing.

People in Manitoba are sick and tired of the tax-and-spend philosophy so well put forward by the honourable member for Crescentwood. He has got to be called to order by the people of Manitoba for his sincerely held views. I do not question his sincerity. I do question the wrong-headedness of what he is saying and how totally out of step he is with Manitobans when he makes the point that, you know, it is nothing to brag about at 19.8 percent when you are spending so little overall.

Give me a break. Manitobans suggest we are spending too much overall and have been spending too much overall. We have been taking steps to deal with that. One of the most important steps was the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which is there to smooth out bumps. It has been called every political sleazy thing you can imagine, like slush fund and things like that. [interjection] This is true, but the real point here is that you cannot hammer it and support it at the same time. You cannot push and pull at the same time. You cannot suck and blow at the same time. This is what is going to catch up my colleagues in the New Democratic Party in the coming judgment call on the part of the people of Manitoba. It is. Before they make their decision, they have to weigh in the balance the credibility of the alternate point of view. I look forward to that very much. It is beginning already.

So the honourable member is right about declining purchasing power and all of these things, but when she mentions these things, to give a fair characterization of the lay of the land in education funding in 1999-2000, you need to keep in mind that there is a partnership approach here, always has been. We deal with the Education Support Levy, which is levied by the province, the special levies in the various divisions levied by the divisions. I know that just like they, just like us, the divisions have to meet the challenges of the costs and so on. The government has attempted to be helpful as a major partner in education funding by providing additional monies for information technology. I think it is another \$5 million this year.

* (1710)

We have tried to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the members of the teaching profession, who do so much for our kids, in adjusting to new curricula. We have added money to professional development, so that that work can go forward. I think we have tried, within the confines of what I have been talking about, to do a good job for the children of this province, and I think that that will be the decision the people of Manitoba will agree with. The fact that we have support from the New Democrats for the budget this year lends credence to what I have been saying, that we are indeed on the right track in Manitoba.

Now, the honourable member asked me to speak about independent schools, and I can give her some information about the enrollments. Beginning in 1987-88 in independent schools, there were 8,244 full-time equivalent student years in independent schools. The next year, '88-89, there were 8,424. In '89-90, there were 8,633.5. In 1990-91, there were 8,885.5. In 1991-92, there were 9,116.5. In 1992-93, there were 9,693. In 1993-94, there were 10,070.5. In 1994-95, there were 10,657. In 1995-96, there were 10,952. In 1996-97, there were 11,468.5. In 1997-98, there were 11,868. Still not finalized but probably pretty close, 1998 and '99, 12,046.5 and estimated for 1999-2000, 12,303.8. Those were the enrollments of full-time equivalent students in our independent schools.

The enrollments have increased each year by some 200 to 400 full-time equivalent students approximately. The total of 12,300 today is about 6 percent of the total school age population in the province. We have not seen, therefore, significant swings from public to independent schools which was predicted when the matter was finalized with the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools in 1990. Further, for 1999-2000, there are four schools completing their three-year waiting period to become funded independent schools, they being: the Southeast College with 50 children; the Alhijra Islamic School, 18 children; St. Aidan's, seven students; and H.B. Community School with eight students.

After this fiscal year, there is only one more school waiting to be funded in two more years

from now. That one is a Hutterian school with a very low enrollment, the Andreas Hofer. I had the privilege of visiting three Hutterite colonies early on in my tenure as Minister of Education and Training, learning about some things I already knew and some things I did not know about Hutterian culture and traditions and religion. I must say I was very, very interested in what I learned and was treated extremely well in those communities and was also pleased with some of the things I saw going on in education for Manitoba Hutterian children and older students, too.

So we are pleased to have been the government which was involved in the signing of the letter of comfort which ended the threat of the remedial order, provided choice to parents and did all that while maintaining a strong, healthy, vibrant and sound public education system. As I have said before, whatever this is worth, I am the product of the public education system, and my children are also the products of the public education system.

I think that they have as good a chance as most to live successful and happy lives, and I think that future generations of young Manitobans will also be fortunate indeed. The reason they are going to be fortunate indeed, and this is very important, I believe not only just in my heart of hearts but from reliable information that Manitobans have over the years demonstrated a very significant commitment to education, including, almost especially including the last 10 or 11 years.

That commitment to education is reflected in the fact that Manitobans are finding their way very successfully in all parts of the world and competing in providing leadership to others in every part of the world. That needs to be said because there is a sense in some quarters that members of our teaching profession have not been appreciated to the extent that they deserve. Well, they will probably never get appreciated to the extent they truly deserve, and I feel profoundly about this. This is something we should remind ourselves about from time to time, perhaps more often than we do, that these people in our society are amongst the most positive people you can imagine anywhere, and that is contagious.

When you cut through all the political rhetoric that goes on in this place and in other quarters, and you cut through all that and get right down to the working, work-a-day teacher who deals with students in the real world each and every day, you get a better sense of what we owe those extremely dedicated people. A number of them are sitting in this room this afternoon. The point is not only myself but other Manitobans need to do that, make it known, and also those who come after us, our kids, need to be reminded how fortunate they have been to have benefited from the leadership of their instructors and teachers.

So I wanted that to appear on the record. I look forward to hopefully many more years as Minister of Education working with members of that profession to learn what their needs are, to learn more about what would help in terms of continuing the tradition of excellence that we have already demonstrated in this country and in this province. We do not take a back seat to very many, and I cannot really think of anyone that we should be taking a back seat to. If there is somebody better than us, then we still have work to do. Apparently, there is somebody, one, in the whole world that is better than us in terms of results and that is the Netherlands, so until we are top of the heap, then we are not finished our work.

* (1720)

That is why I recognize the value of good constructive criticism and I recognize the value of an ongoing debate about education. It needs to happen almost every day of the year in order that we maintain that sense of priority that excellence demands that we maintain. For that, I thank the honourable member. I know she is not finished yet but just in case she talks for the next half hour, I want to thank her for her role in the examination of these Estimates. I want to thank the members of the Department of Education and Training for their role in helping all of us get through this process. It is not always a neat and tidy exercise. I appreciate that, and I appreciate that people are available at short notice or make themselves available at short notice and that people are there when the call is made, and when they are not, they make sure something else happens that helps us get through the process. I

appreciate the role of the Chair of the committee, all those who have occupied the Chair and the other staff who have been involved in this process.

All of it to me is a very, very important thing to do. I sometimes despair that we waste some time and we do, and I despair that we do not always achieve through this as much as we would like to. But, for me, at the end of it all, I can say for whatever period of time we spent examining the Estimates of Expenditure for this department for this fiscal year, we all come out of it just a little more knowledgeable and perhaps a little more sensitive to issues related to education in Manitoba. If that is all we achieved, then we have done something good. Thank you.

Ms. Friesen: My intention is to ask some specific questions. The minister will not have time to answer them, but I think many of them can be answered in other ways. It is not my intention to take a meander around the mulberry bush, as the minister has sometimes done in his answers.

I am not quite sure how to proceed here. There are a number of questions I would like to put on the record, some of which I have given advance notice to the minister of. They deal for the most part with post-secondary education. So I think perhaps the simplest thing, Mr. Chairman, is to pass the lines in K to 12, take the first line on post-secondary education, put the questions on the record and have the minister indicate how he is going to respond to them, not necessarily to respond but how he is going to, whether it is in writing or whether it is further information, and then come back to the Minister's Salary and then complete.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, just so the record is clear, it is my full intention to do my best to answer each and every question the honourable member raises. If I do not have immediate ready responses, then I undertake in writing to make responses available to the honourable member. If perchance—I am always worried about this—we have missed an undertaking, the member need only remind us and we will get right on it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Is it the will of the committee then that we proceed and if

there are questions, the honourable member would stop me? [agreed]

Then we will proceed with 16.4. Support to Schools (a) Schools Finance (3) Property Assessment. We previously have passed 16.4.(a)(1) and (2). We would now like to proceed to (3). 16.4.(a)(1) and (2) had been previously passed; however, we reverted to our discussions on those in those areas. So I would now like to proceed to 16.4.(a)(3), which is Property Assessment.

Mr. McCrae: If indeed there is a misprint or something in the Supplementary Information, we did find earlier an oversight, and this could be another one. If there is that, I will ask the department to do a review of that and to prepare something for me to get over to the honourable member to explain and set it out how we arrive at that, unless the honourable member wants us to do it now, which we can do. The professional fee part of it is \$7,600. If you add that to the \$2,267,400, then you get \$2,275,000. The number represents 25 percent of the assessment costs.

*(1730)

Ms. Friesen: Even with the minister's explanations, which I have no reason to doubt, I still think that would not be clear to somebody who is reading this from the outside. The public record would not be clear. What I am looking for is some way of making that public record clear.

May I propose to the minister that something be written and be added to the public record? I do not know how we will do it if we finish Estimates now. Perhaps what we should do is leave Minister's Salary till tomorrow and add it at that point.

Mr. McCrae: I guess there are a number of ways to do this. One could be done by rising in the House and putting something on the record with the undertaking that it would be extremely brief so that it would not take up time in Question Period. I can undertake to do that as early as tomorrow.

Ms. Friesen: That would be acceptable. What it needs to do is to make clear the connection between the line we are passing, which is

labelled in the minister's book and that is in the main Estimates book as Property Assessment. That Property Assessment is comprised of the following numbers which are to be found in the Supplementary Estimates on page X and under this X and Y heading.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): With that understanding, can we then proceed and pass 16.4.(a)(3) Property Assessment for \$2,267,400? The item is accordingly passed.

16.4.(b) Education Administration Services
(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,336,500.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I have two questions here. One deals with the boundary division work of Mr. Schellenberg. I wonder if the minister, not necessarily now but at some point—I know Mr. Schellenberg has spoken to a number of school divisions—could give us an account of which school divisions he has met with and if there is a progress report or an evaluation and a schedule of work for Mr. Schellenberg. I think it is two-year contract that he has, if the minister could give us some further information on that, basically a progress report.

Secondly, I wanted to ask about quality control inspections of school transportation generally. Is there a report on that within the department? Is there something which would enable us to have a sense of the state of the fleet and of the department's responsibilities within that fleet?

Mr. McCrae: Before the honourable member goes further, Mr. Chairman, the answer is yes, with respect to the work of Mr. Schellenberg. We will make a report available about that.

Next, we would also provide a report respecting quality control inspections related to the transportation part, the school bus system. I am just trying to keep up to your questions.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): 16.4.(b) Education Administration Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,336,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$531,800—pass.

16.4.(c) Schools Information System (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$370,000—pass. (2) Other Expenditures—

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, this is an area I have asked a lot of questions on in the past, and I am not going to ask any questions. This year, it has come up in a number of areas of the department and just to say that this is one of the fundamentals of accountability of the department. I understand all ministers have agreed to this. It seems to me very odd—not odd, but it is very difficult to see 10 years of work here that have not yet come to fruition. Some of the numbers that I have been asking the minister for still will not be available for another couple of years.

I notice there is an increase in the money in this department; staff remains the same. They look forward, as I am sure the minister does, to some results and some school information systems that will be helpful to everyone in Manitoba. Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed, and that item was 16.4.(c)(2) Other Expenditures.

16.4.(d) Schools Grants (1) Operating Grants \$585,122,600—pass; (2) General Support Grants \$19,447,500—pass.

16.4.(e) Other Grants \$2,442,800—pass.

16.4.(f) Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund \$71,555,500. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, just a question of scheduling here. I understand the government has been approached by the Manitoba Teachers' Society on the issue of the governance of the pension fund. I wonder if the minister intended to meet with teachers on this, or is there a schedule for responding to this issue?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, yes, with respect to this matter, we have met with the Teachers' Retirement Fund people, Mr. Sutherland and the new executive director, Mr. Ulrich, formerly of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, also formerly a board member, and discussed some of the concerns. In addition to that, I met with the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I spoke with the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society just yesterday. She was in the building yesterday, and I had the opportunity briefly to chat with her

to remind her that my door is open to her and to the Manitoba Teachers' Society. We have identified a number of issues. She, Ms. Speelman, was wondering when we might be able to get on with the meetings that are going to be required to address the various matters raised with us by the Manitoba Teachers' Society. It told her, I said: if you get a chance to talk to Ms. Friesen, get me out of these Estimates, and then we can establish some meetings. Well, magic has happened, because it looks like we are heading in that direction. Now that I will not be tied up with Estimates review I can now begin to schedule my meetings with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, which I look forward to. So that is what I said about that.

With respect to the governance of pensions, that is one of the items that I am quite willing to discuss further. There already have been some discussions. We are going to need some more in order to make some progress. I hope that we can do that. I hope that we can find areas of agreement and consensus with the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the other partners in education. That is what I view as my job, to work the best I can with all of these different organizations and to be open and frank, and areas I cannot do anything, to say so, and to also try to be as reasonable as I can and convince my colleagues as well to be as reasonable as we can in our dealings with, in this case, the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

There are a few issues involving the TRAF that are important to teachers. I have been getting some mail about that. I fully intend to address those matters with the Manitoba Teachers' Society and with the board of the TRAF itself.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): 16.4. Support to Schools (f) Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund \$71,555,500—pass.

16.4.(g) Manitoba Education, Research and Learning Information Networks \$513,300—pass.

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$685,149,900 for Education and Training, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Then moving on to 16.5. Training and Continuing Education (a) Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$520,500.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, we had suggested earlier and I think there is general agreement to ask a number of questions basically on this line and then to move through the lines quickly afterwards.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): If that is agreeable, we shall proceed.

Mr. McCrae: We have made this much progress this far. I am quite agreeable.

* (1740)

Ms. Friesen: In the area of post-secondary education I had a couple of specific questions, one of which I had raised with the deputy minister of post-secondary education, who is here. The minister, I believe, has received a letter on it as well very recently, probably in the last two or three days, but the individual in question, a medical doctor in residency for plastic surgery has previously met with the executive director of the Council on Post-Secondary Education. So I think the issue has been understood by the department.

I do not know that the department has been able to act in any capacity so far. I am not quite sure how much of this I want to put on the actual formal record. The minister has received the letter. The issue is of a doctor who had taken a three-month placement in California and then had found that she had been in her absence taken off medical lists in Manitoba and hence not able to practise or re-enter the plastic surgery program, of which she, I think, was half way through. So, though that is the general outline, as somebody with a great deal of professional skill who has found herself in a very difficult situation, she has been through a number of procedures, of processes of appeal at the University of Manitoba. I am not clear myself what the minister's responsibility can be in this, but I do believe that The Council on Post-Secondary Education Act did enable the minister to raise questions with arm's-length agencies such as universities and colleges.

What I am asking the minister for at this stage is really a commitment that he will look at the case, look at the letters that have been sent to him and also letters of support and that he will do what he can to ensure that justice has been done and is seen to be done.

Mr. McCrae: As any MLA or any minister would do, I suggest, from any party, someone coming forward with a concern like that, I think it is my job here to use my offices to be as helpful as I can, trying as I do to respect that decision makers in other places are sometimes the ones that are ultimately responsible. On the other hand, there is nothing wrong with any MLA making enquiries. That includes the Minister of Education and Training.

I have asked the chair of the Council on Post-Secondary Education to investigate this matter, as it has been brought to my attention, and to report back to me. If that person would like the honourable member to be kept informed, then I would undertake to include the honourable member in that, but I do need the indication from the person—I assume that already—but I need maybe something in writing to say that I should share this information with the honourable member as well.

Ms. Friesen: I appreciate the minister's undertaking on that and, yes, certainly I would like to be kept informed but subject to the authority of the individual. I wanted to ask about Labour Market Support Services and in some ways connected with the Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Development Agreement and the employment and training services of the department. Particularly in the context of the Labour Market Development Agreement, which Manitoba has signed with Canada and which the minister tabled earlier, there is an onus upon Manitoba to develop its Labour Market Support Services. This is a provincial responsibility. It is an area which I think has been under-developed in Manitoba. It is a difficult area to work in under the best of circumstances.

I do not think there are perhaps any jurisdictions which do it as well as they would all like to do it, so I acknowledge the difficulties in this. I am interested in the minister putting a few words on the record or possibly tabling

something at a later date which indicate the direction the province is going to take in this area. I notice that there is a small increase in Labour Market Support Services, but I was very disappointed that it did not include increases in staff. The increases that are there are for desktop services as I understand it, not for increased staff. It seems to me an area which I would like to see certainly an increase in staffing and an increase in much more precise labour market information, not just for government but for individuals.

As Manitoba has taken over the counselling aspect of Labour Market Support Services, it seems to me that we need much greater detail, much greater regional, and I am not sure of the right area but job specific information than we have at the moment. Does the minister have a plan for that? How is he going to do it with the existing staff? Are there other resources he is going to be involved in? Can he table something in writing at a later date? Does he have some brief comments for that now?

Mr. McCrae: This is something that we have touched on. I know that I have been involved in some other discussions about this with senior people in the department and with the Council on Post-Secondary Education as well because this is related to their function in terms of the strategic aspects of the building of a stronger post-secondary sector. I know that this job market information issue, it is a critical factor, critical to success. It is a better system of job market information. It is clearly needed. We are working to make improvements to that. It is a very difficult area, however, and I know that we have identified this as an area of need, so has the honourable member. The Labour Market Support Services branch develops information on labour market conditions, trends and opportunities for employment and training for the public on an ongoing basis. Users include students and their parents, unemployed persons looking for work, persons who are making career decisions and individuals seeking education and training programs suitable for their needs.

The other issue is dissemination of the information that we are able to gather. We know those are the two, and as we have got more to

report on, we will do that for the honourable member, but at this point we feel that there is a need, especially in a changing, working and market environment that better information is made available on a basis that is more responsive to immediate needs. That kind of information base is what we need, and we are certainly very clear on that and know there is work to be done in that area as well as making the information available to others.

* (1750)

Ms. Friesen: Two specific issues: one deals with Workforce 2000. If the minister could table at a later date the programs that have been funded through Workforce 2000 in the past year and that are proposed to be funded this year. I understand that most of them at this stage, the 1,890 number that is here will not include, I assume, the tax rebates through the Department of Finance, but these will be the expenditures for industry-wide programs for the most part but not entirely.

My second question deals with Red River Community College and the payment of staff. I wonder if the minister is able to table any information upon the payment of nonpermanent staff at the community college, not just Red River but the community colleges generally, staff who are hired on contract. Does the minister have any records of levels of pay, rates of pay? [interjection] All of them. Community colleges generally, and particularly the question came from a constituent and it dealt with Red River Community College, but I was looking for a context as well. So it is the part-time staff, the contract staff, the number of people in that position, and the rates of pay which have been established. Is there a system-wide principle for those payments, or is it developed by each college, and if the minister could give me a sense of the direction of the colleges in the hiring of part-time staff? One of the increasing trends in post-secondary education is to a nonpermanent workforce. This is true at universities as it is at community colleges, and the proportions of that permanent to nonpermanent workforce is something that I think, overall across Canada, there is some general concern about. So I am interested in what the trends are in Manitoba at the college

level. I am a bit more familiar with the university level.

Mr. McCrae: With respect to Workforce 2000 information, I think the honourable member has put enough on the record that we can get an appropriate response out to her in the next few days.

With respect to contract staff at our community colleges, we will undertake in this case to contact them to find out if they have this type of information, or if they will make this information available. If they do, then we will pass it on to the honourable member.

Ms. Friesen: I wonder if the Council on Post-Secondary Education is also tracking this trend across the system.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I can ask.

Ms. Friesen: I have one question about the Millennium Scholarship Fund. The minister earlier tabled the agreement. The agreement, as I understand it generally across Canada, wants to ensure that provincial funds which are replaced, or which may be replaced by federal funds, are applied to the area of post-secondary educational access. I wonder if the minister is able, perhaps at a later date, to give me some written information on how much money is going to be leveraged, how it is going to be applied, what kind of policy is going to be developed within the department for those—I do not know if leveraged funds is the right word—which have been replaced by federal grants.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I am glad the honourable member mentioned that. That is a matter of importance to students. Under these agreements with the provinces, the provinces are agreeing not to enrich their coffers through this federal initiative. What I am going to do is make the commitment letter that I have signed on this topic available for the honourable member's review.

I simply want to make the point that, even though I appreciate the Millennium Scholarship Foundation deal that we have agreed to, it is not a substitute for replacing dollars removed from post-secondary education. I want that very clear,

and I want the federal government very clearly to understand that. It is not a substitute. I do not accept it as that. The students no doubt are going to benefit from that, but it does not help us with our base costs at our universities and colleges that are a constant challenge for everybody across the country.

Ms. Friesen: On Apprenticeship, there have been a number of changes. Some of them perhaps we will be able to pursue at another time, but I am concerned about, as the minister knows, I have raised this in Question Period, and I just wanted to follow up on that question, the issue of people who have been placed in apprenticeship positions under journeymen. The journeymen themselves though they may be acknowledged as journeymen under strict definitions of The Manitoba Act, they themselves as journeymen have not received apprenticeship training. They have had experience in the job, they have had the six years, but they have not been apprentices themselves.

Can the minister tell me how many people are in that position, and what concerns he has about apprenticeship training under such situations? Again, this can be done in a written response if the minister prefers. We are getting close to time. But that has certainly been a question that has been raised with me, and it seems to me to be one that makes sense and needs some quite clear answers from the department and a sense of direction in which the department is going.

Mr. McCrae: I had a longer answer, but I do not want to take from the honourable member's time. She has put some specific questions on the record, and we will attempt to answer them in writing subsequent to these Estimates.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 16.5.(a) Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$520,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$218,700—pass; (3) Advanced Education and Training Assistance \$1,229,400—pass.

16.5.(b) Labour Market Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$469,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$161,500—pass.

16.5.(c) Adult Literacy and Continuing Education (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$356,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$92,100—pass; (3) Grants \$1,174,500—pass.

16.5.(d) Youth Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,317,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$404,300—pass; (3) CareerStart \$2,480,800—pass; (4) Youth Community Partnerships \$4,325,000—pass; (5) Partners for Careers \$400,000—pass; (6) Less: Recoverable from Rural and Urban Economic Development Initiatives (\$3,900,000)—pass; (7) Less: Recoverable from Northern Affairs (\$200,000)—pass.

16.5.(e) Workforce 2000 (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$404,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$86,200—pass; (3) Training Support \$1,400,000—pass.

16.5.(f) Stevenson Aviation Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$593,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$624,900—pass.

16.5.(g) Apprenticeship (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,205,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$643,900—pass; (3) Training Support \$2,545,500—pass.

16.5.(h) Employment and Training Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$3,567,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,861,500—pass; (3) Training Support \$4,269,500—pass; (4) Making Welfare Work \$3,710,800—pass; (5) Less: Recoverable from Family Services (\$600,000)—pass.

16.5.(j) Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Development Agreement (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,343,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$448,400—pass; (3) Training Support \$49,521,000—pass.

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$85,675,600 for Education and Training, Training and Continuing Education, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

16.6. Support for Post-Secondary Education (a) Council on Post-Secondary Education (1)

Salaries and Employee Benefits \$635,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$265,700—pass.

16.6.(b) Universities Grants (1) Operating Grants \$220,727,700—pass; (2) Faculty of Management \$889,000—pass.

16.6.(c) Community Colleges Grants (1) Operating Grants \$57,792,200—pass; (2) Inter-Universities North \$822,100—pass; (3) Colleges Growth Plan \$4,000,000—pass.

The hour being 6 p.m., is there leave of the committee to proceed?

An Honourable Member: We cannot do that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): We cannot do that. Then this committee is recessed. Committee rise.

* (1430)

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 14.1. Administration and Finance (d) Manitoba Film Classification Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$156,200, but in a far-ranging way, on page 41 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I had some questions for the minister about the classification of videos. I have had some concern because we have three young children and we often rent videos, and when we get home with the video, we are often surprised and often angered and embarrassed by either violence or language in the videos. We feel that we have been inadequately informed about the language or level of violence on a fairly regular basis.

I will even just comment that even a Christmas movie like Jingle All the Way, for

example, sure enough, had a gun in it. You almost get to expect that a gun is going to show up at some point, even during a general movie.

But I want to deal with some more serious concerns on the classification topic. It was just a few weeks ago, we went to the country inn at Gimli for a family getaway for one night. We went down to get a video from their selection. There was one movie called *Nine Months* starring Hugh Grant. It had a sticker on it, G, for General, I presume. When we brought the movie back to the room, we discovered that there was foul language in it and there was sex in it, although not explicit. This angered us. I was embarrassed in front of the children. I thought that we had been misled.

I know that when you look at the package that the video is contained in, there will be a printed classification in most cases, particularly for the newer movies. As well, you may find one or even two stickers on the package, sometimes over top of the printed classification and sometimes not.

I note, for example, there is a movie, *Cliffhanger*, out. It is a Sylvester Stallone movie. The package had noted that it was Restricted, but the sticker on it said 14. *Die Hard 2*, for example, was noted to be Restricted on the package but the sticker said 14, the same for *The Opposite of Sex*. I looked at *Lethal Weapon 4*, what it said. There was Restricted on the printed message on the package. Then it had a sticker on it that said 18A, and then it had a third classification on there, on the second sticker, which said 14. That is getting quite confusing when you have three different classifications on one video.

I noticed the comedy *Almost Heroes* was classified as PG-13. It then had a sticker 18A on it and also had another sticker that said PG on it. Now, other than the confusion, there also seems to be a theme here, being that the industry classification, that is the classification that is printed onto the sleeve of the video, is more restrictive or is at a higher standard than the sticker. This tells me that the industry standard is higher than the provincial video classification standard.

I wonder if the minister can explain if that observation is accurate and if the video classification sticker reflects the work of the Film Classification Board and provincial regulation.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): The member makes an accusation about the classification done here by our own community standards, by our own video classification. It is not to my knowledge that our Film Classification Board does not classify with the best of community intentions and in a sometimes generally seen by the industry as too strict method, because the member may be aware of some recent publicity which has dealt with the fact that they feel Manitoba is in fact far too strict.

There are sometimes several ratings on a jacket cover, however, one being an industry rating by the U.S., one being a Canadian industry rating, which is sometimes an average of what Film Classification Boards have in fact across the board classified this at, and then there is the classification by our Film Classification Board. If the member has a concern about the way in which a video has been classified locally, according to our own community standards, then the action that would be very helpful for him to take is to phone the board and let them know.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, but I am coming to the minister who is responsible for the legislation today, and I think on behalf of many others in the community. First of all, with regard to the minister's comment and observation that some in the community think our classification is far too strict, right now, what is her view?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, we have from the member for St. Johns the typical NDP line which says that everything should rest centrally in government, there should be no devolution to school boards, to Film Classification Boards or to anyone else. The member says then that he comes today to speak directly to the minister, and the minister has appointed, according to the legislation, a Film Classification Board to represent community standards with a mechanism for members to make their points known.

However, I am happy to take what he has said under advisement, and I will pass it onto the

Film Classification Board. What we see here in Estimates again is the trend generally taken by the member for St. Johns and the NDP party in general which does not respect the process of the community's partnership with whatever government may do. In fact, it has been an ongoing theme, that there should be no partnership and that it simply should be a centralized government decision.

In my opinion, I believe that the Film Classification Board does in fact represent quite reasonable community standards. However, if the member has some suggestions to make about that, then I will be happy to discuss them. That is what we are here for in Estimates.

Mr. Mackintosh: That was an interesting speech.

This current government appointed the current members of the Film Classification Board?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, if the member's question was has this government appointed the current board, to my knowledge, with various appointment dates, the current members now have been appointed by this government.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister interview the members of the board before they are appointed, or how is the selection process determined?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, no, I do not interview the members before appointment, but the appointments are made by the minister. The chair of the Film Classification Board will often mention a particular area of interest or age range or specific skill, geographic area, to make sure that this in fact does meet a community standard.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, are the members of the Film Classification Board appointed because they meet specific criteria? For example, are they members of the Conservative Party, are they workers? Is that the criteria, or are there other criteria?

* (1440)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, for the member to come up with that, I presume that is how it

was done when the NDP were in power, and we would have to check back to see if the members on the Film Classification Board were all members of the NDP party when the member opposite and his party were in the position to appoint members.

However, we attempt to appoint members who meet community standard, who represent a community standard. As I said to the member, there are types of representation which then the chair of the Film Classification Board may recommend for consideration.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the minister has not answered the question. I mean, how do they come to the minister's attention? Does she put an ad in the paper asking for people to volunteer? Is it just people that she knows personally or people her colleagues in cabinet have passed on to her? I think we are entitled to know where these people come from.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, people who are interested often will phone in, say that they are interested, make their interest known to the Film Classification Board, make their interest known to the chair of the Film Classification Board. We had a number of calls recently when there was quite a lot of media around the Film Classification Board of people phoning and expressing their interest and saying why they might be interested.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, of those who are currently on the Film Classification Board, how many have phoned in with their names, which therefore led to their appointment?

Mrs. Vodrey: The members currently have come from a variety of sources. If the member has a particular person he would like to bring forward and question their right to be on the Film Classification Board, their representation of a community standard, then I think he should make himself known.

Mr. Mackintosh: I do not think the minister understood my question. I will move on to another question. Is there a designation of certain interest on the Film Classification Board? For example, are there certain positions that are filled from people from the film industry, some

from the general arts community? Are there certain people who are parents of small children, for example? Maybe she can break down for me, if she will, the different interests that are represented on the board.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, there are not people from the film industry on the board, as the member would probably know. That would potentially be a conflict of interest, and so there are not people selected for that interest. The Film Classification Board makes every effort to represent a community standard within the province, and so the member should represent a geographic interest and the wide variety of interests as are Manitobans in general.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister assure us that there are people on the board who have small children?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister says that the qualification is that they meet community standard and represent community standard. How does she assure herself of that?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, as I said, sometimes the chair will come forward with a recommendation for a person who represents a certain geographic area or families' age range. So the effort is made in looking at the Film Classification Board to try and represent what are the interests of ordinary Manitobans, a range of ordinary Manitobans, which in fact would deal with the community standard. If the member has a particular difficulty with a member of the board, then I would hope he would come forward and let me know.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, when I look at a particular movie, and let us take *The Opposite of Sex* for example, which was classified as restricted by—at least that is how it was indicated on the package in print, and it was reduced to 14 by what I understand would be the Manitoba Film Classification Board. First of all, I want the minister to confirm whether that reduction was done by the Manitoba Film Classification Board, or was it some other body?

Mrs. Vodrey: I appreciate the member actually asking could this be clarified because his history

is to bring things forward as if they are fact and then have to retract. So I cannot confirm that, Mr. Chair, because I did not have that movie nor has it been offered to the committee for review.

Mr. Mackintosh: So is the minister saying that *The Opposite of Sex* has not been reviewed by the Manitoba Film Classification Board?

Mrs. Vodrey: No. I mean the committee that we are currently sitting in and he is participating in.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just want a simple answer from the minister. There was an R printed on the sleeve of the video, and now there is a sticker on there. It is a triangle, and it says 14. Who authorized and classified it for the sticker?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, the member has not brought the video forward. I have no way of knowing what is on that video, and so I am not able to provide him the answer.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, if the minister will accept this for a moment. A particular movie, any movie, says R on it, printed, and then next to the R is a triangle that says 14 on it. Would the minister tell me where did the 14 sticker come from? Who authorized that sticker?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I find it always very dangerous to accept anything that the member brings forward without proof, so what I would say to him is this: if he has a concern about the classification of a movie, please put it in writing, submit it to the Film Classification Board, copy me as minister and let me look into the matter, but it is absolutely absurd to walk into a committee of the Legislature and to expect out of thousands of movies that I am going to have some personal knowledge of the stickers on a video that he found somewhere in this province. It is simply absurd to expect that.

So what I would ask him to do, which is what he rightly should have done in the beginning, and I am very happy to provide him with the information, if he has a question about the classification, please check with the Film Classification Board. If he has a complaint about the classification, please put it in writing. Let the Film Classification Board act on it; let his

views as a citizen then be reflected in the concerns which are being brought forward by the members of the Film Classification Board. By all means, for me as minister, please copy me, let me know, so that I can also ensure that the information has been dealt with by the Film Classification Board. I think that is, in fact, the most constructive way to deal with the issues of concern.

I would say that to him as a parent. I would say that to parents, in general, who would ask me if they feel in some way that a video has not been classified appropriately or they have questions about that. We do have a Film Classification Board where those answers can be received, and we would like to make sure people have them.

* (1450)

The Film Classification Board does reflect a community standard. It is expected to reflect a community standard. It does not censor; it classifies. So where Manitobans, in general, have these concerns, the Film Classification Board should, in fact, be made aware of the concerns. I would suggest to him that that may be his most appropriate course of action.

Mr. Mackintosh: What I am complaining about today to the minister is: why is there a general pattern of a lower standard for classification exhibited on a sticker as opposed to, as compared to the printed classification? I ask the minister: is it correct to assume that the sticker on the video sleeve is there because of the role of the Manitoba Film Classification Board?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, as I said to the member, I cannot tell him because I do not see it in front of me. I am not able to somehow conjure up in my mind what it is that he has seen, but what I am asking him is to clarify with the Film Classification Board the issue that he has brought forward. Then it becomes a matter of his own personal view as to what the classification might be.

The Film Classification Board classifies according to the community standards of the community members who are currently there, but they are certainly able to receive complaints

if the member has a complaint to make about a particular classification.

Classifications may also be appealed. So if the member has a concern about a particular classification and if that classification has been done by our Film Classification Board, then to make the most of our discussion today, I believe that it would be important for him to actually follow the route that is set out.

Now, if the basis of his question is something other than to actually find out what to do, if it is some kind of a political argument, then that is also making itself clear.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I think I am in politics and I think the minister is in politics, so this is a political discussion. It is a political questioning of the minister to find out what is the basis of a different kind of classification. It is a simple question. The minister thinks this is some political ambush or something. It is a simple question from one parent to another, if you will.

Take away the politics. On any level, it should be an intelligent kind of discussion. I simply want to know, why is it that there is a 14 on these packages as opposed to an R on the packages? Can the minister explain why some packages have three different classifications, or is she completely clued out?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I would ask you to ask the member to lower his voice. The screaming in committee is really unacceptable.

My answer to him is as it has been; one parent to another, though, let us remove the politics. My answer to him is the same answer that I gave him in the beginning. If he has a question about the classification and he is not sure which classification actually represents our local film board classification, please check with our Film Classification Board, and if he has a complaint about that classification to please register his complaint about the classification, and if he would like to copy me with his complaint about the classification, to please do so.

The answer has been the same at least three times, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister saying she does not know, then, why those stickers are on those videos? I mean, she is not giving an answer. Why might there be a sticker on those video sleeves?

Mrs. Vodrey: In the very first answer, I did explain to the member that there is a classification by the U.S. industry, there is a classification by the Canadian industry, and then there is a classification by our Film Classification Board. Because he has not brought any evidence here for me to look at on a particular film that he has referenced, it is impossible for me to tell him.

So what I am asking him to do, then, is either bring forward further evidence, please make his concerns known to the Film Classification Board, and underlying all this, is he saying the Film Classification Board is not strict enough in what they are bringing forward? It is not really clear to me whether he is saying they are not strict enough, or they are not accurate enough. I have to say that he has just not made himself clear.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister not have concern as to how consumers are to discern these three different labels? I mean, I am trying to understand the minister's view here. Does she support three different labels, for example, on Lethal Weapon 4 at Movie Village today, which has an R printed on the package, an 18A, and a 14? Is that acceptable to the minister?

Mrs. Vodrey: Oh, I hardly know where to begin with the member for St. Johns again. Let me go back to this from the beginning. I believe that the Canadian classification should have had an identification that called it the Canadian classification, and there also should be a way to identify our classification, but I do not have that particular video that was classified in front of me. Therefore it is almost impossible for me to speak about that. I did ask him, did he think classifications were too strict or not strict enough? That is not yet clear to me.

When he asked about how are people to discern, Manitoba actually was very interested in a national classification system, a classification system that, in fact, would be consistent across

the country, but there was not interest in doing this by other jurisdictions. There was a view that for those who classify, that the classification should be done on a community standard, a local community standard.

So that is what we still do. We do, in Manitoba, a local community standard, and for those who are unhappy with a particular classification, then they should do what has been expressed, and I am happy to review it again. What they should do is this. They should phone the Film Classification Board or go in. They should find out which classification applies, local classification, if there is any concern. If they believe that the classification is incorrect according to their personal standard, then they should make that view known to the Film Classification Board. Then, if he or any other citizen wishes to copy me on their concerns, and if we find that our community standard, as reflected by our Film Classification Board, is somehow causing a great deal of complaint, well, then, that would obviously be something of great concern.

Then, finally, as I have said, there is an opportunity to appeal a classification. If the member feels that that would be helpful to him, that option is also open.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I guess I have to proceed then on the understanding that the 14 sticker on videos in Manitoba are put there by the Film Classification Board of Manitoba. In light of the movies that I cited, and others, and I do not think we have to get into particular movies, is it the minister's opinion that Manitoba—in fact, if we classify on the basis of a local community standard—has a lower standard than the U.S. industry standard?

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not accept what the member has said. I do not know that it is harsher either, but I do not think that he can take for granted, as he would like to suggest, that Manitoba's standard is lower than a U.S. industry-based standard.

In this case, I think it would be important for him to actually find out the facts. He comes again to a legislative committee, as he comes to the House all the time, with half a story—half a

story. We see half a story every day, and we have another just half a story, if that, today.

* (1500)

So he has come to seek information, and I would like to give him the benefit of the doubt in that way, and I would like to say to him, here is how you can clarify. Now, if we find out in your clarification that there is something that is quite different about the classification here than in some other place, then you are right. I, too, would like to know what the explanation is, but I cannot tell him that our classification system is for some reason less stringent or not reflective of reasonably good assessment of a film. I would not want to say that here, and I would frankly not believe that to be the case.

Classification is based on community standards. If the member has a dispute with that, then he should bring it forward. I am informed during the course of this discussion that there is generally about five appeals a year, so I would say for all of the classifications that are done here, those classifications appear to meet the approval of the community standards in the classification of films. If they were extremely unreliable, then you would certainly expect that there would be more appeals per year than there are.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, as the minister responsible, I am surprised if the minister has not also observed that there appears to be a pattern of reducing the classification from R, which according to her—well, from R, which is the U.S. industry standard, down in Manitoba. I mean, has the minister not observed that? Has she not ever spoken to the Classification Board about why that is so or asked any questions about that? I cannot be the only one who has observed that pattern.

Mrs. Vodrey: Does the member have any evidence of this pattern that he would like to bring forward to the committee? He references a pattern. He appears to have seen a pattern. I would be very interested to know, in establishing that pattern, how many films he has observed in that pattern and what information he would like to bring before this committee, rather than simply a statement which we are to accept. It is

not accepted, by the way, unless he is able to provide some background.

Mr. Mackintosh: I think the minister has really given a pathetic response. I am not prepared to accept her position, responsibility and accountability here. There are parents that have expressed concern to me, and I am surprised that they have not expressed concern to the minister or other government colleagues of hers about the classification scheme that appears to be more lenient or to a lower standard on the sticker as opposed to the printed classification. I gave the minister some examples and some of them are rather bewildering, and I think the minister owes a duty to Manitobans to at least explain the process, how people are chosen other than geography, I think was her explanation. I am surprised the minister has not observed that there appears to be a pattern here. Has the minister met with the Film Classification Board and questioned the members of that board or provided any assistance to the board?

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, I understand that most of the appeals are that our classification is too restrictive, so I have not seen the pattern or had reported to me a pattern which the member attempts to reference by way of two examples. So I would say to him that if he has further examples, information that citizens have brought forward to him, I would like to see it. Provide the information, work in a co-operative way, give us information that has been provided to you, and let us have a look at it. But this afternoon, I think that we have heard quite questionable information brought forward by the member for St. Johns, not reliable, no evidence. So it is very difficult to accept what he has said.

I believe he is trying to ask, too, whether or not my personal views should be inserted into the decisions of the Film Classification Board, and again, as we started with this afternoon, we know that the NDP style is to do that. It is to insert from central government a very specific point of view, a point of view in relation to school boards not having any business with any authority whatsoever, everything coming from the Department of Education. We have seen this in several examples brought forward in relation to classification of films, so what I see, Mr. Chair, is a pattern. I see a pattern brought

forward by the NDP of control, of no community partnership, of also no faith in a community standard. However, I think that if there are concerns that have been brought forward, it is really important for us to know what they are. I would ask the member, as I have asked him over the years that he and I have operated on opposite sides of the House, if you have evidence, bring it forward.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, that political diatribe is not helpful to parents. I will share this record with them. This is an important issue to a lot of people. I do not think the statements add anything to this discussion.

I will just leave with the minister the information that I have. The movie *Nine Months*, for example, being classified with a sticker as G at the Gimli country inn, is a concern, because that, in my view, in every way was not a general movie. I would like to know who put the G there. I would like to know what classification that went through. I think the minister has to be accountable to that movie being classified as general, accountable to my children for one.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, now the member has raised a specific question which I will look into on his behalf. Secondly, I hope he does share the Hansard with the community. I would say that the process outlined during the series of half-questions brought forward never changed. The process has never changed in whatever angle or partial piece of information the member has brought forward. The process remains the same, and I believe it is a helpful process. If the member shares with the community information which helps them know how they can clarify, if he shares with the community what they can do if they are concerned, that there is an appeal mechanism, then I think that would be helpful. If there is anything that I find further which indicates that people need to know more about this, then I will certainly be very interested in acting on that also.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I will leave the minister with a couple of other concerns, and this is not particularly with regard to the level of classification, but the confusion caused by the varying classifications. At *Movie Village*, *Lethal Weap-*

on 4 has three classifications—R, 18A and 14. *Almost Heroes at Movie Village* has three classifications—PG13, 18A and PG. Now, there is a confusion, because there is a significant difference.

* (1510)

Then I leave with the minister, and I ask her to go to her local video store and look and start to compare and see how confusing it is and ask whether there are differing standards applied that are quite outstanding. *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, on the package it says R; in the store it says 14. *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, the package says R; in the store it says 14. *The Opposite of Sex*, the package says R; the store says 14. *Die Hard 2*, the package says R; the sticker says 14. *Cliffhanger*, R it says on the package, and 14 in the store.

Those are some examples, but I ask her to go and see whether, in her view, there is a pattern or not. If she cannot answer, she perhaps can get the Film Classification Board to get back to me in terms of why it is that there is that differential. I am not making a value judgment here. I am asking: why is it that in Manitoba there is a sticker that is quite different than a printed classification on the video?

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, now the member has in fact given us some information, and it is a little bit more information than I believe we had, however, Mr. Chair. So what I think needs to happen for the member is to clarify whether or not those are in fact our classifications or industry classifications, and then if there are classifications to get some reasoning. If he wishes to make a complaint about the classifications then he certainly should do so, as any citizen would be entitled and hopefully would do themselves.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chair, I wanted to suggest to the committee that the member for St. Johns did not mean to, and I do not think he did, pick on *Movie Village*, which is in *Osborne Village* and one of the best video outlets I think in the city. Anyway, I will not advertise for them. They do very well by themselves. It is a very fine video outlet.

I did want to tell the minister, I have had people phone me and complain about classifications, more of videos and films, and I am very glad today to hear that there is an appeal process, because I did not know that there was. What I have generally done is outline to individuals the classification system, and so I am glad to hear that there is an appeal process. I understand from what I have picked up that the appeal process would require a citizen to phone the Film Classification Board and say: I protest, and would you please reconsider the classification of this particular film or video? Is that the case?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I am informed that that would be the start. Then there are forms which an individual who wishes to make a complaint or to file an appeal would then fill out.

Ms. McGifford: I am assuming the forms would be available through phoning the Film Classification Board.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: One of the things that does concern me is the multiple labels. I can understand the reasons for the multiple labels, but I think it is important for Manitobans to know which of the labels is a Manitoban label. Is that information available as perhaps part of the video retailing licensing? Is that available in all video stores and publicly noticeable so that people can see a video and say: well, Manitoba feels this way, the industry feels this way, and this is another kind of rating, because if we have community standards we need to know which one is the community standard?

Mrs. Vodrey: I think that is a very reasonable expectation that people should know which is the classification from our own classification. So, if it requires some information—I understand in about 1991 there used to be posters which people then could use as a reference to know which was our classification and what our classification system meant. If a person is not able to distinguish which rating system is which, we want them to know which is our local rating system. So I will certainly look into finding out that, if in fact we do not have a clear name on the label, then how do we provide the education

which tells people which is in fact ours? That is quite a reasonable expectation.

Ms. McGifford: I thank the minister for that. It apparently was not clear to the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), so I am sure there are many individuals to whom it is not clear. It has not been an issue for me personally, but I do not rent video films for children. So I am responsible for my personal taste, and it has not been a problem for me. [interjection] I will let that comment go by. I do have a funny story I may share with you sometime, though.

I also wonder if there is a set of printed criteria in regard to board members for the Film Classification Board.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, there is not, so we are not attempting to slot in specifically certain people, but we do strive for a community standard.

Ms. McGifford: So then some of the things that you would be considering—and you mentioned a couple to the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) are that the geographical areas of Manitoba are represented, and I am gathering from the remarks there that it was also important that there be some parents. I wonder if there are any other general guidelines that the minister has operated under.

Mrs. Vodrey: We do strive for a balance. As I said, we do look at things such as gender. We would like the Classification Board to have a balance in that way, a balance in terms of age, to have some people who are younger and some people who are older and more experienced, some cultural balance as well, some geographical balance, and when there is an opportunity on the Film Classification Board, to then look at what requirements might be there.

Ms. McGifford: Then I wonder if the minister could forward to me a list of the current board members on the Film Classification Board. I do not really have a complete list. I also would like to ask her, and I think this is probably a rhetorical question: are the same standards used in classifying films that appear in our theatres as are used in classifying home videos or videos for home use or whatever the right expression is?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the definition and the regulations are the same for both.

Ms. McGifford: Yesterday I was told that the video fee for a video retail outlet was \$105 if it was purchased before the 1st of April, and I believe it was \$120 if it were purchased after the 1st of April. Then I discovered in my files a sheet from the Manitoba Film Classification Board dated July 1998 in which it says that the adult video retailer licence fee in Manitoba is \$95. Is that an additional \$95 or has there been some change? I would like to have the explanation, please.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am not sure where the \$105 came from. I am not sure if I heard the member correctly when she was recalling yesterday. The information that I have is that the video licence fee is \$75 before April 1, \$95 after April 1, and that it is the same for all retailers.

* (1520)

Ms. McGifford: I think that the \$105 made its way into this discussion because one of my constituents phoned me, a man who has a video retail—well, he does not really have a video retail, but he sells the odd video. I brought it up right at the end of our discussions here yesterday, and he is the person who told me he was asked to pay a \$105 fee.

Now, perhaps he was mistaken in his figure, and perhaps it was \$75. Obviously, people here do not know whether he was mistaken, so the answer then is that it is \$75 for a video retail fee before the 1st of April and that there is no special fee for an adult video store.

Mrs. Vodrey: It is the same fee, I am informed. I am sorry, I do not have a Hansard from yesterday to reference how we discussed the number yesterday.

Ms. McGifford: Now, I do see on this piece of paper from the Film Classification Board, which is labelled adult video retailer licence fees by province. It says, Manitoba, \$95, and then in brackets, \$75 if paid before licence expiry date.

Can the minister tell me, or perhaps her staff would know the answer to this question, if there

are differential fees for, I will use the term ordinary video retailers and adult video retailers in other jurisdictions? I mention this because it seems to me since the minister knows, because I am on the record as having said I object strongly to adult video retailers, period, but since they are in our community, it seems to me there is a great opportunity to make at least a little bit of money out of them by charging them a higher fee.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, we do not have the information available to us here that gives us any provincial comparison, but we certainly could look at that and provide the member with the comparison and also take note of the recommendation or the suggestion that perhaps there may be a differential fee, depending upon the content rating of adult videos versus general classification videos.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask the minister a few questions about the video game classification awareness program that her department is currently engaged in. I wonder if the minister could tell me something about the public consultations which I believe the department underwent, who they consulted with, when, where, that sort of thing.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the information that I can provide to the member is information when we were looking at how we should proceed, and there was discussion with the industry as well as discussion with parent councils about the value of the education program. So we attempted to, in discussing with the industry, the province-wide education program that we are embarking on, we have—I am not sure if the member wants the names—letters of support from Microplay, The North West Company, Rogers Video, Video Software Dealers Association, Wal-Mart, Zellers. We have understood, from the Winnipeg Sun, Blockbuster video has offered support. I do not yet have in my hand their letter of support, and we also have support indicated by the parent advisory councils that they will be putting in their newsletter information about this province-wide campaign focusing on public education.

Ms. McGifford: When the minister was reading from the list of businesses, are those the parties that the minister means by the industry or is the industry something different?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is the industry that I was speaking about, those people who would in fact be having direct contact with the public where they would be renting or selling the video games.

Ms. McGifford: So these parties are the distributors as opposed to the makers of the videos?

Mrs. Vodrey: Just so that we are clear about the categories of groups, we did have direct contact with ESRB, who actually deals with the people who make the video games. The next category are people who are the distributors. What they do is simply then pass the product on to those people who are the sellers. The distributors we did not work with, because they take the product when created and pass it on to the sellers. We had contact with ESRB, not with the distributors, but then the next one is the seller, who has direct contact with the public.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me who supports the ESRB.

Mrs. Vodrey: The Entertainment Software Rating Board, the ESRB, is an independent rating system. It was established by the Interactive Digital Software Association, IDSA, which is the leading trade association for the interactive entertainment software industry. It does receive its financial support from the manufacturers, but it is an independent rating system.

Ms. McGifford: I think that there are ways of being independent and there are ways of being supported by the manufacturers of these products. It might lead some people to speculate as to its value as a rating board. What I really wanted to do was to ask the minister some questions about the public awareness program. I understand that her government is committed to a program which is designed to provide a guide rather than to classify.

* (1530)

Mrs. Vodrey: At the moment, we are not classifying here ourselves. We are using a system of classification which is an international

system. Our goal is then to make sure that there is a public awareness about how to use that classification system. However, as the member knows, we will be amending The Amusements Act to provide for our ability to classify should we find that this is not successful, working in partnership with the industry.

Ms. McGifford: Under the public awareness program, really, then, not much has changed. In fact, nothing has changed. There is a program to alert the public, to give parents information about video games. I remember the day of the announcement in I believe it was Rogers Video, some of the minister's staff were pointing out to me the classification or the letter—let us say classification—from the ESRB. It appeared that these video games had been there and had been classified for some time.

I am assuming, then, that is the case, and what the minister's government is committed to is alerting the public and bringing parental attention to the fact that indeed there is a rating on many of these videos.

Mrs. Vodrey: The games have been rated. This system has been in place since about 1994. The problem that parents have expressed here in Manitoba, and I understand from listening to the radio, watching TV and reading the newspaper that parents in general were not aware of the fact that this information was contained on the jacket of the video game and that they could find out. Parents who were then told after the fact that there was a way to receive that information said that they did not know about this.

One of the things that was very important was to then put a highlight or a spotlight on the fact that this classification system is available, and that it is meaningful in an international way, because not only do parents want to know about this when they are here in Manitoba and they are renting or buying video games, but when they go away on holidays, if they happen to go across the Ontario border, across the Saskatchewan border or into the States and they want to rent or buy a video game, the same system of classification is used and they can understand the symbols. So what we are doing here is a public awareness campaign to help parents in being able to monitor on behalf of their children both

the classification symbol which is on the front of the game, and on the back of the game there is a content description which tells you a little bit more about it.

If parents in Manitoba become aware of that and start to use it, they will be able to use that when they go to other places with their families, as well. That is why there has been a benefit to the use of the international system also.

Ms. McGifford: The minister speaks of an international system. I wonder about the extent of its internationality. Is it European, American? How extensive is it?

Mrs. Vodrey: It is a North American rating system. But I think in this case, it may be quite useful because the mobility of people among provinces and into the States just south of us—and people are very mobile and it does provide some degree of consistency. Again, parents will learn to recognize the rating symbol, and if they have any further questions they can turn it over, and they can see the content descriptor.

Ms. McGifford: So since this system is entirely voluntary, many of our retail outlets may choose not to use it. We do not know that, I suppose, at this point, but it would also seem to me, then, the situation is that any individual regardless of that individual's age could still purchase or rent any video game.

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, I would just like to clarify in terms of using it as the member said. These ratings are on, I understand, the biggest majority of video games, and so what we are asking retail outlets or sellers to comply with is the public awareness campaign.

We do have very good reason to believe that there will be very good co-operation, but in the event that a single outlet fails to co-operate with the education system, by and large, people do rent or buy at a number of video outlets, and because there will be a radio and a newspaper campaign to educate people, parents, then, will still be able to use that information.

Now, obviously, what we are looking for is the partnership with all of the sellers in terms of the public awareness campaign, but, again, if

people go into Ontario or Saskatchewan where there is not a public awareness campaign, they still will be able to look at this video game and get information about the video game.

Ms. McGifford: The minister has already begun to answer my next question. That was: I wondered if she could provide some details of the public awareness campaign, and she seems to be entertaining that there will be some information on radio and some in newspapers. Could she provide me some more details?

Mrs. Vodrey: I would like to first recognize Cindy Stevens, who is the executive director of Information Resources for my department. I am informed that the public awareness campaign through newspaper and radio will begin June 12. It will be covered in all daily and weekly newspapers, newspapers within the city of Winnipeg and community newspapers, whether they are daily or weekly, and there will be spots on all radio stations in both Winnipeg and rural Manitoba.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister has developed a set of standards that will enable her to determine whether the voluntary system or the voluntary awareness program that she is promoting is in fact working. What will be the sign that it is working? What will the signs be that it is not working?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am going to try and approach this from a couple of points of view. First of all, the compliance among the sellers or the retailers or the renters of the video games, we will be looking for compliance and their participation in the public awareness campaign. We will have our inspectors out as they are out for all matters. They will be using this as one of the issues that they will be inspecting for, and that is compliance.

* (1540)

Then, in terms of how people uptake the information, we have brochures that will be displayed in the outlets, which the member has. We will also be looking for the fact that those brochures are actually taken and used. Then we will also see if there is any further comment which comes from parents either at the time of

renting or buying or phoned into the classification board or myself regarding the videos.

As the member knows, this really is going to take the support of parents too. You can regulate and you can make laws, but you need the support of the people who are actually in the place with the children. We also will be looking to see if we have further feedback or comment from the parent advisory councils, but it will be in terms of its real value. Are parents, once being made aware, actually using the system and finding it helpful to themselves and their families?

Ms. McGifford: I think I am following the minister here. She spoke about inspectors visiting retailers and looking for compliance. What would the evidence of compliance be?

Mrs. Vodrey: The compliance will be that they have the posters displayed, that they have the brochures displayed and that those brochures are easily and readily accessible and that the posters are also readily accessible and in a place that would be helpful when you are renting or buying video games.

Ms. McGifford: I just want to share with the minister what my concern is finally. I know that most parents are extremely conscientious and are very interested in the products that their children view and purchase and that become part of their children's lives. Unfortunately, not all parents are, for a variety of reasons. We do not need to go into the reasons. I am sure the minister knows from the work that she has done in her various ministries and in her work before she became a politician that all parents are not there for their children and are not interested in what their children are viewing.

So I am very concerned for those children because it does not seem to me that this voluntary program, awareness program—and I told the minister's staff the day that the awareness campaign was introduced, I thought it had merit, but it does not seem to me that it addresses the concern that I brought forth. So I do want to put that on the record.

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, I appreciate the member's comments of having some positive

remarks to say about the effort to educate parents.

In the areas of her concern, I would say that it is always hard where there are parents who are not interested. But I am trying to put together how you take an uninterested parent and you say, well, if we happen to classify here in Manitoba, why would that be different than this international classification system, and also that games are available, as I know the member knows, on the Internet, for instance, which is quite unclassified and available for kids who can play in any number of venues.

So I think it was our view that we would like to begin first of all in partnership with the sellers, so that we could in the place where I believe probably most of the video games are rented or bought, that this public education program could actually assist parents and fill in the blanks where parents do not know, so that then if children are playing games on the Internet, parents at least have some way to get some information about that.

It is a start. As the member knows, as well, we are bringing forward legislation. It is now in second reading. We will be watching the program, too. The games are so complex that, as the member knows, depending on which route you choose, once you get into the game, you can end up with all kinds of different outcomes. It is very easy, you know, if somebody really wants to subvert the system, for kids to go this route when parents are there and this route when parents are not there.

So we are looking at a way to try and educate parents who, by and large, are a generation of people, you know, like me, who did not grow up with computers and the Internet and these kinds of games.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I think that we have chosen to classify home videos and films because we believe in the importance of a community standard for the protection of our children for, I suppose, the furthering of our morals and simply to recognize our ideas of civilized behaviour. I do not quite understand the logic between classifying films and videos but not video games, and perhaps we should best

delay the whole discussion to the committee following second reading.

I did want to ask the minister if she could assure me that the amendment that she is proposing would indeed allow for the classification of video games, because I was reading the regulations, and I think it is 54.1(1) that allows for certain exemptions. Video games, I believe, is listed there along with some other things.

I am wondering if the regulation would be changed or whether the amendment would allow for classification but not make it mandatory.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the amendment allows for classification which simply provides the empowerment or the authority puts classification—the ability to classify—within the scope of the Film Classification Board, and then if we decide that we want to make it mandatory it would be included in the regulations.

Ms. McGifford: So then this particular regulation would be changed.

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct, Mr. Chair.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me exactly how much revenue the Film Classification Board generates, or if not exactly, almost exactly.

Mrs. Vodrey: The Film Classification Board generates revenue to basically cover its cost and slightly better, and the cost recovery this time was \$350,000.

Ms. McGifford: I notice that the estimated subappropriation for next year is \$441,000, so presumably it will not cover the cost next year.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, yes, the dollar amount for this year reflects the dollars that were put in by government this year to deal with this new initiative regarding the public awareness campaign about the ESRB classification system.

Ms. McGifford: So is the public awareness program, as it is currently conceived, a program for next year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, well, it is in the budget for this fiscal year and then, as with all

issues, we will be reviewing what the requirements would be for the following year.

Mr. Chairperson: Did the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan) have a question that he wants—[interjection] No? Okay.

Item 14.1. Administration and Finance (d) Manitoba Film Classification Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$156,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$284,800—pass.

Item 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (a) Executive Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$283,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$83,900—pass. 14.2. (b) Grants to Cultural Organizations \$7,694,600.

* (1550)

Ms. McGifford: I notice that it is in this subappropriation that deficit reduction appears, and I wanted to ask the minister a couple of questions about the deficit reduction. I think I understand from past years that this is a fund of money set aside to help arts groups or heritage groups which are in financial distress. This leads me to ask the minister if she could tell me anything about the work her department is doing to assist the symphony in their current financial distress.

Mr. Denis Rocan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the Winnipeg Symphony is part of our current deficit reduction program and continues to be, even though they have now experienced some additional difficulties. So we have had to this point at least two meetings with the symphony that I have attended, and I understand that the department has also attended further meetings. The Manitoba Arts Council has also been involved. The issues for the symphony are a deficit which they clearly speak about and a requirement to actually look at what the accurate number of that deficit is and then to look at how they will develop a business plan so that that deficit does not remain.

Some of the details of our discussion I have had with the current board, actually the board of

trustees of the Winnipeg Symphony. There were four and I understand there are now three people who are basically acting as trustees, though the board continues to meet in committees. I am looking forward to being able to participate with them when they actually make their announcement about their long-term plans. But at the moment discussions have taken place, offers of assistance from the Manitoba Arts Council, from members of my department have been made, and I can say that the Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Symphony, in addition to the trustees, are really working very, very hard to come up with a comprehensive plan. The plan will include matters that relate to their future planning and their future financial stability which is really important for them.

Ms. McGifford: Is the additional difficulty that the minister mentioned the resignation of the conductor?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, it is not, although obviously the Winnipeg Symphony will have to look now at finding a new artistic director. Obviously the artistic vision comes also from the symphony board and the city basically are those who attend in conjunction with the artistic director. There should be a couple of years left where our current artistic director—has made a wonderful contribution to our city—remains here and the board is able to look, with the orchestra, at who the new artistic director will be.

Ms. McGifford: What then is the additional difficulty?

Mrs. Vodrey: Sorry, maybe I misspoke myself. They are working very hard. They did have a deficit last year for which we entered into a deficit reduction program. It appears this year that they will have a greater deficit which they will be required to manage. So the symphony has to look at how it is going to set itself on a sustainable fiscal footing and how they are going to develop in matters relating to that and board governance and so on.

Ms. McGifford: Is the arts stabilization fund that we discussed yesterday—or to change my question, how will this Arts Stabilization Fund—or will it indeed be helpful for the symphony in its current situation?

Mrs. Vodrey: This is the kind of issue which the arts stabilization fund should be able to assist with, and I gave the member yesterday a list of the kinds of areas which that stabilization fund would be looking to work with, but, at the moment, as we discussed yesterday, it is still in its conceptual stage while we are bringing all members onside and it is being driven, led basically by the private sector.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if I could have a list of major agencies' operating grants.

Mrs. Vodrey: We will provide that to the member.

Ms. McGifford: I believe that the Manitoba Museum is one of the major operating agencies.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to ask the minister a question about its name because I believe it was two years ago when we had a bill before the House that changed the name of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature to the Manitoba Museum, and I believe we were told at that time that the museum's name would soon change because the signage was being changed. I have not seen any evidence that it has changed, and I wonder if it is going to be, or what is happening there.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, the ability to change the name was passed in legislation, but the museum is currently going through a major strategic planning exercise. They want to consult with the committee during this process to look at, in fact, what the effect of changing the name in reality might be operationally. So they have not chosen yet to effect a change operationally.

Ms. McGifford: So if I was really curious about it, I should probably phone the director of the museum and speak to that person.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes.

Ms. McGifford: The minister will be pleased to know that I did read Hansard today, and I did notice the increase of \$875,000, which is a special grant, and I believe it is going to be managed by the Manitoba Arts Council to look

after special needs of the arts community. That is how it was outlined in Hansard, and I wonder what these special needs are and how this money is going to be given out.

* (1600)

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Vodrey: The Manitoba Arts Council in consultation with the arts groups would like to focus on issues, with these additional dollars, such as governance, marketing, new work which would be important in renewal for some of the arts groups, administration and new audience development.

Ms. McGifford: The minister spoke about the Manitoba Arts Council being in consultation with the community arts groups, and I wonder if she could tell me which community arts groups were consulted.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that they consulted with all of their clients, that is all of the clients of the Manitoba Arts Council, and they did so discipline by discipline.

Ms. McGifford: So I am assuming by all of their clients, that would suggest to me all of those groups which would receive money on a year-by-year basis and obviously not each and every single artist who has ever got a grant from the Manitoba Arts Council.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that it would in fact have included some individuals, though not every single individual but representative of individuals and disciplines.

Ms. McGifford: So then I am assuming groups like the Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Prairie Theatre Exchange, the symphony, the ballet, the Art Gallery, then individuals who are also representative of their particular art.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: And these individuals and then these groups apparently agreed that this was a good way to spend this \$875,000.

Mrs. Vodrey: Ultimately the plan was formed by the Manitoba Arts Council, but in formu-

lating the plan, they attempted to take into consideration the information that came from their consultations and the priorities that have been outlined by the arts groups. The arts groups would not have known the details of the plan then of the Manitoba Arts Council, but that plan which was developed again in consultation but ultimately by the Arts Council.

Ms. McGifford: Are there any details that would be available to me other than the ones the minister has given to me? I am looking for something on paper.

Mrs. Vodrey: The Manitoba Arts Council is just in the process of putting together a package which will go out to all the arts groups. So when that package is available and sent out, then we will send it to the member.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (b) Grants to Cultural Organizations \$7,694,600—pass; (c) Manitoba Arts Council \$7,317,300—pass. (d) Heritage Grants Advisory Council \$580,000.

Ms. McGifford: I do not really have any questions. Well, I do have one quick question. My understanding is that the Heritage Grants are given out twice a year? There are two rounds?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, there are two rounds.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if I could have a list then of the most recent grant assistance when they are available.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2.(d) Heritage Grants Advisory Council \$580,000—pass; (e) Arts Branch (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$610,300—pass. 2(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$138,400.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could explain to me the other operating increase.

Mrs. Vodrey: The member will find, I understand, throughout on the other operating line an increase which by and large reflects the desktop management increase.

Ms. McGifford: Then, to save time and energy, maybe the minister could tell me right now what the total cost of the desktop publishing project to her department is.

Mrs. Vodrey: The total is \$909,700.

Ms. McGifford: I notice that one of the expected results reads as follows: an enhanced local, national and international profile of Manitoba arts and artists through the Pan Am Games, trade missions and other branch-supported initiatives. I am curious about the Pan Am Games aspect of this expected result, because it leads me to believe that some special efforts will be made to promote Manitoba arts and artists throughout the Pan Am Games. I wonder if the minister could give me some concrete information about that.

* (1610)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed that we have provided consultative support to the organization. We have also provided advice to the festivals division, and our efforts are to profile and to help profile arts and culture both at The Forks and also in other venues.

Ms. McGifford: Will there be special displays of Manitoba art where people can purchase these products or these items, or is there going to be an effort to market Manitoba art?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that there will be some sites where people will be able to purchase Manitoba art. The Manitoba craft guild has just set up a bus link between The Forks and the guild, and our position has not been to fund but rather to co-ordinate.

Ms. McGifford: I cannot remember whether it was last year or the year before that I believe it was the Manitoba Arts Council who sponsored a group of individuals who produced a manuscript entitled Cultural Equity in which they voiced their concerns about there not being cultural equity. I notice here that one of the Expected Results of the Arts Branch is to increase the participation of Franco, aboriginal and designated new immigrant communities in branch-sponsored activities, arts, cultural industries and I wonder how that is being done.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, we do work with the various communities to try and assist them and their profile within their communities. Yesterday I referenced our assistance to the Cercle Molière, the Francophone community to assist them in celebrating their anniversary. I know the member was at the recent opening of the Robert Houle exhibition in the Pool of the Black Star, and there are several sites for his exhibits as a Manitoba aboriginal artist.

The department is also in partnership with the Native Affairs Secretariat and Industry, Trade and Tourism. We have provided \$12,500 to the Canadian Plains Gallery to co-ordinate an aboriginal performing and a visual arts program for inclusion in the Canadian Pavilion in Brazil in 1998. That is just one example.

In addition, I am also informed that the Arts Branch works with the Citizenship division, and they are looking to find artists who have immigrated or have come here as refugees and to link those artists with our arts community.

Ms. McGifford: I note that the Pan Am Games start in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, roundabout the 20th of July, although I might have the specific date incorrect. This means that the summer festivals, the Fringe, the Folk Festival, the Jazz Festival—I know I am going to miss one if I start listing them, but our various festivals which are more or less spread over the summer are going to be kind of boxed in to the beginning of July.

I wonder if the minister has any concerns about the effect of this on these various summer festivals, because I know that the festivals need to have participants in order to balance the books. Even with many participants they sometimes do not make it, and I know that the department supports many of the festivals.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I guess we all hope that we will benefit from the Pan Am Games in general, both all of our artists, performing artists and visual artists, et cetera, but in terms of the festivals in specific, the festivals did want to still make the most of their opportunities, so they are working together in partnership. They are doing joint marketing, which I think is great. I think the partnership is really wonderful and helpful also. So they will be, I would expect, able to

benefit as festivals and then also able to benefit when we have this really wonderful undertaking of the Pan American Games, as well.

Ms. McGifford: The minister spoke about a partnership among the various festivals. Could she give me any more details about this partnership? I wonder if her department, for example, has participated in assisting in the partnership and co-ordinating, or if her department has had a role.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed and actually have observed that these groups work very well together. My department is not involved. They have formed their own partnerships. They are doing things such as joint ads, and they are continuing their process of really looking to make the very most of this summer's opportunities.

Ms. McGifford: Just my last point on the Arts Branch then. I wonder if I could have copies of the grants assistance, and also I do want to ask a question about the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation. The question is under the act. Is Manitoba Film and Sound responsible for delivering a report, an annual general report? If so, what is the most recent one, because I think I have not had one for some time?

* (1620)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, this is the first year of operation of the new corporation, and they will be submitting an annual report. I am expecting that that annual report will be available by the fall.

Ms. McGifford: The minister did not respond in regard to the Grant Assistance, but I am assuming that her answer was yes.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes.

Ms. McGifford: The act that created the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation does require an annual report, is that correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, it does.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (e) Arts Branch (2) Other Expenditures \$138,400—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$4,158,300—pass.

14.2.(f) Public Library Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$798,700.

Ms. McGifford: I want to ask some questions about libraries. First of all, I would also like to have a list of Grant Assistance, but I also wanted to ask the minister if her department has any intentions of reviewing and reconsidering and perhaps even rewriting The Public Libraries Act, which I note was I believe first created in 1987. I have been told by librarians that it is quite out of date because in 1987, of course, the public libraries had not achieved the same degree of technological development as they have now.

So my question is: is there a plan or are there plans to reconsider The Public Libraries Act?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do not have any plans at the moment to open the library act. It does not mean that we will not in the future. We have had a number of initiatives in relation to libraries, and we have not needed to open the act to accomplish those initiatives. It is not in our immediate plans or not in our plans of this year.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me something about the Public Libraries Advisory Board. I am interested in knowing if this board is meeting regularly and if the board has met with the minister at all and also who is chairing the board.

Mrs. Vodrey: The chair of the Public Libraries Advisory Board is Linda Pleskach from Selkirk, and she is in place in that position until September. She works in Selkirk. She is in place until September, and then each year in September the group has to determine who will be their chair for the next year, so they will determine this September if in fact it will be Linda or another member.

I am informed that they have met four times this year, but they do have numerous teleconferences because people are representatives from across the province and, yes, I have

met with them. I have met with them several times.

Ms. McGifford: So it is the advisory board itself that determines the chair?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to refer the minister to an article in the Winnipeg Free Press, dated May 26, 1999, and this is really a question for information, because I do not really know what is being discussed, but it is in connection with the city making the decision to withdraw funding from the public library. I think it was \$4 million. There was a conversation apparently with Councillor Garth Steek who says that the cuts to the library have been proposed because the province has not "come through" with its share of funding, and then it goes on to say because of the city's financial constraints.

I wonder if the minister could offer any information, because I would like to know.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I can tell the member that I have met with the committee who is proposing this expanded library and other facilities several times. They have also met with my department. For the province it is now the Economic Innovation and Technology Council, which is taking the lead provincial role on this expanded millennium centre of knowledge. The reasoning for that is that it has expanded itself really beyond the library. I mean, it is expanded itself into quite a technological plan, so it is again being looked at by EITC.

In relation to the comments of Councillor Steek, I am somewhat puzzled because the City of Winnipeg does make their own budgetary decisions. They make their budgetary decisions based on their own priorities, and so I would say to the city, if this was a priority for them, their money would have been on the table. Their money should have been on the table if it was their priority and that whatever was possible then to leverage from that money or to plan with that money, then obviously could have been accomplished by the committee, but he does know that the committee has been working with the province. I am sure he knows that and so the

basis for those comments, I am not sure why he would have made those.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (f) Public Library Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$798,700—pass; 2.(f)(2) Other Expenditures \$718,500—pass; 2.(f)(3) Grant Assistance \$4,390,000—pass.

14.2.(g) Historic Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,217,400.

Ms. McGifford: I have a couple of questions to ask about Historic Resources. I would like to begin by asking whether Historic Resources has any plan to have a provincial-wide meeting of all organizations involved in heritage, because my understanding was that a meeting had been planned for April. I cannot remember whether it was the 15th or the 12th, or perhaps I have the date incorrect, but I believe a meeting had been planned, and then I believe the meeting had been cancelled. My question is: was it ultimately held and if it was not, is there a plan to hold it?

Mrs. Vodrey: To my knowledge there is not a plan to have a province-wide meeting at the moment, but Historic Resources, I am told, has met with all of their clients this year, that they have a very good network that they work through, as well, with municipalities, and that this is the way that they are working with the Historic Resources community across the province, the heritage community.

Ms. McGifford: So then was the decision that rather than to meet as a group, Historical Resources chose to meet with individual groups?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed yes. I am informed everyone could not make it, necessarily, so they have met with all of their clients.

Ms. McGifford: Perhaps I could have copies of the grant assistance for community museum grants and community heritage grants, along with the other ones?

* (1630)

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, we will provide that.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to bring up an issue raised in a publication called *Heritage Now*, which is a publication of the Manitoba Heritage Federation Inc., It is in an editorial by Chris Vogel. If I could quote from that editorial, the editorial is basically about the demolition of a heritage building in Souris. The writer says that he had been advised, and now I am quoting: by staff of the Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship that the building screening committee of the Heritage Council has already identified a representative sample of stations, that is, railway stations, that are to be designated provincially. The Souris station is not one of them and is, therefore, not to be designated by the province. Apparently they have done this exclusive selection with all other kinds of buildings. He goes on to protest this policy.

So I wanted to ask the minister if there is indeed a building screening committee.

Mrs. Vodrey: The committee that the member refers to is actually a committee of the Manitoba Heritage Council itself. That is a council of experts. They have, in fact, reviewed. They did an extensive railway study of 128 railway stations in a previous study. At the moment, the Manitoba Heritage Council did not recommend that the former CP station in Souris was of provincial heritage significance.

Ms. McGifford: I was more concerned whether there is a policy. My concern was not so much about this particular building but whether there is a policy, the policy referred to in the bit that I quoted, that names a number of buildings.

Mrs. Vodrey: If I understood the question correctly, it was is there a sort of maximum number of sites that might be designated by policy. No, there is not.

Ms. McGifford: So the author of this editorial's suggestion that there is a process where a number of buildings are selected—his expression is "exclusively selected"—is inaccurate?

Mrs. Vodrey: The Heritage Council would review in this case the stations, for instance, which may, in fact, be designated. They are very precise in their assessment in terms of allotting a weighted criterion as they go through

their assessment. Based on that, very often they also have to compare one to another, I am told.

But they do a thorough assessment. They are experts in their field, and, ultimately, they recommend what would be of provincial significance. In this case, they did not recommend the former CP station in Souris.

Ms. McGifford: But whether a building is ultimately designated or not is a judgment made on the merits of that building. There is not a predetermination that we will preserve 10 railways and six churches, or whatever.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the member is correct. I guess that is what I have been trying to say, is that there is not a specific number that they operate by in terms of policy that says there can only be four or five, or whatever. Each is assessed based on its own merits. The evaluation is on criteria such as the age of the building, the architectural interest, the historical interest, and then there is an assessment made as to whether that building meets the criteria and would be recommended.

Ms. McGifford: There is a list, then, of published criteria?

Mrs. Vodrey: What I am informed is that they do not specifically publish it as criteria, but they do publish it or have available what to look for in a building if you were to be assessing yourself as to should this building be brought forward for consideration under the provincial designation.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder, then, if I might have a copy of that information.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the member can have a copy. She might be interested in what I have in front of me, which is basically just off the Internet, and off the Internet it is titled: What has been commemorated by the province as being of heritage significance. Then it does talk about some of the criteria.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, I would appreciate that copy.

I just have one other question. It actually grows out of the news today in which I heard

that historic buildings on Princess Street are once again under discussion. I wonder if the minister has been consulted about these buildings or whether her department has been consulted, whether there is ongoing participation in the preservation of these buildings.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, we are a part of that committee. We actually initiated a trilevel committee. It is being chaired by Bill Neville. We are working together with the City of Winnipeg and also with Parks Canada, who has the responsibility federally to look at these historic buildings and historic areas.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (g) Historic Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,217,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$382,500—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$869,300—pass;

14.2.(h) Recreation and Wellness Promotion (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$484,900.

* (1640)

Ms. McGifford: I do not really have any questions, but I would once again like to have the list of Grant Assistance.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is fine. I am happy to provide that.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2.(h) Recreation and Wellness Promotion (1) Salaries and Employee benefits \$484,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$237,000—pass; (3) Grants Assistance \$671,900—pass.

14.2.(j) Regional Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$941,800.

Ms. McGifford: Again, I would like to have Grant Assistance.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, we will provide that.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.2.(j)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$941,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$326,900—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$35,100—pass.

14.2.(k) Manitoba Millennium Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$234,500.

Ms. McGifford: This is of course the first year I think that the Manitoba Millennium Office has been part of the department. Perhaps it was last year, because I see that there are Estimates of expenditure but of course nothing was spent. They are zero.

I wonder what the minister's plans are. Will the Millennium be in operation for this year and next year or three years? What are the plans? Maybe I will leave it at that.

Mrs. Vodrey: I would just like to take a moment to introduce the staff member who has joined us at the table. This is Jill Logan [phonetic], and she is the director of the Manitoba Millennium Office. The Manitoba Millennium Office is expected to be operational during this fiscal year, which would take us through 2000; and the next fiscal year, which would take us through 2001.

Our plan is recognizing that as communities or individuals or groups look at their millennium projects and funding is required, they will probably require perhaps some of that this year in preparation, 1999, most of it in the year 2000, but some may be required to be paid out in the first months of 2001. The Manitoba Millennium Office will be operational until all of that is complete.

Ms. McGifford: The minister's recent announcement on behalf of her government I believe was to provide \$10 million for Manitoba Millennium programs. I wonder if the minister could tell me where that appears in the budget. It is obviously not in here.

Mrs. Vodrey: I would like to table basically a page of this budgetary initiative. It actually appears in appropriation 27.6, called the Millennium Fund, in the Minister of Finance's Estimates, but if it is possible for us to table it and have it approved here, I think the questioning is most relevant here in Culture Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson: I am told that you can pass this out all right, but we cannot approve it. It is a separate appropriation on the list here. You understand? [interjection]

Order, please. We cannot pass this, but we can discuss it if that is the will of the committee. Is it the will of the committee to discuss this particular portion, Millennium Fund?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Chair, having just received this page, I am not in a position to discuss it. I would be happy to attend the Estimates of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and discuss it during that time. Okay?

Mr. Chairperson: As it is the will of the committee.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is fine. Our discussions were simply to try and have this relevant. My understanding was that it was to be discussed between House leaders, but perhaps in the busyness of the busy House it was not done, so we are certainly open to considering it at whatever the committee's direction is.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.2.(k) Manitoba Millennium Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$234,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$70,000—pass.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,244,500 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Item 3. Information Resources (a) Client Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,214,700.

Ms. McGifford: I just have a general question here. I wanted to ask the minister if it is this department that was responsible for the spring's health ads.

Mrs. Vodrey: I would just like to take a moment to reintroduce Cindy Stevens, again, who is the Executive Director of Information Resources.

I can tell the member that the Department of Health is responsible for those ads. It is also contained in their budget, but our responsibility was to assist in the producing of the ad.

Ms. McGifford: So this particular department assists different ministries in producing their materials for the media.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct. We are the technical support.

Ms. McGifford: I think it was last year, maybe the year before, that I spoke to somebody, I believe from Client Services, I think it was Dwight MacAulay, about possibly having in Question Period an ASL interpreter. I am sure the minister appreciates that as the MLA for the constituency of Osborne which includes the Centre for the Deaf, I do get calls from people who would like to be able to follow what is happening in Question Period, and they cannot. I wonder if this has been considered, or if I need to pursue the matter a little bit further, or whether there is any information that the minister has on this initiative.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand that this issue was referred to the Legislative Assembly review, which is the all-party committee, chaired by the Speaker, and we have not had any direction back yet from that committee.

Ms. McGifford: So I should take the matter up with the members of my caucus who are on that committee then?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.3. Information Resources (a) Client Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,214,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$282,600—pass; (3) Public Sector Advertising \$2,384,100—pass; (4) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$2,859,500)—pass. 14.3.(b).

Ms. McGifford: Client Services.

* (1650)

Mr. Chairperson: That was Client Services. We are on Business Services now, but I am told that we would like now to go to—

Mrs. Vodrey: Let us do Business Services, if you do not mind.

Mr. Chairperson: Business Services. Okay. 14.3.(b) Business Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. McGifford: I do have a question. I notice that under professional and technical staff, although the numbers of staff has stayed the same, there is a jump of approximately \$90,000 in salary, and I wonder what the explanation is for that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, these are the salary dollars added for the Internet team which I mentioned yesterday in my opening remarks.

Mr. Chairperson: 14.3.(b)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,137,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$996,400—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$260,300)—pass.

14.3. (c) Translation Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,269,100.

Ms. McGifford: I just wanted to ask the minister if Translation Services is providing any supports for the Pan Am Games? I was thinking particularly of Spanish translation, or does it deal almost exclusively with English-French translation?

Mrs. Vodrey: I would like to introduce Sue Bishop, who is the Executive Director of Provincial Services, to the table.

I am informed that Translation Services is supporting the Pan Am Games by making its interpreter training facilities available to the Pan Am Games Society, and the society has sent interpreter trainees on several occasions for half-day sessions, but we are not providing interpreters. If the Pan Am wants interpreters, they would have to then make that contract with the interpreters. It is not through my department that the interpreters are provided.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could tell me why the numbers of staff have been increased by four this year.

Mrs. Vodrey: During this budgetary process we had four staff approved to assist in the area of Education and Training, additional translator

positions to deal with a very substantial workload for the Department of Education and Training.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.3. Information Resources (c) Translation Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,269,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$480,700—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$269,700)—pass.

14.3.(d) Provincial Archives (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,062,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,640,600—pass.

14.3.(e) Legislative Library (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$742,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$646,100—pass;

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,467,500 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Mrs. Vodrey: I wonder if it is the will of the committee to step out of order of the Estimates book and to consider Capital Grants, which is appropriation 14.5., for consideration now while the Arts Branch is here and may be able to provide information.

Mr. Chairperson: This is agreed? [agreed]

Item 14.5. Capital Grants (a) Cultural Organizations.

Ms. McGifford: As I have been asking all afternoon, I would like to have copies of the grants for these particular lines. I wonder if the minister could explain to me the significant increase in the budget line for 1999-2000 over 1998-99.

Mr. David Faurshou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Vodrey: The increase is as a result of three initiatives which again I spoke about yesterday. There is \$1 million to the Mennonite College Federation. There is \$1 million to the Betel Heritage centre, and there is \$500,000 to the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum.

Ms. McGifford: I notice that in 1997-98, \$2,104,700 was given out through Community Places, and I think what the estimate is here for 1998-99, and also '99-2000, approximately \$2.5 million, so that all the money was not given out. I think about \$400,000 was not given out. I wonder what happens to money which has not been accessed but has been designated for this program.

Mrs. Vodrey: In the Community Places line, we pay according to the invoices as they are received, so sometimes there is somewhat of a lag.

Ms. McGifford: So is all the money always given out?

Mrs. Vodrey: I meant to say every penny—well, maybe not every penny, but the program is very well subscribed, but because we pay out on invoice, sometimes there may be a lag, in which case it may not all be used and some may lapse. But it generally is all subscribed and paid out.

* (1700)

Ms. McGifford: I understood the minister's explanation of the lag. So then the minister is assuring me that there really is not money left over at the end, wherever we may eventually take the end to be, so that, in fact, the money is accessed and there is no place for it to go, because there is no money to go.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, generally, the money is all spent. Occasionally there may be a project which has been approved which for some reason the community is unable to go ahead with. That happens very rarely. Generally the money is all spent.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the minister could explain to me Recoverable from Capital Initiatives.

Mrs. Vodrey: That is transferable from the Department of Finance. It is one time only, and it is the grants that we spoke about in terms of those capital initiatives.

Ms. McGifford: The minister said at the beginning that this was the last time that she

would be doing Estimates, so it is the last time we will be sitting down at an Estimates table together, so I would like to thank her for her work and for her answers and thank her staff, as well.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you very much. I appreciate the member's comments. I also would want to comment on the sincere interest in a number of initiatives and issues which I see she has brought forward really on behalf of people in Manitoba. That is very much appreciated, so thank you, too.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurschou): Item 14.5. Capital Grants (a) Cultural Organizations \$4,380,900—pass; (b) Heritage Buildings \$300,000—pass; (c) Community Places Program \$2,525,000—pass; (d) Less: Recoverable from Capital Initiatives (\$2,500,000)—pass.

Resolution 14.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,705,900 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Item 14.6. Amortization of Capital Assets \$560,900—pass.

Resolution 14.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$560,900 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

14.4. Citizenship and Multiculturalism (a) Citizenship (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,677,100.

An Honourable Member: On the salaries line, George? On the salaries line?

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Not really on the salaries line. We can pass that if you want.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.4.(a)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,677,100—pass. (2) Other Expenditures \$846,600.

Mr. Hickes: I just wanted to put some comments on record first, then I have some general questions. It is sort of the comments that I have been making over the years. I hear over and over from constituents and concerned citizens that have made Canada their home, especially Manitoba, which we should all be very proud that they have chosen our province, a lot of the issues that are raised to my attention pertain to the federal government.

I hear a lot of times that for immigration to be successful in Manitoba and to be open to all citizens throughout the world, we have to do something with the head tax, that \$975 and the \$500 processing fee. For a lot of people from poor countries or even Third World countries, it is extremely difficult, because a lot of times you are talking about a whole year's salary for individuals. If they have families, you are talking about two or three years salaries.

One of the questions I will be asking the minister a little later is if she has consulted with her federal counterpart and, hopefully, has stressed the disagreement of citizens of Manitoba to that horrible head tax and the processing fee that is imposed on us by the federal government.

The other thing I wanted to raise was the importance of immigration. We all understand it stimulates our economy. People come here, they take training and education, they purchase homes and buy groceries and buy clothes. So it only does nothing but positive for our province. I would like to see us increase the opportunity of individuals to come to our wonderful province, where a lot of people that have come from other countries have benefited greatly but we as citizens have benefited the most from the individual's contributions and what they have given to our province and what they have shared with us as citizens of the province.

So I would encourage that we extend our hand out and increase immigration to Manitoba because, like I mentioned earlier, it only makes us a better province. We are a diverse province, with many cultural groups and different ethnic origins in the province. I firmly believe that it makes each one of us a better person when we have a better understanding of other cultures and

other ethnic groups that come from other parts of the world. If I only knew about Inuit people, I do not think I would be the person I am today, because that is the only thing I would know. I thank all the people who have come to Manitoba to make their homes.

Also, when we extend our hand out to people to our province, I think it is important that we have an accreditation program that would recognize and appreciate the foreign credentials that people bring with them. If there is a way of encouraging that, a way of looking at the certificates, diplomas, and compare them to what is required in Manitoba and Canada and maybe look at recognizing all or part of one's diploma or credentials and maybe set up individualized programs for groups, where instead of four years of university, they might already have qualifications that meet two, and they might only have to study for two more years to get their degrees or doctorates or whatever is required, instead of trying to go through the whole four years again, or in some cases it might only be one year.

* (1710)

I say that knowing that it could work very well. The program that I was involved with for many years was called New Careers Program. That was a program that was designed for individuals who had needs, and so any program could be developed to meet the needs of individuals. When I say that, I think it would benefit us as governments and as a province if we would put dollars in place to assist individuals to attain their accreditation and not have to try and work a full-time job, study, raise a family, all at the same time. I think if we had some kind of fund available for individuals to be paid or get a training allowance while they are studying, which would assist the families, and then upon successful graduation, there could be an avenue of cost recovery or some form of forgivable grants or loans if a person accepted employment in a high-needs area.

We always hear at great length the importance and the shortage of skilled individuals in northern Manitoba and in rural communities, and if a person upon successful graduation was willing to relocate for whatever

the agreeable time is, whether it is three years, five years, two years, whatever is agreeable, all or a portion of the education costs could be forgivable, because we spend a lot of dollars trying to recruit offshore for skill shortage areas, and this way I think we would be helping individuals who choose Manitoba to be their home and also helping ourselves at the same time.

Another important issue that I was really pleased to see in this budget line was the increase in English as a Second Language. There is a tremendous increase from 1.172 to 3.472. That is a great increase. I am really happy to see that. I just hope that it is not just transfer of dollars from the federal government to the province that is already doing the training for English as a Second Language. I hope it is new money and new opportunities for people that have chosen Manitoba as their new home.

The other area that I think is crucial for all of us is to introduce more access to our children through history in our schools and teach the different ethnic groups that are here, so hopefully our students have a better understanding and a better appreciation on why we are different. There is nothing wrong to be different. I think it should be accepted. But I think a lot of that racism and discrimination is brought on by individuals that do not really understand or have not taken the time or have not had the opportunity to understand why we are all different from one another. It does not make us bad because we are different, but to understand and to appreciate our differences, I feel it is very important that it be taught in our schools.

I hear individuals say it should be taught at home. Well, not all parents do that. If we want to change the actions in the future, I think it has to come from our schools. That is our education system. Yes, I accept that there is a role and a responsibility of parents in the home, but there are some parents that do not fully accept that responsibility. We all know that. So I think it is incumbent on us as individuals whenever we get the chance to speak, we should try and express the importance of being different and that it is okay to be different.

We are a very diverse province, and we have many different cultures. I know a lot of

individuals that really appreciate the different cultures and have no problems at all. When I say that, I think we as a province need to really look at what are we doing as governments and as individuals to try and help people around the world that are in need. Sometimes it comes down to dollars and cents, and I hope that we will never consider only the finances of an individual for immigration.

That is why I am so set against the \$975 head tax and the \$500 processing fee, because it is so unfair to individuals, that all they want is a new start, a new way of life. They have heard so much, and some have relatives right here in Canada and in Manitoba and wish to join or some families that are here to bring their family members over, and they are so willing to come over. The individuals that are here have really caused no problems and have contributed greatly to the province, yet these kinds of barriers are put in place for people that are wanting to make Manitoba their home. I strongly believe that it is so unfair.

The constituency I represent is very diverse, and I am very fortunate that I meet individuals from all over the world. They really appreciate the opportunity that they have been given here in Manitoba and are very proud to be Canadians. They talk about the importance of their grandchildren and their brothers and sisters and their aunts and uncles, and they say if only they could be given the chance they were given. That is why I always raise that, because it is a tremendous hardship for people I know that would do very well, that would make a great contribution to our province.

When I say that, we turn on the news every night and you see what is happening in Kosovo. Even Canada is bringing over people from Kosovo and extending a helping hand, and I hope we as a province are extending that same helping hand. I hope we are doing something to assist and to accommodate some of the individuals from that country who really need assistance from friendly countries and provinces throughout the world.

I saw on TV there was an organization, I think it was bringing in 85 or 90 families from Kosovo. I think that is great, but I think we as a

government should really be doing something, and I hope we are. I have not heard, but I hope we are doing something to help people who are in crisis right now. In a lot of cases, it will be short-term help, because a lot of them, once everything is settled, wish to return back home, but you will have individuals who will adjust and adapt to our country and our province and will probably wish to remain here. You are going to have both sides.

So I do not know if we are doing anything as a province, but I hope we are. If we are not, I hope we will be. I think that is so crucial. If we were in trouble, I am sure we would appreciate help from other countries and other provinces.

Just for a small example, when we had the great flood, the army came in from all over the country, and they came in to help. I was not even affected, but I appreciated to see what was happening for the individuals who were affected by the flood, and I think that the same thought should be given to the individuals from Kosovo who really need help from everyone today.

* (1720)

Another issue that I will be asking is the whole Manitoba Intercultural Council which you know was made up of groups from all walks of life here. There were individuals from the Chinese community, the Philippine community, the black community and on and on and on. They had an important role, I feel anyway, when they gave directions to governments. It was a hands-off organization that gave advice to the governments. I am not sure exactly what is in place now, but that was scrapped a couple of years ago. I do not know if there is any consideration of reinstating it or reinstating another organization, or if there is already one in place that accommodates all the various diverse groups that I just mentioned.

The other issue that I will be asking questions on is appointments of government boards. Hopefully, the minister is encouraging her government, when appointments come up that are government appointments, to reflect the make-up of all of Manitoba and to ensure that we have individuals from the black community, from the Philippine community, Chinese

community, aboriginal community, to really, really encourage the government, in all cases, to try and appoint a true make-up of the province.

I know for years, for example, the Manitoba Hydro board did not have one aboriginal person represented on their board. The power came right from northern Manitoba, of which I am very familiar because that is where I grew up, not totally grew up, I hope I never totally grow up, but that is where I am from. But I see now they have George Campbell on the board, which to me I think it is a giant leap forward. He is not the same political stripe I am, but he is a very fine individual, and I am sure he represents the aboriginal community very well on the board. I think that it is crucial for that to happen and for the different groups to see it happen. That way you have different voices and different opinions. So I think that will be crucial.

So I would just like to, first of all, ask the minister, I know that you have written a letter to federal Immigration minister. Have you received a response, or is there anything happening to try and eliminate or ask to or whatever we can do to eliminate that horrible \$975 head tax and the \$500 processing fee?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, this is a point on which we both have taken a similar position. As the member references, yes, I have written to the federal minister on specifically this point. Actually, I also pointed out to him, when I met with her fairly recently, I think it was in my June meeting or my meeting following June, I also wanted to make clear that we had passed an all-party resolution about our concern about any taxes, any of the taxation that the federal government had put in place that may in any way discourage immigration or create a hardship for family reunification and immigration, new immigrants, discourage immigration or refugees.

Our position has been made very clear to the federal government on this issue, again by letter, in face-to-face meetings and in informing her of the all-party resolution which was passed I believe last spring in the Legislature which asked the federal government to examine all taxes and to review all taxes which may in fact act as a discouragement. To date, I do not have any positive reaction back. The federal minister

has accepted that we have concerns. She has accepted the information. I have really tried hard to put the point across by saying Manitoba really wants to encourage immigration and we want to encourage settlement services so that those people who immigrate here stay here, so we are not just looking at increasing our immigration numbers to have those people move away to Vancouver or Toronto, and that basically our province is extremely friendly towards any policies which would assist in the area of immigration.

So in that way I would say it is unfortunate that we have yet to have any positive reaction back, any positive assessment and perhaps she has been unable to influence her Minister of Finance in the preparation of the budget. I would say, just on the positive side, that though we have been unable to deal with the tax side, I believe that the federal government has in fact understood Manitoba's very proactive and strong desire to increase immigration to our province and to maintain those people who do immigrate here. I know as the questioning goes on, we will probably talk about things such as the provincial nominee program, as well as others, and our participation in terms of refugees and particularly the extra numbers of refugees which we are wanting to assist from the very terrible war-torn area of Kosovo right now.

So the short answer is nothing positive back, but we will continue to press that point with the federal government.

Mr. Hickes: Do you have a meeting scheduled with the federal minister in the near future?

Mrs. Vodrey: Not in the near future. What is interesting with this part of my portfolio is that there is not generally such a meeting as a federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for immigration, which in most other ministerial responsibilities there is. Because each province has its own view on how it would like to encourage immigration or whether it does not want to encourage immigration, the federal minister generally does not convene a meeting. There was only one meeting, which I told the member I attended last year which took place in Montreal. Other than that, the federal minister has in fact visited

Manitoba twice recently, once in June and then once when she was looking at her responsibilities in terms of introducing a new act. So not a formal meeting. It is however possible should there be a series of issues which we need to discuss. I can say that we do have in fact a good response from her if we wish to have a meeting but it is generally bilateral, our province and the federal government.

Mr. Hickes: I would just like to ask the minister, a while back there was a recruiting process to recruit 200 garment workers, if I remember correctly. How successful was that? Was that accomplished?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, that was an initiative that took place several years ago. The time frame was completed in 1996—am I correct? I beg your pardon, processed in 1996, completed in 1997. We were able to recruit 157 sewing machine workers.

Mr. Hickes: I am happy to hear that. I think those are the kinds of things that we have to do as a province is to try and encourage individuals to come to our province.

I would like to just move on to the increase in English second language. There is a huge increase, which I am not against. I am happy to see it. Is that provincial dollars, or was that transfer of federal funds to the province?

Mrs. Vodrey: This increase does in fact reflect the devolution of the settlement services from the federal government to the province. That devolution has now been completed. It does deal with adult ESL services, settlement services in general. It is our intention, with the result of that devolution, then, to in fact have a more responsive system for people who are immigrating or who are here as refugees.

* (1730)

Mr. Hickes: Those programs were already being delivered, but under federal dollars. Is there any increase in new positions for students to take the opportunity of English second language. Is there an increase in classes or students or anything, or does that pretty well stay the same?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the agencies or service groups which delivered the services have in fact had an opportunity to do an assessment of what was really required. So the answer to the question is that there may be some change in the configuration as the groups now looked at a more co-ordinated effort, those groups that were funded to deliver this service, so that they can look and see if there was perhaps a greater need at the medium level, not necessarily the introduction level or at a level in relation to, I guess, work experience, as well. It is now being co-ordinated through the province.

So are there actually more students? I am honestly not sure of that, but I think that what it would be reasonable to say is that the focus of the training is now better co-ordinated to look at what is required.

Mr. Hickes: So it is not new dollars that are coming available to individuals who require those services. It is just a transfer of dollars that were existing already but under the federal jurisdiction, that were transferred to the province. Is that correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: By and large, yes. The increase is in fact a reflection of the devolution of dollars paid by the federal government now administered by the province, though I know the member knows we do have provincial dollars in that service area as well.

Mr. Hickes: When new programs or new initiatives will be undertaken, from what I heard, what the minister was saying, will there be consultation with the communities to see the needs? Will it be government programs just given out or offered to people? Will there be consultation with the organizations and the groups that will be affected to get their recommendations and input from the communities that will need these services?

Mrs. Vodrey: When the devolution was being actually operationalized, in January my department had very broad-based consultation both with the immigrant communities and also with the service deliverers. Through that consultation, information was provided to the organizations and individuals about the meaning of the devolution, about the criterion which was going

to be used for the service delivery so that groups who were service deliverers then would have the opportunity to know what that criterion was and then begin to look at tailoring their programs based on what the need was determined.

Mr. Hickes: In what way was the information gathered from the immigrant communities, through what communications? Was it groups or was it meeting with various ethnic organizations? How was this accomplished?

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, there were letters to groups informing them. Then there were meetings held. Then finally we wrote to all of the groups who do programming. We gave them the guidelines for program delivery and encouraged them to then communicate with the department regarding proposals that they would have and want to put forward.

Mr. Hickes: I would like to touch on accreditation. Is there a program in place now dealing with individuals that come to Manitoba that have certification or diplomas? Is there any accreditation in place now to view a person's credentials and see if they apply?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do have a credentials assessment service at the moment.

Mr. Hickes: That credentials assessment, when that is taking place, does it compare credentials from other countries like foreign credentials to Manitoba standards? If so, how does it determine whether one meets our standards or not?

Mrs. Vodrey: I know the member knows that this is a complex process because it involves very often professional organizations, it involves the universities or other post-secondary training institutions. The program of credentials assessment facilitates the credentials assessment and the recognition process between the applicants and the professional licensing association or government department or academic institution. So our role is to assist the immigrant to bring together the appropriate documentation so that documentation can then be considered by the appropriate certifying agency. So we cannot say even through this process that a person is licensed to do certain work, but we can help

them bring the documentation together, and then we also provide them with records which when assessed are able to say that their qualifications are an equivalent of a certain qualification here so that it can be then assessed by employers, for instance.

Mr. Hickes: If an individual that had that letter was applying to the province, would that letter carry any weight to get employment, if it is an equivalent to and if a person was applying for a position, say within government? Is it recognized by the province?

Mrs. Vodrey: My understanding of this then record, which the person would have some equivalency, again it would not be an equivalency which provides a licence, but it might be an equivalency, for instance, assessing the courses that a person had taken in their place of origin and being able to provide some assessment that this might be a Grade 12 equivalent. So it does not provide a certificate of Grade 12 equivalency, but it does provide basically a translation of the record into what that would be equivalent to. So again it is not the Grade 12 equivalency test, but it does basically translate the record for the purposes of employment so the employer could assess it.

Mr. Hickes: When that assessment is done, say, for example, if it is equivalent to say a university course, when it says equivalent to, if a person was applying for a position, say, in the Manitoba government, would the Manitoba government accept that as compared to an individual that has a degree from the University of Manitoba, per se, if they have a letter saying the equivalent to?

* (1740)

Mrs. Vodrey: It would be my understanding that it would be taken into consideration by a potential employer. It does not bestow a degree, but it does quantify, classify or describe the knowledge base that the individual brings. That seems to be one of the difficulties that when it is an unknown qualification, if there is some way to say the meaning of this qualification is that, then the knowledge base is described, whatever that may be. Now, I guess if it is a professional organization who requires a professional certification, then they would have to assess if that was equal to them.

But if they were applying for a job which did not have a professional designation or certification, for instance you did not have to be a dentist, but you were planning to work as part of a policy department, for instance, and we could identify your knowledge base as being significant policy experience and educational experience in agriculture, for instance, then that descriptor would assist the employer as the employer determining whether or not this person might meet the requirements to do the kind of work that they would like to do.

So the distinction is a fine one. It is an important one for the governing bodies of, for instance, a university or professional organization that we do not confer a degree or a professional entitlement, but we do describe a knowledge base, and if that is what is required by an employer, then, yes, it certainly should be considered and I would think would be very helpful.

Mr. Hickes: For example, if an individual walked into an interview with the government of Manitoba, Family Services, and if they had a letter stating that they had the education equivalent to, say, a B.A. in social work, and the government was looking for social workers for their department, how serious would that equivalent two letters be taken into consideration by the Province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand where the member is going. Unfortunately, we are getting really hypothetical in a specific type of case, and I am hesitant to say something because I am concerned that someone may then feel my comments are misread as an entitlement.

In a very general sense, if someone said this is the kind of knowledge base required which might sometimes be found in a Bachelor of Social Work, a Bachelor of Human Ecology, a Bachelor of Education or other related training, and that is often the way the job requirements are listed, the person then may be able to present their knowledge-based qualification and see if it is to be considered, and it probably would be considered among other things.

If, however, and, again, very hypothetically, in a general sense, the requirement was very

specific to a Bachelor of Social Work, the person then would have to take the description of their knowledge-based accomplishments to the university, to the Faculty of Social Work, and have the Faculty of Social Work assess whether or not this was an equivalent to a Bachelor of Social Work.

So it would very much depend upon how the job was listed. I often see Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Human Ecology, Bachelor of Education or other related training, and that would be a good opportunity to use what we are able to provide. But if it is a specific degree, it would require the university to then say that this was an equivalent degree.

Mr. Hickes: That is exactly the direction I was going, because the obvious next step is has the government discussed with universities and colleges to try and work out something that is agreeable and may be an upgrading course or some program that would ensure or hopefully prepare the individual to, say, challenge the Province of Manitoba examination.

For example, any individual within the last 10 years, and I am not just talking about only university credentials, I am talking about like also college, where for example in the trades area, if you have worked five years in any given trade within the last 10 years, you can challenge the journeyperson status. You could challenge it. A lot of individuals, what they do, what we have done in the past is we have designed specific courses to help an individual to understand and to grasp the theory, because they already have the practical experience and the practical knowledge, but they need the theory part of it. Quite a few have been very successful in getting their trades papers that way, because they have already put in their time, they have put in their hours, and they are very skilled but, for whatever reason, they never had the opportunity to write for their trades papers. Could this be a further process in helping individuals from other countries to obtain accreditation or trade certification to ensure hopefully employment opportunities in their new home country?

Mrs. Vodrey: That has been part of the ongoing work which has been done by this committee, by my department to actually work

with the universities, to work with the community college, all post-secondary institutions and also the professional organizations. You have referenced some of the apprenticeship groups who have in fact been more amenable to assess prior learning experiences. With that there has been some progress. I understand through the Department of Education, and I do not want to speak for them because I do not know the details of it, but they are doing a prior learning assessment centre as well. I have to say that to my knowledge, with the professional organizations it has really been kind of slow going.

Mr. Hickes: One of the reasons I raised it is because I hope you, as the minister for immigration, would consult your colleague the Minister of Education and hopefully encourage or try to work out something that is agreeable to encourage accreditation for individuals from other countries. That is why I wanted to raise it. I hope you will talk to your colleague and encourage and maybe meet or hopefully try and find some way of working it out to get accreditation.

* (1750)

I want to move to the newcomers program. You have heard of that, the newcomers program. You were partially funding it through Family Services. It was dealing with single-parent families that were training to help with resumes and find employment. Will that funding continue from your office?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I understand that their past proposals were being assessed by not only my department but by Education and by Family Services, where I understand there was not a successful outcome. So I am informed that they have now put forward a new proposal which has just come into my department recently, so I do not have any information about how that assessment is going, other than to say obviously whatever the concerns were they have attempted to address through a new proposal.

Mr. Hickes: From my past experience and looking at the program, I dropped in quite a few times and I found it to be a very successful program. It got a lot of the families who were

having a hard time finding employment were able to obtain education and a lot of them went on to employment. If I remember correctly, their success rate was somewhere from 75 percent to 80-some percent where individuals once they obtained the training found employment. There was a very, very low cost. I do not think it was even \$100,000 for the whole year. I hope when you look at it, I would encourage you to hopefully give it successful assistance because if the families had to go on other provincial assistance I think it would cost us a lot more.

As you know, I do not have to explain this to you, you are a former Minister of Education, it seems to always work where parents obtain or try to obtain education opportunities, the commitment that is there and the strive for success usually filters down to the children as good examples. So I think any education opportunity that adults undertake, I believe it benefits the whole family, not just the individual.

I just wanted to touch on Kosovo. Are we assisting in any fashion to try and help the individuals who are brought over to Canada?

Mrs. Vodrey: We have been involved really from the very beginning of the international plea to look at the evacuation of refugees. I do not know if the member wants me to go through all of the details. Certainly if you would like to, I would be happy to have you for a briefing in my office about how this works. We have been working with the federal government. I understand we were having daily conference calls, and still are, with the federal government. At the moment, we are accepting—now if I read this right—our usual complement of refugees. In addition to our usual complement, we are accepting 350 people who are refugees plus 80 in addition to that for family reunification. So the important point to make is that by assisting in the humanitarian effort for people from Kosovo, we are also recognizing that there are conflicts in other places in the world where there are refugees and we have maintained our commitment to our usual complement of refugees and, in addition, with the Kosovars.

We are also working with the federal government. You will see over the next few

days, we would like to have more private sponsors come forward to assist. We recognize the importance of the cultural community, emotional support and social support for the community.

So we are working with all of these sponsorship groups and will continue to do that.

Mr. Hickes: I guess this will be my final question. How much involvement does your department have with the Pan Am Games to ensure that we have the true representation of Manitobans on the Pan Am board, and also for employment opportunities when they arise pertaining to the Pan Am Games?

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand that one of the staff of the Citizenship Division is a volunteer on the committee, but, by and large, the Pan Am Games operate as a Pan Am Society. So we are certainly available and would be willing to assist in any way that we can.

Mr. Hickes: I just wanted to state that I appreciate your comments, and I really appreciated these and previous Estimates that we have undertaken. I wish you all the best in your new career because this will be our last Estimates together. Thank you very much and to all your staff.

Mrs. Vodrey: Being mindful of time, I would just like to say to the member, thank you very much. I also have appreciated his sincere interest in people. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 14.4. Citizenship and Multiculturalism (a) Citizenship (2) Other Expenditures \$846,600—pass; (3) Financial Assistance and Grants \$4,759,100—pass.

14.4.(b) Multiculturalism Secretariat (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$97,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$47,500—pass.

14.4.(c) Multicultural Grants Advisory Council \$294,600—pass.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,722,300 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Citizenship and Multiculturalism,

for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

I would ask the minister's staff to leave the table.

Item 14.1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$27,000—pass.

Resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,635,600 for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

The time being six o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

The Acting Chairperson (Ed Helwer): Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on Resolution 21.4. Perhaps we will just wait for the minister. Here he comes.

21.4. Health Services Insurance Fund (a) Funding to Health Authorities, Acute Care Services \$870,311,300.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Could you indicate to me, are we on the line dealing with health facilities?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): We are on the line dealing with Acute Care Services actually.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): The answer is yes, this is where facilities are funded from. Just to clarify, when I say facilities, I am referring to hospitals. Obviously personal care homes are in another line, but hospitals are funded from here.

Mr. Reid: This would deal with Riverview Health Centre then. I believe this would be the

appropriate area then for asking questions with respect to that particular facility. I wanted to ask the Minister of Health: can he tell me, because this involves the food that is distributed to the patients of that facility, what flexibility do they have in amending the orders for patients that are either resident at the Riverview in more of a long-term sense or for those patients that move in and out of the facility? What type of flexibility do the patients have with respect to ordering their food?

Mr. Stefanson: Just to get a sense of the nature of questions to try and have appropriate staff here, if we are going to be sort of general, this is basically the appropriate staff, the deputy and the assistant of the deputy. If there are very specific questions, especially if we are going to get into food in some detail, there is probably a different staff person I would have join us.

I can provide some just basic information on Riverview, that I believe the menu changes on a three-week cycle at that facility. If there are any special diet requests, those are in fact met, but in terms of beyond special diet requirements in terms of any other specific adjustments to the menu, I will have to get back to the member, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Reid: I am looking for some understanding here about the flexibility of the foods services or the ability of the Riverview Health Centre to provide the meals for patients, for people that go into Riverview Health Centre, to find out their ability to respond to short or little notice requests.

I have a specific case that I will raise with the minister, but I am just trying to get an understanding of how the system functions within the Riverview Health Centre as it currently exists. Then I will go directly into the micro part of the question, giving you some background on what I have encountered with a family in my community that has some difficulties with that centre, and then I will draw that detail to your attention in a moment. If you can just give me some background on how it is able to respond to the specific diet requirements.

* (1500)

Mr. Stefanson: I apologize, Mr. Chairman. What I am told is at Riverview they can meet a special diet requirement or a dietary change in anywhere from two to four hours notice. They are on a computerized system into which that information would be obviously inputted and forwarded through to USSC and those adjustments made for an individual patient at Riverview. In terms of issues related to food services, as the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) knows, there is a long-term care food advisory council, which deals with various issues relative to the delivery of food, quality of food, and so on. They continue to deal with any concerns raised by individuals in any facilities. They have really done a very good job of eliminating and reducing various concerns in the facilities and in the system.

So, with those comments, I would be very interested in the specific situation that the member is going to share to get a sense of what has happened in an individual case.

Mr. Reid: I appreciate the minister telling me that Riverview can respond with two-to-four hours' notice, which seems to be at odds with what I am hearing from a community family. During my door-knocking in the community I have encountered a family who has a child, an adult child, in the Riverview Health Centre, and that young adult is disabled fairly severely and has an illness, for which my understanding is there may or may not be a recovery. In other words, it is a lifelong illness. There are also other complicating factors with this young adult in that there are problems, I believe it is with the lungs. And there is an imbalance in the blood, and there has to be regulation of the diet to make sure that there is some balance and that the individual does not deteriorate further in health condition as a result of improper diet.

The family tells me that they have had to, for some time now, take food in to their son at Riverview when he is in there, because he is not in there on a continual basis, but when he does go in because of his condition, he is in there for periods of time, in other words, more than just a few days, it is into the weeks. They tell me that they have to take food in to their son. Of course, I would think that that would be inappropriate, that that would be able to be taken care of by the hospital itself.

The family tells me that they have to do that because the Riverview Health Centre cannot respond quickly enough to the change in the diet requirements for the individual to match the needs, with respect to the diet matching the condition, and they tell me that—and I do not mean to in some way say that the nurses are doing inappropriate things, because I think they go far beyond in their service to the patients at that facility, but they do provide the opportunity for alternate food in the sense of toast and other small food items. So they do help the patient out in that regard.

The family is very, very adamant that they do not want me to raise their name and that they do not want to get the nurses in trouble at this particular facility. So I say to you in very guarded comments about the situation because they do not want to have any retribution in the sense of the fear that I sense in the comments that they have made to me. They say that the hospital cannot respond in a short time to that diet requirement, and that is why they have to bring in food.

So if the minister can tell me and assure me that the Riverview Health Centre is able to respond in two to four hours notice, then I will take that back to my constituents and get them to ask that centre why the meals cannot be supplied and cannot be structured in such a way to match the diet requirements for their son who is a long-term resident of that facility.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, it is confirmed to me again that for that first meal, it might be a two to four hour adjustment. After that, if this individual, as has just been described, even though he is not in there on a permanent basis, comes in and then stays for days, there might be a time lag of two to four hours for that first meal, but after that there should not be any problems.

So I would certainly encourage the member to pass on that information, but I am probably more concerned with the latter part of the member's comments in the sense of the family being nervous to either come forward in any way, whether it is to Riverview or to this Legislature or to any body, because the whole objective to all of this is to continue to ensure everybody is doing the utmost to meet the food

requirements, the food nutritional value, the food quality, and to continue to address and improve all these issues. Really, the only way is if people do have concerns, that they feel comfortable bringing them forward directly to the people providing the service.

I am certainly trying to do and am prepared to do anything I can to break down any of those barriers if people are feeling that in any way, because there will not be, there should not be any retribution towards any individual or family for bringing forward a concern about any kind of service, whether it is related to food or any kind of service that they are fielding in facilities. These are facilities Manitobans own and pay for. They should feel comfortable raising any issues if they feel they are not getting sufficient or adequate medical services, food services, whatever it might be.

* (1510)

So that concerns me the most of the comments, and I would encourage the member to encourage this family to come forward. I can assure him that there will not be any retribution to the family, and we will collectively deal with the issue. Having said that, if it is sufficient to go back to the family and let them go directly to Riverview, that is another way to deal with it. I appreciate those comments.

Mr. Reid: Well, I appreciate what the minister is saying. I know the family, I would hope, would take some comfort in what the minister is saying with respect to their rights and their abilities to tend to the needs of their son and make sure that the health centre would do likewise. In this case, the family is also worried about not wanting to get the nurses in trouble, because the nurses do go above and beyond in trying to assist the patients who are in that health facility. When the meals, the appropriate meals that match the diet requirements for that young man are not available to meet the needs, from what the family is telling me, then the nurses do provide some food, because the individual cannot just starve, cannot go without a meal, because it will create further complications.

So perhaps what I can do is take the minister's comments back to that family and

make them aware of what has been said and then have them either contact directly the minister's department, if they choose, or Riverview Health Centre directly to make sure that they can respond within the two to four hours as the minister has indicated here. I hope that would solve that particular problem.

If I can move on to another facility, can the minister advise me whether or not the St. Amant Health Centre is a part of this particular area of his budget. Perhaps he can indicate that to me now, and then I can go on with my questioning from that point.

Mr. Stefanson: When it comes to St. Amant, perhaps the reason the member asked me the question was because when we released our recent '99 capital budget there was reference to some improvements at St. Amant Health Centre. Through the Department of Health, we do provide the capital dollars. All of the operating dollars are provided by Family Services. In terms of any questions, we are not at the Capital section. When we get to the Capital section, I would welcome questions in terms of the capital, but the operating dollars for St. Amant Centre all come through the Department of Family Services. I hope that is helpful.

Mr. Reid: The question I have is with respect to a letter I received recently from a constituent, an elderly lady in my community whose son is in St. Amant Centre. She is getting billed by the St. Amant Centre for services that are apparently being provided by the centre. They include foot care and other medical costs, as is indicated on the statement of account that is sent to the family. I did not know whether it was appropriate to ask questions, because there are some medical issues that are involved here, whether or not that would come under the Department of Health budget line or that would come directly under Family Services.

So I am looking for some guidance on this. If it is not for his department, then perhaps I will take this matter up when the other more appropriate department comes before the Assembly.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, as I have already said, Family Services provides all of the

funding to St. Amant. If the member wants to give me more specifics around the nature of the service that the individual was billed for, I can certainly follow up through our department in conjunction with Family Services. I am more than prepared to do that. If the member wants to wait and appear at Family Services, that is fine too. I really leave it up to him.

Mr. Reid: Well, perhaps I can do it through the Ministry of Health then, and then if an opportunity presents later for me, I can also do it through Family Services department Estimates.

The senior in my community who has the son in St. Amant has received billings for some time, and, of course, she is on a fixed income. She is quite elderly. Her son has been a resident of St. Amant for some time, and she has billings here for a variety of items, some of which are health related and many others which are not. One particular bill, statement of accounts, is for over \$400; another one is nearly \$300. She is getting these every few months. For a senior on a fixed income, of course, it is very hard to pay for that for someone who, in essence, I would think, would be protected under the Public Trustee's office for any of those expenses because there would be no other source of income, no gainful employment for the individual as a resident of St. Amant.

They are being billed for such things as Tylenol, bed pads, other hospital supplies. At least that is what is indicated in the letter that I have received. In other words, it is part of what one would consider to be medical costs. I do not know if that is appropriate, if that is a standard practice to have those costs shifted from the St. Amant Centre over to the family members who have other family members that are resident in St. Amant, but perhaps the minister can advise whether this is appropriate to have these costs, what one might consider to be medical costs, transferred back to the families.

Mr. Stefanson: I think what would be the most helpful is if the member could provide me with copies of that information. If you are prepared to leave the individual's name on it, that would be fine and would make it even easier to follow up, but even if you felt you had to block that out.

But, if you could provide that to us, then we will follow up and get back to you.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

* (1520)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would like to ask the minister a question in regard to an issue that is a major concern to us, and that is the priorities in terms of health care spending in this province. I know this is a concern that the minister may have already heard. It is a concern coming out of Reston in southwest Manitoba, and it relates to a proposed capital expenditure by the RHA, specifically to establish an extension on the hospital, a clinic. What is interesting is the residents of the community are saying that they have a current physicians' clinic in place which is far more cost-effective than the capital expenditure that will be required, about \$430,000, to put in a specific extension to the hospital. There have been a number of public meetings. There has been a meeting with 100 people present, a meeting, I believe, with 200 who were present from that area.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health what the position of the government is in terms of these types of priorities. Does the minister not feel that in this case, where you have the community itself saying that the existing arrangement which has the clinic available in a normal commercial space, would that not make more sense since it is far more cost-effective than to have a significant capital expenditure on a clinic extension to the hospital at a time, obviously, when capital dollars are scarce, when there are many needs in our system?

I wonder if the minister could indicate his response to the members of the community who are saying that they want the priorities for health care put toward patient care and not this capital extension.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think I can speculate what community the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was referring to, but maybe he can indicate to me what community it is that he is referring to? [interjection] Reston?

Mr. Chairman, that might be the most appropriate, is to get a little more information from the member for Thompson. There is a capital project, if it is Reston, at the Reston health centre, a renovation being done at that facility. Again, as the member I know is well aware, these capital projects are done in conjunction with communities, in conjunction with the regional health authorities. In fact, the regional health authorities prioritize the capital projects when they submit them to the Department of Health. We review them with the RHAs, and so on.

In some cases, we have some relocations of some of the medical clinics adjacent to hospitals which allow for extended hours, better utilization of the staff available in communities. Certain communities have been very supportive with that change in focus by the co-location of a medical clinic and the hospital. But if the member would provide me with specific information, I am certainly prepared to look into, if it is the community of Reston, the issues he is raising here this afternoon.

Mr. Ashton: I certainly will provide more information, and I want to stress that one of the paradoxes here is that the community is clearly stating that they do not want this. There have been a number of public meetings. You will have to forgive me if I revert to my own situation in my own community where there are many capital needs, and it just does not make sense to—regardless of what the process was within the RHA, you have a community that does not want the capital enhancement. I believe it actually may even result in fewer beds with the way the facility is going to reconfigure. Quite frankly, that money would be better spent in other areas of the province or perhaps on other needs in that particular regional health authority.

I will provide the minister with details on that. I have spoken to people in that community. It may be something, as well, that he may wish to talk to the MLA for the area on. I am sure that he is aware of that as well. To my mind, it just makes sense, once again, that if the people in the community prefer the existing arrangement, why spend scarce capital dollars on this capital improvement?

I want to add on that, that there have been a number of other capital projects brought in by RHAs that have been questioned in the same way. I think with this process being a relatively new process, when so much now being weighted on the regional health authorities under the new structure. I think the minister is aware of that.

We waited for a number of years, for example, for personal care homes. When I raised the issue in Thompson of the need for a personal care home, I was told after the freeze in 1995, wait for the regional health authorities. We are now in that process. There is a process ongoing in my constituency on that particular area, but if I had more information I would ask the minister to look at that and quite frankly I am not trying to get involved in that issue directly, other than to express to the minister that there are a lot of people in that community who are saying this does not make any sense. My hope would be that whatever decision is made does not end up with a situation where the community ends up getting a capital facility that it does not want and replaces an existing structure, commercial structure that has worked quite well, and it does not make sense when dollars are scarce. So I will provide more information and I urge the minister to look into this and listen to the people of Reston in Manitoba.

He may even wish to travel to southwest Manitoba. I am sure he has done this in the past. I am not sure, he could do a lot of things this time of year. Probably he would have to take his canoe. I might be a good opportunity to go visit southwest Manitoba at a time when it has gone through a lot of difficulties economically because of the situation.

But I have been in southwest Manitoba, I have been in Virden a number of times the last couple of months and I intend on going back. It is a very interesting part of the province and you know what I found interesting, and I say this to the minister just in the completion of my remarks here, I found a lot of similarities. A lot of people in southwest Manitoba felt just as isolated as northern Manitoba in terms of decisions being made in Winnipeg and I am not talking about the Nestibo situation. I do not want to get into that in health care Estimates but just generally there is a sense out there. I visited

a hospital as deputy Health critic for our party, I visited two personal care homes and what there were talking about was physician shortages, nursing shortages, difficulties in terms of access to specialist services, people having to travel into Brandon and into Winnipeg for services that could have been provided in the past in their community. Once again it gets to the point of the priority in southwest Manitoba, according to the people I met with, people working in health care, people were patients, they all identified priorities and quite frankly the priorities that they were looking at tended to be in terms of providing physician and nursing resources not this particular capital project.

So I do urge the minister to listen to southwest Manitoba on health care issues. When I find myself saying, as I said when I was out there: there are a lot of similarities. It seems the further you get away from the Perimeter, quite frankly, the more your health care system generally in this province has fewer and fewer resources and the more alienation people have from the centre of government. It is sort of ironic, in a way, that I was hearing this message in southwest Manitoba, not an area that people necessarily identify in the same way that northern Manitoba obviously gets identified that way. I mean, southwest Manitoba, with its traditional support of the Conservative Party, at least up until recent events and as I say, I am not getting into that, but that alienation although I am sure if the minister was to go out now he would want to be well briefed on the Nestibo nomination situation. I just warn him of that because I talked to quite a few of my contacts out in southwest Manitoba and it is pretty hot out there, but on health care southwest Manitoba is asking to listen to the communities in this particular case, the community of Reston, listen to the residents of Reston and perhaps talk to the RHA and urge them to make sure the health care system in that community is responsive to the needs of the community not other needs as they might be identified by the regional health bureaucracy in that area.

* (1530)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, there really was not a question, so I will just very briefly—I do not think that there was a question at the end of that—

respond. I wait for more information on Reston. I assure the member these projects are done based on input, consultation with communities, with RHAs. I know when we announced our capital projects for 1999, the regional health authorities were very satisfied with the overall package because of that partnership, that consultative process. I have said to the member before that in my short time in this portfolio, I do believe in getting out to facilities, to communities to meet with people in their work environment in their communities. I have certainly done a fair bit of that to date, but I look forward to doing more of that. I am a little restricted these days to go because I am currently in the midst of my Estimates. I have a little less flexibility than some other members have right now. I think last week the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was promising me a pair to go up North, so I am still looking forward to accessing that commitment sometime soon.

I do agree with that part of his comment, how important it is for us, whether we are in government or not in government, to get out to communities, to get out into facilities, to hear first-hand from people in their communities. I have a different perspective in terms of a lot of what I am hearing from people in terms of their level of satisfaction with a number of issues, including health care. That is not to say there are not still some issues to address in terms of meeting some of the physician needs, and so on, into some communities, but we do continue to work with the RHAs and work with the communities to do just that, to make sure they have adequate physicians and quality health care services, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Did the honourable member seek leave to ask questions from the front yet?

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chairperson, I was told that that was not required two Estimates ago.

Mr. Chairperson: Only if leave has—

An Honourable Member: The Clerk told me that this had been changed.

Floor Comment: For the critics.

Mr. Chairperson: For the critics. You are not listed as a critic.

An Honourable Member: Then I will ask for leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for the honourable member to ask questions from the front bench? [agreed]

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Thank you, I apologize. I did not realize that it was just for the critic. The minister probably expected that I would like to talk about frozen food a little bit in regard to the hospitals that are part of Urban Shared Services Corporation.

I would like to start by asking what studies were undertaken prior to the commitment by the government and the Department of Health to the Urban Shared Services Corporation approach of a shared commissary. What consultant reports, technical studies were undertaken?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told that in 1994 a cost comparison was done by Manitoba Health of the status quo versus a centralized commissariat costing. Then, in July of 1995, Price Waterhouse undertook a review of nine Winnipeg hospitals and three personal care homes in terms of their needs for food service facilities and the options to go to a centralized system. Then ultimately Urban Shared Services Corporation further refined their business plan in 1997 based on some discussions and negotiations with Versa Aramark.

That is the information I have before me this afternoon, and I will certainly look into this matter further. If there are any other studies or any other reviews that have been done relative to this, I will report that back to the member, hopefully, in the next couple of days for sure.

* (1540)

Mr. Sale: Was the study for Price Waterhouse the one that was transferred by letter from Merrick [phonetic] Watts and Price Waterhouse to Michael Kirkpatrick on June 7? Shared Food Services business plan, is that the document that the letter refers to?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I apologize for the delay. I have taken so long, I have almost forgotten the question. But I think the genesis of it was that Merrick [phonetic] Watts were really a part of the Price Waterhouse study, basically worked in conjunction with Price Waterhouse in the development of that study. If that was basically the question, the answer to that is yes.

I think the member referred to a specific letter and date that I do not have here this afternoon, that I could find a copy of a letter dated in, I think he said 1997. So if he has a copy, I would certainly welcome that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, we have asked a number of times, and I will ask again. We are aware of the study, but we do not have a copy that is the final study. So we would like to have that. Given that the policy advice presumably was followed by Urban Shared Services Corporation, I am at a loss to know why that Price Waterhouse study would not be tabled.

The same goes for the business plan. We have drafts, but we do not have the final business plan. It seems to us that it would be sensible for the minister if he is confident of the numbers contained in it, some of which he was citing in Question Period today, and I am wondering if I could ask him again today, will he table the business plan of USSC that was given to the hospitals in July, I believe, or late June of 1997 and the Merrick [phonetic] Watts-Price Waterhouse study of June 1995 which led to the decision to go to a single commissary model.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I understand this question was asked last year during the Estimates process. Again, I think what I am prepared to do is to look into the entire matter—this is not something new; it has been around for a while—what the reasons given in the past were, why it was not made available. I know one issue is that it does I believe require the co-operation and approval of the Urban Shared Services Corporation itself. I should say at this point in time, my comments are initially on the business plan.

An Honourable Member: I really cannot hear. I am saying I cannot hear whatever it is you are

saying. My ears just do not work that well. I can hear the minister.

Mr. Stefanson: I was just being reminded, you had asked about both. You had asked about both the business plan and the studies that were done. I am, in terms of my response, initially splitting them. I am talking about the business plan itself initially. That request was made last year during the Estimates process. I think the previous minister wrote a letter to the Urban Shared Services Corporation, and I now need to follow up and see what happened, what reasons were given, why the information is not being made available. I have indicated a willingness to look into that, and I am prepared to look into that, as to whether or not that information should be made available. Along with that, as the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) knows, there is going to be a revised business plan very shortly, so again I will continue to get the same question, I am sure, either in this House or through the media, about the revised business plan on a go-forward basis.

* (1550)

So I really am looking at that entire issue in terms of what can be made available, if it can be made available, what some of the concerns are about making it available and so on. So I will look into the matter further, and I will report back to the member.

I think to a certain extent again the same applies on these studies that have been done. I know they have been asked about in the past, have not been released in the past for various reasons. Again, I am going to go back and review what those reasons were and whether there still are good and valid reasons not to be releasing the original studies.

In many respects, I see a lot of merit to having the information out there and being able to discuss it relative to today's situation, but I need to determine what concerns have been expressed in the past because these studies have been around for a few years, what they were, what the concerns are of the Urban Shared Services Corporation.

While I am on my feet, I should probably also indicate that I, as a result of questions here,

have communicated with the Urban Shared Services Corporation on the contracts that I have been asked about during Question Period, and, again, we are in the process of determining what can be released there with a view of applying the same criteria that we would apply to any government document. That is going to be basically the test that I intend to have our department apply. If they are contracts that we would have to be releasing or should be releasing as a government in their totality, that would be what I will pursue. If it is releasing them with some modifications, if there are third-party confidentiality clauses that have to be blocked out or whited out, that might have to be done to protect certain issues, but that should not preclude releasing a good portion of the contract as well. So I am in the process of having that discussion with the Urban Shared Services Corporation.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, it is probably not a productive discussion to engage in for any great length of time, but it is just astounding to me that the minister thinks that there might be something untoward about releasing a document that is clearly in the public interest to know whether the concerns being raised by the opposition and by the public have basis in fact in terms of the figures that are in the business plan. The public has an enormous stake in this issue. The mortgage is for up to \$30 million. I do not know what was drawn down on it. I do not know what the mortgage rate was, although the maximum rate stated in the Land Titles Office document is 25 percent. That is clearly the legal maximum. Whatever the rate that was finally concluded will be something under 10, I would expect.

I simply do not understand how a minister of the Crown, a former Finance minister, can say that it is not in the public interest for the public to know the terms of a mortgage and the terms of a contract that is in the \$30-million region in total and involves millions of dollars annually and meals, nutrition for thousands and thousands of Manitobans, many of them long-term care patients. Transparency is seen to be an important public virtue, except it seems when this government is asked for contract documents that would allow that transparency to be real for Manitobans.

So I hope the minister will find that it is in the public interest in his discussions, but I would say to him that his predecessor had a year to act. He has had more than a month to act, and when it is in the public interest of the government, it is astounding how quickly things happen. Things get built, things get done because the power of government is there to have that happen quickly. So, when things take a great deal of time, it is not an unreasonable assumption that it is because the government perhaps does not want them to happen or at least certainly does not want them to happen very quickly, perhaps does not want them to happen until after an election.

I wonder if the minister knows of the study by Leo Paul Lauzon [phonetic] and Martin Poirier [phonetic] entitled Socioeconomic Analysis: The Streamlining of Food Services in the Quebec Hospital System, 1995. Is he aware of that study?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, maybe just initially to respond to the comments about releasing documents, in spite of what the member may think on occasion, I do tend to agree with a lot of what he has said about releasing documents, and I do believe in it. I am not suggesting there is anything untoward about these documents. I do believe it is in the public interest to have any work that has been done, any research, any information out there, whenever possible.

I think the member indicated that I have had this for a month. I am not only dealing with just government. I am dealing with a number of entities that are impacted by these, from the Urban Shared Services Corporation itself to a private sector firm that is delivering some of the services to the hospitals and so on. So I am in the process of looking at it because, as I said in my previous response, I think there is a lot of merit to that information being out there to see what the original—when I say to see, to let others see and let the public see what the original plans were and the estimated capital costs, the operating projections and so on, to use that as a benchmark against how things are progressing today. I think there can be a lot of merit to having a more meaningful discussion on that kind of a basis. So I am going to be looking into

that whole issue of what documents can be made available publicly.

Certainly, in many cases, my personal track record would attest to that. I know when we had the entire review done of the Immigrant Investor Program, when I was Industry minister, there was some concern expressed about releasing those documents. We released them very shortly after our receipt of those documents because it was important to have an informed discussion on that whole issue.

So in terms of the objective that the member was suggesting about it being in the public interest, having informed debates, I agree with that in terms of the more information we can collectively have before us, the more informed discussion we can have. Obviously, we might disagree in terms of issues around it, in terms of performance, in terms of objectives, and all of those things, and that is fair game. So I will be looking at this seriously with a view to releasing as much as I can in this area.

In terms of the Quebec hospital document that I think he said was done in 1995, or the '95 document, I have not seen that document, so I have no familiarity with it.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I was not assuming that the minister would necessarily have seen it. I was wondering if it was one of the documents that the department was aware of, that they might have consulted in regard to the cook-chill-cook-freeze method that was adopted.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, with the staff here with me this afternoon, there is no specific knowledge of that study. The cost comparison by Manitoba Health, of course, as I have already indicated, was done in 1994. The Price Waterhouse study was done, I believe, in July of '95.

Now, whether or not the Price Waterhouse—and this Quebec study was done, I gather, in 1995, so I am not sure of the timing of that study, the release of it—whether or not the Price Waterhouse study had accessed that as a resource in any way, I would have to check, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, there is another study by a professor, Dr. Denise Ouellet. It probably did not come to the department's attention because it is in French, but it is *Impact sur la qualité des aliments des modes de production et de distribution des services alimentaires hospitaliers* (Québec: Laval University, 1994).

That is another very useful review of the issues, which I think are very well known across the field. I do not expect that the minister would have any knowledge of that, but I wondered if the department was aware of that study.

* (1600)

Mr. Chairperson: Could I ask the member for Crescentwood if he would have a copy of that, that part that he just read, so we could give it to Hansard? It would make it easier for them, rather than them having to go through the translation, if you have it available.

Mr. Sale: I have the title in the form of a footnote, which I would be glad to share with the translator.

Mr. Chairperson: With Hansard after. Thank you.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, again, the answer is no in terms of the department officials here with me indicating an awareness of that study, but I think it is important to recognize that there was a study done in Manitoba by Price Waterhouse in July of '95, who obviously brought certain expertise to this issue as well as working in conjunction, as we have already discussed, with Merrick [phonetic] Watts Incorporated who again bring significant expertise in this entire area. Whether or not they accessed and referenced those two studies the member refers to in any way, as I have already indicated, I will determine whether they used those studies in any way as background or resource for the work that they did here in Manitoba.

But those two firms, Price Waterhouse and Merrick [phonetic] Watts, brought significant skills in this entire area, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, those two firms in fact do studies all across Canada, and they never

reference any data whatsoever. They do not reference studies; they do not reference academic studies; they do not put footnotes in; they do not provide a bibliography of studies. So I have no idea whether their studies in British Columbia or Quebec or Toronto or here, all of which are essentially clones of each other, were based on adequate scholarly research or whether they were based on simply replicating their recommendations from elsewhere because they, for whatever reasons, have a great deal of interest in the privatization of food services.

So I have significant interest in whether there is any scholarly research, solid research, behind a great number of the things that are contained in the assumptions about centralized food services.

I want to just reference a number of issues. I do not believe in Canada that there are any regulations similar to the British regulations in regard to temperature control of chilled processed food that has been cooked, chilled and is being held for reheating. I wonder if the minister is aware of any public health regulations that regulate the temperature and require regular assessment of the actual conditions in the food preparation chain by public health officials. Are there any temperature requirements in The Public Health Act or regulations?

Mr. Stefanson: We have dealt with the Public Health section previously, but I know the member is relating this both to Public Health and, obviously, to the Urban Shared Services Corporation and the food services to the hospitals. There are food and food-handling establishments regulations, and I will certainly return with details for the member on all aspects of the regulations here in the province of Manitoba as to all of the areas that they cover in terms of food handling and food preparation. Obviously, the relationship that Urban Shared Services has with the hospitals requires the corporation to meet the level of food quality and standards that the hospitals would expect.

* (1610)

Mr. Sale: Another study that might be of interest is Nicholas Light and Anne Walker,

Cook Chill Catering: Technology and Management, London, England, Elsevier Science. It dealt with some of these issues, and I am told that in Canada there is no regulation in specific regard to cook-chill technology.

The British Department of Health in England developed regulations in 1980, revised in 1983 and again in 1989, to deal with new food service technology such as cook-chill and cook-freeze. According to British cook-chill standards, food must be completely cooked and then chilled rapidly and held for a maximum of five days just above the freezing point, zero to three degrees Celsius. Immediately upon removal from chill conditions and shortly before consumption, the food must be reheated to a minimum core temperature of 70 degrees Celsius. In addition, the British standards require regular testing of all food with samples taken immediately prior to meal delivery, not at the assembly point.

In Canada, there is no regulation of cook-chill other than normal public health for restaurants, but normal restaurants do not do cook-chill, so we are in a different field here. I am well aware that there are food handling, food safety regulations. My partner has to deal with them all the time at St. Matthew's-Maryland, and they are quite extensive, but I do not believe they deal with this situation.

I want to ask the minister whether he knows the costs associated with the carts, each cart, the rethermalization, reheating carts. I believe that the cost is in the order of \$15,000 a cart, but I would just like to have some confirmation that that is the ballpark. I do not need an exact cost, but a ballpark.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I believe the member is in the ballpark on his cost estimate, and I will return with a precise cost for his benefit.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, it was the hope that we could use the automatic cleaning approach here, the power cleaning as opposed to a hand-cleaning approach to cleaning the carts for all of the food residue, or do they have to be done by hand?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will return with the specifics on that question as well. I know the member has a very keen interest, a high level of interest in this whole area. His colleague was encouraging me to go to communities and visit hospitals and individuals outside of Winnipeg, and I am not sure if he has had an opportunity to visit the Urban Shared Services centralized site and to get a full briefing on the whole process and so on. If he has not, I would certainly offer to arrange that for him.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the offer. I have not had an opportunity to tour through the site. I think that would be a very good thing to do. We have certainly had many reports from workers inside the site about both the positive and negative aspects of it, but I would be very glad to do that. I will just conclude this question. I want the minister to understand that I am not interested in detail per se, I am interested because the overall technology that has been purchased here has proven problematic all over Canada. For example, in Toronto, the \$15,000 carts broke down far more frequently than they were advertised to have problems. The repairs are very expensive. The autocleaning function, which they were sold on, which would save labour and allow them to be more cost-effective, proved not to be effective, was not sanitary. These carts then had to be scrubbed down by hand. Now, that takes more time, it takes more labour, it costs more.

After we have a bit of a break—I believe the Chair is suggesting we have a five-minute recess—I want to simply explore a number of areas in which it seems to me that the evidence that we have from other places in Canada and from staff of this facility are that foolish decisions were made in response to promises perhaps by Merrick [phonetic] Watts, perhaps by Price Waterhouse, perhaps by goodness knows who, that this would be cost-effective, would save money and save time and would produce higher quality food.

So I simply want to draw for the minister a picture of information we have been given and the information that we have gleaned from research and invite his response. He chooses to be very personal in his attacks in Question

Period in response to information which has been provided to us and which I have attempted to verify. If information is incorrect, I will be the first to apologize. The difficulty is when we ask for verification, we do not get it. We simply get a stonewall that says, I cannot provide you that information, I do not have that information, it is third-party information, we cannot release it.

So I am going to spend some time going through the studies that we have assembled, sharing the concerns that have been shared with us and inviting the minister to comment or to provide alternative information which challenges information that we have been given. I want to put on the record that it is in no member's interest, and certainly not in this member's interest, to knowingly bring incorrect information into the House or into any debate. It is foolish, would be foolish. So I think it is very important that we get as much factual information on the table as we possibly can. That is what I intend to do this afternoon.

Now I understand the Chair is suggesting a short recess, and I am certainly agreeable to that.

Mr. Chairperson: Take a five? [interjection] Sure, let us take five.

The committee recessed at 4:18 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:35 p.m.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, I really do not have anything else to say. I think the member more made a statement than asked me a question. I think he outlined that he is going to ask a number of detailed questions. I will certainly do my utmost to provide what we can today. Recognizing if he is getting into detailed operational questions or suggestions, then I will probably have to return to him with responses to those. I certainly would encourage him to take up my offer for us to arrange for him an opportunity to tour the facility and get a presentation on how the whole operation functions.

Mr. Sale: I certainly will avail ourselves of the minister's offer to tour the facility. I do not know the name of the manufacturer of the cook-chill system that is being used here. Primarily, I guess it is the manufacturer of the carts. I would just note that in Jonquière they had very serious problems, basically, finally gave up on the cook-chill system. That is my understanding. Patients were complaining about stained trays, chipped dishes, because of the force that needs to be used to clean them after things have been cooked on. It is very hard to clean them, as I am sure anybody who has tried to clean up something that has been left in the oven for a long time knows. If it has been held for a long time in a dish, it is hard to get the dish clean.

The Lions Gate and Burnaby hospitals in Lower Mainland B.C. experienced similar problems with the cook-chill system. They have had a lot of leakage from trays. Carts have broken down. The project is already one-third over budget. This was 1995. A one-year warranty on the carts, of course, is not very long when they are supposed to have a 10-year life. Two other B.C. hospitals, Penticton and Riverview forensic unit, reverted to conventional food production after experiencing serious problems with cook-chill technology, and they found, much to their surprise, that they saved \$70,000 in the first year. That is a very small forensic unit, and Riverview is a very small unit. So \$70,000 is a lot to save.

Another major issue which has been brought to our attention by nurses and staff at Deer Lodge, particularly in the units, the several, many units, in fact, that care for people who cannot physically open the packages—I am sure that staff have heard about this problem. Everything is packaged for sanitation reasons, and many people who have serious arthritis or other difficulties with their hands or who have had strokes or for whatever reason cannot open the packages, the nurses tell us that they have to, between themselves and the other staff on the floor, open virtually every package that comes with the trays.

That creates an awful lot of use of time which I am sure was never budgeted into the system. But because of the packaging, and this is something which is also noted in this study

and it has been noted by other researchers, the American researchers Greathouse [phonetic], Gregoire and Speers [phonetic] and others, who have found from their analysis of different food service systems that food costs were considerably higher in the cook-chill system compared to the conventional method because of the wasted food resulting from volumes that have to be set longer in advance leading to surplus food being discarded, because the cycle of planning requires a number of days in advance.

The other area of wastage which Deer Lodge people tell us is amazing is the amount of packaging. There is a huge amount of packaging going out in the garbage because every single item has to be repackaged. Even a piece of toast is packaged in my understanding.

So I do not know that these costs were ever taken into account when the original budgets were put forward. I wanted to ask the minister if he could tell the committee whether he is aware of the staffing levels that were planned for the facility at full production, the number of equivalent full-time positions that were estimated to be needed to operate the facility?

* (1640)

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, I think on some of these questions what I will try to do is—I would like to give the member, obviously, accurate information. I think his question was how many positions or EFTs at Urban Shared Services Corporation, how many employees do they have?

If I cannot give that to him before we adjourn here today, we are back in Estimates tomorrow morning, probably at ten o'clock. I can certainly provide him that information tomorrow morning.

Mr. Sale: I think actually we are going to be in private members' tomorrow morning, but maybe in the afternoon we would be in Estimates again.

Let me just share with the minister my understanding that the labour negotiations were based on 117 staff and approximately 84 EFT. I may be out by a couple in there, but that was the

budgeted level in the labour negotiations that took place to transfer workers. My understanding is that Mr. Sheil in Toronto, in March I believe, no, it was in April, indicated that there are 137 staff numbers now, but I do not believe that is EFT; I think it is numbers.

I am wondering what the EFT is now that those 137 that Mr. Sheil referred to in Toronto might amount to. I can understand if the minister does not have the information so let me just go on then, unless the minister wants to respond.

Mr. Stefanson: That is exactly the information that I am intending to provide the member, if not today by tomorrow, the issue of the number of staff and also the number of EFT.

Mr. Sale: Madam Chairperson, my understanding is that staff are working flat out at the present time and that the Urban Shared Services Corporation board and staff are very pleased with the staff efforts. They believe their staff are doing everything possible to make the system work properly, and they feel that their staff deserve credit for that.

I certainly support them in that regard. I believe that is true. I believe that they are proud members of a proud union, and that they do the very best work they can do to meet the needs of the employer and to meet the needs of patients in our hospitals. So I have no criticism whatsoever of the staff or of the pace that they are working at, but I want to just refer to some very serious concerns that were raised in some of the studies in regard to labour issues.

The issue of cook-chill systems has been characterized by one study done by a national labour union in this fashion. While production staff may enjoy some advantages in the cook-chill system, the majority of food-service staff, those employed in assembly, delivery and washing, they find their jobs downgraded. Workers who assemble the meals often have to stand for hours doing repetitive tasks at a rapid pace. At the other end, washing cook-chill dishes is extremely difficult because rethermalization leaves stains encrusted on food. Supper dishes are usually left overnight and washed the next morning.

I believe, Madam Chairperson, that it is quite common for the return carts to sit in the trucks overnight outside the RDU, and then the dishes are washed the next day. I think that is the situation here. Not only is the work more monotonous and physically demanding, these workers do not enjoy any improvement in scheduling with cook-chill. The kitchen staff responsible for distribution and washing still work a seven-day week in the cook-chill system, so there is no improvement there. What we also have found is that the requirement for people to work in a cold environment on an eight-hour shift is extremely demanding. They are working in a situation where food is being assembled and kept at a low temperature and standing with very restricted movements for quite a long period of time.

We are continually hearing of staff turnover and the difficulty of keeping staff to work in some of the specific areas, but particularly in the chill area where people work in what we would, I think, as ordinary people would feel, would be a very damp and very cold environment for a long period of time with limited movement. So they certainly tell us that they find that a difficult kind of job to do, but I am certainly not being critical of the staff, and neither, in my understanding, is the board or management of USSC.

So I wonder if the minister has received the information that he was hoping to in regard to EFTs. Has that come down? [interjection] No.

Let me just continue with a couple of other concerns then. It is our understanding that the thawing room, which is where the frozen product is brought in and is gradually thawed until it reaches a temperature of a couple of degrees Celsius. It takes quite a long period of time for that to happen,. As anyone who thaws food out in their refrigerator knows, it takes a long time to go from 20 or 30 below to a couple of degrees above.

Our understanding is that that room is not of sufficient size and that, therefore, food gets pushed through more quickly than it should, and that sometimes it does not get properly thawed out. That is one of the reasons why sometimes people receive food that has not been properly cooked because it is still cold in the middle and

may be very hot on the outside. My understanding from staff is that the room is undersized.

* (1650)

Also, I understood that the roof this winter had a partial failure, and the building required some significant renovations. I do not know whether that was found to be a cost of the contractor or whether USSC had to pay that cost, but it certainly demonstrated the vulnerability of a single facility because, I believe, food had to be taken outside and stored outside the building for quite a period of time in trucks on the premises or off the premises. I think that also illustrates a concern about a totally centralized commissary in an urban area, with nine hospitals being served by the single facility. If the minister has information on that problem and how it was resolved, it would be interesting to have.

Mr. Stefanson: I too want to compliment the staff that work for Urban Shared Services Corporation. Certainly everything I have heard is they are doing an excellent job. I think, as the member for Crescentwood knows, the majority of them are represented by CUPE, and everything I have heard is that there is a good relationship, a good labour-management relationship, at Urban Shared Services. I have not had any major staffing issues brought to my attention. I recently met with Mr. Paul Moist to discuss various issues and, without putting words in his mouth, he certainly did not express to me any major concerns or concerns relative to Urban Shared Services and the staffing relationships and issues and so on. So there is obviously that whole opportunity to deal with issues between CUPE and management at Urban Shared Services Corporation, but I am not aware of any issues. In fact, quite the contrary. I have heard that there is a good working relationship, and overall a good positive environment at that facility.

The two specific issues that the member refers to, relative to the thawing room and the roof. I will return to him with specifics relative to those issues that he brought to our attention here this afternoon.

The issue of the vulnerability of a single facility. I know that there are contingency plans,

just because of the nature of our climate in our winter months. I will return, providing the member with an outline of what those contingency plans are.

Mr. Sale: My colleague from Transcona (Mr. Reid) has one question that he would like to ask, and if the minister is prepared to shift gears for a moment, I know that he would appreciate that.

Mr. Reid: I have a question. I think it is related to hospital facilities and equipment, in particular, in those hospitals. I mean, there have been stories of recent, relating to the reuse of certain medical equipment within hospital facilities. I would like to ask about the procedures that are involved or the protocol that is in place to deal with the reuse of this equipment, and how the individuals who have been impacted, what process is being used by the Department of Health to notify or to contact the people that have been potentially placed at risk as a result of the reuse of the medical equipment? Perhaps the minister can advise on that process.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, first of all, on the overall issue of reusing medical devices that are designed for single use in our hospitals, back in mid-February, some concerns were raised primarily in some articles that appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press regarding the reuse of single-use devices in Winnipeg hospitals.

At that time, Dr. Brian Postl, the vice-president of clinical services, undertook a review of the issue and made the following recommendations to myself, the Minister of Health, on February 23, 1999. He recommended that the reuse of single-use devices cease in those exposures defined as critical; that a WHA committee be established to review the issue of reuse and report within six months; that this committee develop a single set of policies, protocols, quality assurance and monitoring systems; and that the ministers or their deputies initiate a national process of review.

I accepted all of those recommendations, and on February 24, 1999, the day after receiving the recommendations, the deputy minister, Mr. Carson, wrote to all of the RHAs advising them that the Minister of Health had approved the recommendations made by Dr.

Postl regarding the reuse of single-use devices. The RHAs were asked to ensure that their policies and practices were consistent with those recommendations. On February 24, 1999, Dr. Postl wrote to all of the urban hospital CEOs advising them, again, that the Minister of Health had approved the recommendations regarding the reuse of single-use devices. The CEOs were asked to advise their staff and ensure that their policies and practices were consistent with these recommendations.

A WHA review committee has been established and includes RHA representation and will report by August 31, 1999. Manitoba is pursuing this issue of the reuse of medical devices at the national level through the deputy minister, and we will be certainly pursuing it at the ministerial level in terms of a national policy on the whole issue of reusing medical devices designed for single use in Manitoba. So right now there are various policies of provinces. We would have probably the most aggressive policy in terms of banning the reuse of certain single-use devices here in Manitoba right now while this study is ongoing.

* (1700)

That is entirely different from the situation that recently occurred at St. Boniface General Hospital, which really had to do with the whole issue of the utilization of disinfectant procedures in a lab, where actually they can be reused and the issue was really the level of disinfectant. The individual was using a lower-level disinfectant than that individual should have been; therefore, the lab was closed. I think the member has probably seen in the news release the various information put out by St. Boniface Hospital.

They have corresponded with the patients that they believe were impacted. I believe they sent out just under 2,000 letters. They have taken a very proactive approach to dealing with the issue of informing patients. They also established a phone line for individuals to phone in if they were concerned, and to date they have received, I am told, about 150 calls. They have sent out the 1,900 letters, and they have had about 300 individuals tested at St. Boniface to date.

So, again, they acknowledge that it was an error in terms of the utilization of an inappropriate disinfectant. They have taken all the appropriate measures to inform patients that they think may have been infected, as they say in their news release and in their letters. They go on to say at length that we believe the risk of exposure to patients is very low; however, we are taking this seriously. As a result they go on to send the letters to each patient who has had one of the procedures since 1992. As I said, anyone with questions or concerns can call their patient relations office at 237-2306. They have also asked external groups of specialists to be involved to take an objective look. Of course they closed the lab, and it will reopen as soon as the hospital is satisfied that the cleaning procedures meet their current protocols and that all appropriate measures are in place to ensure patient safety, likely in early June.

So I could go on at length. I could certainly provide the information to the member for Transcona if he has not seen most of it in terms of the information put out by St. Boniface Hospital on Thursday, May 20, outlining this issue at their facility.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for providing some background, and, yes, I believe we have some of that information available through my colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

The minister referenced that there was just slightly under 2,000 letters that went out to inform patients of St. Boniface Hospital. I imagine he was referencing that they were potentially at risk as a result of the reuse or less than satisfactory disinfecting procedures for the equipment that was being reused. He said that he has mentioned about 300 that were tested by the St. Boniface Hospital, and I take it that was internal to the hospital operations where the tests were performed.

Is it possible that people that were infected, or put in a position of potentially being infected as a result of the reuse of this equipment, can have their testing undertaken by a private practice doctor versus the hospitals? Would that be permissible under the department's guidelines?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, the option is there for individuals to go to their family physician and have the test done, and I am sure some are doing just that. The 300 tests that I referred to have been tests that have been actually done at St. Boniface Hospital, so I am sure some individuals are going to their family physician and having the tests done.

But I do want to make it clear that we are not talking here about single-use devices being reused, which is the issue I outlined at length initially. We are talking about devices that can be reused, but since 1992, unfortunately, this individual was using a lower level chemical disinfectant. When that came to light, that is what created the situation. That is why they are indicating that, because up until 1992 the lower level disinfectant was appropriate that the risk to the individual patients, the hospital is saying, is extremely low. They are taking the appropriate steps, and as soon as they believe that there is any risk, they are notifying the individuals. They are setting up a line, they are testing individuals at their site. But the member's question, absolutely, individuals can certainly go their family doctor and have the test performed.

Mr. Reid: The minister referenced a few minutes ago the fact that there were several documents. Because I have not had access to those, I wonder if the minister has a copy of the letter that the hospital may have sent out to the people that are potentially at risk as a result of the less than satisfactory disinfectant procedures, and if he can provide a copy of that letter for us because I have some questions that have been posed to me that I can pose to the minister, in turn, after I see that letter.

* (1710)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, we can certainly provide that. We will try to provide it in the next short while, but we could provide a copy of the press release and the letter that went to the patients informing them.

Mr. Reid: Okay, that is reasonable. Perhaps, I can ask this question to the minister then: in that letter that went out to the patients of the hospital,

was there an indication there that there would have to be certain lab procedures performed and that the reports that would be done by the labs would have to be returned back to the hospital? Is that a requirement of the process that you have in place?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, we are waiting for copies of that letter, but I believe the letter indicated to individuals that if they wished to be tested, they could be tested at the hospital, and they would have individuals available to speak with the patients. But they also indicated, I think, that individuals, as we have already discussed here, could be in contact with their family physician for advice and support.

I know the question was asked, and is there a link back to that family physician informing St. Boniface? We will confirm whether or not that is the case, but I think it is also important to know that if any individual was determined to have hepatitis C or HIV, those are reportable to the public health officer, so that would happen and there would be the appropriate follow-up.

Mr. Reid: I do understand what the minister is referencing on the hep C, that there is a requirement to report, so I would understand that there would have to be a report going back to the Health department in that regard.

But in this case it is my understanding, and that is why I would like to see a copy of the letter, and this again comes from a constituent who is involved, has been told that first off that they had to go to the St. Boniface Hospital to have testing done, which to me seemed to be in a potential of conflict situation here.

Secondly, they were told that, oh, if you are going to go to your private practice doctor, after the constituent insisted on choosing that route, that the lab report after the test had been done on the samples that were provided by the patient, would go to the lab and be tested, but that report had to be returned to the hospital, not back to the family doctor that was involved. That is why I want to understand about the process that is involved in the procedures or the guidelines that you have set up with respect to reporting. So that is why I am asking you the question about what direction has been given in regard to the

lab testing and the ability to see the family doctor for the appropriate testing. Perhaps you can advise on that.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, we are still waiting to get a copy of the letter which, I think, will clarify some of this. But my understanding is the letter, I guess, first of all indicated that St. Boniface was not necessarily asking patients to come in for testing, but then they were suggesting that if individuals wanted to be tested they could certainly contact the hospital. They also encouraged individuals if they thought they needed to or wanted to talk to their family physician for advice and support.

My understanding is how I have already answered the question. There is nothing stopping an individual from going to their family physician and having the test done. There is no requirement to be reporting that back to St. Boniface Hospital. We can certainly clarify that issue with the hospital, but, just thinking from a common sense perspective, there might well be some reason that an individual just wants to deal with their family physician and keep the confidences with their family physician for whatever reason. So there might be reasons that individuals want to do what the member is asking about and suggesting. My understanding is there is no requirement to be providing the results of that back to St. Boniface Hospital.

I will certainly follow up on that issue and confirm that that is the procedure that is being followed.

Mr. Reid: I appreciate that commitment the minister has made to follow up. The issue was drawn to my attention by a constituent just this afternoon. That is why I decided I would come back here and raise it with the minister, because it is her understanding that her daughter was involved in this and she had to fight first off to go to the family doctor first after the hospital was insisting that, no, they had to go there for the tests. Then, when the family absolutely refused, they went to the family doctor, but then the hospital is indicating to the family that the lab test results have to come back to the hospital, which seemed to me to be inappropriate. It should have been going to, and channelled through, the family doctor first. Then, if the

family doctor and family choose to share that with the hospital, I would think that that would be the appropriate and the logical route and procedure to follow. If the minister concurs with that, then he can indicate so. I can forward that information on to the family to give them some level of comfort in this regard.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, that would be my position unless I could be convinced otherwise for some reason that I am not aware of, but, certainly, as I have already said, how we understood it to work was exactly as we have discussed here, that the individual has that option to go to their family physician and get the test done. If everything is fine, that is where it ends. They do not need to be forwarding those results to St. Boniface, but we will follow up. That is certainly my understanding of how it is meant to work and should work, and, based on everything I know of the issue, I support it working in that fashion. I will get back to the member.

* (1720)

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for that undertaking, and I will pass on those comments to my constituent to make sure they have full discretion over the procedures and process that are followed in this regard. If the minister can search that out with the hospital involved, I think it would help to clarify the interaction between the patient and the hospital.

I want to ask the question now. I do not know if the minister has his staff here available to assist in this, but I will ask the question anyway and he can advise.

When we were in Question Period just recently, we were asking questions with respect to neurologists and the recruitment of neurologists in the province. The minister referenced that there has been some recruitment taking place, and I know I have raised this issue with the minister with respect to epileptologists since Dr. Pillay had left the province of Manitoba for Calgary. It left us with a bit of a void in the province that we had no epileptologist.

Now, the minister referenced for us, in answer to the questions during Question Period

at that time, that he had three and a half pediatric neurologists and that he had also brought four new people into the province as a result of his department's efforts to recruit. He referenced that Dr. Ahmad and a Dr. Hudson who will be joining the team of neurologists on July 1 of '99, just about a month from now, and that there have been four additional neurologists recruited, and that he is talking also about three and a half positions for pediatric neurologists and again another individual who brings some speciality in the whole area of epilepsy.

I am wondering if the minister can indicate, in addition to the two doctors that I have just referenced here, who the other doctors involved are that the minister has recruited as the four people that are coming to the province?

Mr. Stefanson: I did respond in part to the previous question the member had asked when I was responding to another question. So I will outline a detailed response to his original question. First of all, talking about adult neurology, Manitoba currently has 18 adult neurologists. Recently, as I said, four additional neurologists have been recruited. They are Dr. Ahmad, Dr. Stauber, Dr. Nagaria and Dr. Hudson are the four doctors that have been recruited. This recruitment represents a 20 percent increase in neurologists serving the needs of Manitobans. As I think I responded, two of these neurologists, Dr. Ahmad and Dr. Hudson specialize in epilepsy, which the member has inquired about.

While I am on my feet, in the area of pediatric neurology, Manitoba has three and a half pediatric neurologists. They are Dr. Booth, Dr. Persaud, Dr. Chan-Lui and Dr. Seshia. The most recent was Dr. Persaud, and Dr. Persaud brings a special interest in epilepsy. I am told that Manitoba has never been in a better position regarding pediatric neurology than we are today.

There was also a question at that same time or subsequently about the residents. I think there was at that time some inaccurate information put forward about our residency program. There are four neurology students in residency, but only one resident is graduating this year. That individual is leaving the province, but she is

leaving the province to further her education. So I think that responds to the previous question and the question the member asked here this afternoon.

Mr. Reid: With respect to the people the minister mentioned, and he mentioned the name Dr. Booth, can you tell me is Dr. Booth an accredited doctor under our Canadian certification process?

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Obviously, I do not have the listing of all of the accreditations of all of the doctors in Manitoba here, so I will get back to the member relative to his question on Dr. Booth. We were just discussing examples where somebody might not have an accreditation. It might be if they are here from another country, they might have their accreditation from another country, might be working on accreditation here in Canada but would still be qualified obviously to provide these services. So, in terms of Dr. Booth, specifically, I am certainly prepared to return with details relative to him or return with any other information the member might ask for today.

* (1730)

Mr. Reid: Well, I think if the minister, when he is able to undertake his research on this, will find that Dr. Booth—and I am not taking anything away from her on her abilities as a doctor within the system—but it is my understanding that she is practising in a field for which she is not fully accredited and has been for some time, and that perhaps the minister is taking Dr. Booth into account when he gives us his numbers of 3.5 pediatric neurologists. So I just draw that to the minister's attention to be careful on who he includes in his total there, because we are aware and we do have the list of neurologists who are practising in the province. Our research shows that she has not, in fact, she attempted to take the certification test, I believe it is through the Royal College, and that she was not successful and that she may be in the future attempting that accreditation, but has not, from my understanding, to this point. Therefore, she does not meet the criteria that I would expect would be

for the minister to take into consideration as one of his people.

With respect to the new doctors that are coming in here, Drs. Ahmad and Hudson that I think the minister referenced that they will be working as epileptologists. The questions I have: will those two doctors, can the minister tell me, are they recent graduates from the medical college or university with respect to the field of neurology? Have they practised as epileptologists prior to coming to the province of Manitoba, or are they coming here as neurologists and being thrust into the field of epileptology?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, first of all, in terms of the numbers and referring to the individuals in these various areas, it is not my listing that I put people into these categories. Obviously, the Health department, the Health labour relations division does, but even more importantly, it is done with the College of Physicians and Surgeons in terms of suggesting what qualifications all of these individuals have and so on. In terms of these two individuals, Dr. Ahmad and Dr. Hudson, as I have said on a couple of occasions, I am told that they specialize in epilepsy, and I can certainly return with more information about their backgrounds in terms of when they graduated and so on.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, I just caution, when I reference that, for the minister to be careful. I mean, I had the list of names of the practising neurologists in the province of Manitoba here as well. I mean, any one of us can call the college and access that list, and Dr. Booth's name is not on that list. Yet he has referenced Dr. Booth as a neurologist here. So I think you need to be somewhat cautious, and I will not say anything further about that.

I hope you will report back with respect to the two doctors that are coming in, who are going to be practising here as epileptologists, because there is some concern that perhaps these two doctors—not taking anything away from their skill level, but perhaps their field is more specific to neurology versus the field of epilepsy, which is a specialization. I think that it is fair to the patients that they know whether or not the doctors that are coming in, that are going

to be practising, are actually specialists in the field of epilepsy. So I think that that information should be made available, perhaps to the Manitoba epilepsy association, which has regular and frequent contact with the patients and the families. It would be fair that that would be a way of disseminating that information to the patients and the families.

The doctors that are coming in here, I would like to ask the minister if these doctors are Canadian-certified doctors and whether or not they have that certification prior to bringing them into the province to practise here.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will confirm all of that for the member for Transcona.

Mr. Reid: Perhaps the minister could repeat that. I did not quite hear his response in that.

Mr. Stefanson: I will confirm the status of all four for the member.

Mr. Reid: I appreciate that. I am wondering, too, if the minister would undertake, when he is able to confirm one way or the other, whether or not he would also pass that information along to the patients or perhaps their families through the Manitoba epilepsy association who would have that contact. I wonder if he would undertake to make that information available through that route.

* (1740)

Mr. Stefanson: I think that is a good suggestion, and we will make arrangements whether we do it directly as a department or whether we do it through the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I think the suggestion to inform the organizations because of the contact they have with individuals is very appropriate.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for that undertaking. Also, can the minister advise that the doctors who are coming to Manitoba to practise as epileptologists, whether that is their field or not, since Dr. Pillay has pioneered here in Manitoba the vagus nerve implant process or medical procedure and has been somewhat successful in reducing the impact for patients suffering with epilepsy, whether or not either of

those doctors will be taking on the caseload or the patient load of Dr. Pillay, and will those doctors also be undertaking or performing the vagus nerve implant procedures?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that Dr. Pillay would have done the assessment and then other doctors perform the surgery. What I am told is the team that was involved in the implant program, and I think I have said this before, is still at the Health Sciences Centre with the exception of Dr. Pillay. Dr. Brian Schmidt, a neurologist, has followed these patients from the vagus implants. The surgeon on the team, Dr. Brownstone, also remains at Health Sciences Centre, and he too continues to follow these patients. As we have discussed, the two new neurologists, Dr. Ahmad and Dr. Hudson, will be joining the team on July 1. As we have already discussed, they specialize in epilepsy, and I am going to return with more details on their background. So, yes, the implants will be continued.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister confirm that the regional distribution unit is working at about 55 percent of designed capacity now and may be close, between 55 and 60, but certainly not more than 60 in terms of its meals served per day, but that it has the full staff complement, in fact, more than the full staff complement that were planned for?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: I have the information on St. Boniface, I will table now. They just sent down one copy, but we can provide this for now. Just very quickly looking at the letter which the member will receive, it does go on to say, testing for these infections is available to you should you wish to be tested. We also have health care staff at the hospital available to speak with you and provide the individual support you may need. You may also wish to talk to your family physician for advice and support. It goes on to say, we invite you to contact the patient relations office at St. Boniface if you are calling from outside Winnipeg, and so on. So the letter itself does not link the issue of getting the test done by your family physician and saying you have to return to St. Boniface Hospital. But we will follow up on the lengthy discussion we had, and

I will table these documents for the member for Transcona.

In terms of the current operating capacity of the Urban Shared Services Corporation, Mr. Chairman, that is one of many questions I have asked for a status report on the corporation. As the member for Crescentwood knows, we are also expecting a revised business plan from them very shortly. So again, I will return with an accurate percentage of the level of operations at the Urban Shared Services Corporation as of the current point in time.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I think the minister knows that the current centre cannot provide the meals that HSC and St. B need if they were able to receive them. The fact is that HSC and St. B are not in a position to receive them anyway at this point.

I think he will find that the current staff simply cannot produce any more meals on the three lines that are available for a variety of reasons. I hope he will inquire carefully into the reasons why this is the case. I am led to believe that it is because the compendium of meals that has been designed and required is too complex for the assembly to take place within the time that is allowed for each tray to be assembled at the volumes that would be required.

The minister knows that he has committed capital funding for nursing homes: Calvary Place, Misericordia and Bethel. There may be others in the city that have been committed, and these homes are not equipped with normal kitchens. The architectural plans for them do not have kitchens, so the assumption is that they are going to be served from the RDU as well. That may also be the case in Selkirk, depending on the redesign of the central facility there as well.

Is the minister not concerned that he has a situation where he is counting on something in the order of 240 new beds at Misericordia, 120 I believe it is at Concordia, and somewhere around 100 for Calvary Place, something over 400 beds additional in the system, and yet he is not even able with the current system to serve the two tertiary care hospitals? The volumes are simply not there. We are told that in spite of the best efforts of staff that they can barely maintain

the pace required to serve somewhere in the order of 6,000 meals a day, 5,600 to 6,000 meals a day, and the requirement for the system as a whole, depending on your numbers, is somewhere over 10,000. If you add the new beds in, it is considerably more than 10,000.

So is the minister not concerned that we are in the process of committing very large capital dollars on the assumption that technology will work, which at this point has not been able to produce the volume and certainly has not been able to produce at a cost that is equivalent to or lower than the traditional food systems? It is over budget by a very substantial amount, not just on operating but on capital as well. So is the minister not concerned that we are going down a road here that is assuming that a technology will work which there is no data to show that in fact it will?

* (1750)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, the member asked me actually on several occasions whether I am concerned. I would say no, I am not concerned, but there is an issue there that has to be addressed on a go-forward basis. I have asked for a status report of the very issues that the member is raising here today. In fact, a great deal of what he raises is basically identical to information that was provided to me by UFCW in a meeting I had fairly recently with Mr. Jim Sanford and Mr. Bernie LeBlanc. I received a subsequent follow-up letter from Mr. Sanford again literally saying some of the identical things to what the member is saying here this afternoon. So I have indicated that the information they left with me, I am obviously looking into and comparing it to the performance of USSC. I will be responding to Mr. Sanford. I believe I have a preliminary draft response to him, but there is still some more work to be done on some of these issues. I am looking forward to a comprehensive report from USSC on the issue of their capacity, their current capacity, their current needs and their future needs. Obviously, that also relates very directly to their revised business plan, which I am expecting very shortly as well.

Mr. Sale: Well, Mr. Chairperson, I have not got a copy of that letter, so I certainly was not

quoting from it. If the minister would like to give me a copy, I would be happy to have it. But I think probably we are sharing the same information because we are getting it from the same people, so it is perhaps not surprising.

There are certainly major timeline questions here. I wonder if the minister can explain—he made some very strong comments in Question Period today in regard to renovations at HSC, their required changes. I again repeat my information, as given to me by engineers and by senior management staff of the facility, that the major impediment is insufficient electrical supply and that the hospital requires substantial wiring changes to be able to accommodate the rethermalization carts, which have a very high draw. That is the main problem. There are also some doorways, some structural issues in the food-receiving area that require modification.

The information from senior management of the hospital is that the total bill is in the \$3-million region—estimated, because tenders have not gone out, as far as I know at least have not gone out—and that the argument is between USSC and HSC as to what portion of those costs should be borne by each party, and that is what is in dispute.

I think I also put on the record that the only data that I have available indicate that the total renovation allowance in the USSC's business plan, old business plan, was \$1,042,000 for patient facilities. There is an additional amount for nonpatient facilities, which includes the cafeterias for public and other people's use. But the line that I am looking at and the business plan that I have a draft of—I assume it is a late draft, but it is a draft—is \$1,042,000 total renovation budget. Now, if the minister would like to provide other information, I would appreciate that. I am particularly interested in

the issue of what changes are required at HSC because the minister seemed to think today that the engineers and senior staff of Health Sciences Centre were incorrect when they gave me that information.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, well, first of all, we did respond in Question Period today about some of the operational issues that were raised by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). I am told by HSC and USSC that, as in the other hospitals, the meals will be rethermalized centrally and trays will be transported to patient areas at mealtime, so that precludes any needs for any adjustments of hallways and so on.

As well, the major renovations in the main kitchen include electrical upgrading, removal of some of the existing equipment that will no longer be required, and renovation to accommodate the rethermalized carts. Again, I am told that has been known for quite some time in terms of their requirements.

Again, I have an overall more inclusive budget from USSC in terms of their capital requirements at HSC, both building and equipment, which is in the range of about \$3.7 million, and I will certainly return with more particulars, as I have indicated, on other issues, Mr. Chairman.

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being six o'clock, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow (Thursday) at 10 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 2, 1999

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