



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. XLIX No. 39 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, June 7, 1999

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

Monday, June 7, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

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

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I am pleased to table this afternoon the annual report of the Surface Rights Board. Also, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the annual report 1998 of the Municipal Board.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table the annual report 1998-1999 of the Seizure and Impoundment Registry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Conditions

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to report that the weekend rain was relatively light over the Manitoba portion of the Souris River watershed; however, a significant portion of the watershed on the U.S. side received one to three inches.

Some river rises are expected in the U.S., but we anticipate little change at this point for the rest of the week. The weather forecast is predicting the possibility of additional significant rainfalls. If this rain develops, levels of the Souris and its tributaries in Manitoba could again be on the rise. The amounts of additional rain will determine whether earlier crests will in fact be exceeded.

The Assiniboine River is on the rise from Virden to Brandon because of last week's rain. Secondary crests expected later this week should still be lower than crests during May. Overbank flows are not expected, but levels of the Assiniboine River from Brandon to Portage will rise later this week. Levels will remain below crests in May unless heavy additional rainfall occurs tomorrow.

The Portage diversion continues to be operated to maintain the river level at flood stage between Portage la Prairie and Headingley. We have also received rainfall over the Pembina River watershed. It was quite heavy last weekend and has stopped the river from receding. Significant rises will develop if additional rainfalls occur tomorrow. Rainfall over the Red River watershed was significant in some areas near the U.S. boundary and in farther northern areas. The Red River is on the rise at most U.S. points, and some minor rises may develop later this week. We have a situation where there have been heavy, significantly local heavy rainfalls over vast portions of agricultural Manitoba, and we are experiencing exceedingly large acreages that are in fact inundated and have become saturated.

* (1335)

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for providing us with an update of the conditions that are appearing in the southwest and other parts of our province over the weekend. In talking with some people in the southwest corner of the province, they tell me that the rain is very spotty and that, in some areas, like Waskada and a little bit east, they did receive almost three inches of

rain since last we met here last week. So having put up with this much rain so far and more on the weekend has to be a very, very frustrating experience for farm families and communities who cannot get the crops out into the seeding position.

It is a terrible problem in the southwest part of our province but also in other parts of our province as well. Constituents of mine in Grandview and Gilbert Plains have been talking to me and to others about the amount of rain that they have received since last June and this spring as well, almost as much as what we see in the southwest part of the province. Constituents of the ministers in Laurier and McCreary have been telling me as well that in those parts of Manitoba they are experiencing very wet, saturated conditions and having a struggle to get onto their land as well. It seems that the southwest corner and then all around Riding Mountain and up into the Duck Mountains there is a real problem with farmers not being able to get to their land to do the seeding, so we on this side would urge the government to co-operate with all levels of government, especially with municipalities, in putting together a package of compensation to help the farm communities and farm operations in this province which we so greatly depend on for our source of economic wealth in rural Manitoba and indeed all of Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 28—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae), that leave be given to introduce Bill 28, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, No. 2; Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House, and I would table a copy of His Honour's message at this time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 33—The Special Payment to Certain Dependent Spouses of Deceased Workers Act

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that leave be given to introduce Bill 33, The Special Payment to Certain Dependent Spouses of Deceased Workers Act; Loi sur le paiement spécial destiné à certains conjoints à charge de travailleurs décédés, and the same be now received and read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon fifty-four Grade 5 students from Linden Meadows School under the direction of Mrs. Gail Hurak and Mrs. Kathy McLennan. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Also, twenty-two Grade 9 students from Sanford Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Kelly Taylor. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura).

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

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

AIDA Program Compensation for Farmers

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, further to the minister's statement of rain and the devastation that that is creating and the despair that it is creating for

Manitoba producers, we had a call from a reeve of Westbourne over the weekend talking about the number of municipalities that are unseeded. The R.M. of Rosedale is 85 percent unseeded as of Friday. We had a letter just recently from a person, Cam's Aerial Spraying, talking about the peaks and valleys in agriculture, but they have never seen a situation so serious and so grave as they do today.

We know that, as we speak, farmers, producers, Reeves and municipal officials are meeting in Melita, and I would like to ask the Premier: has the provincial government notified the federal government in writing of their intent on the disaster funding assistance program?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) a week ago Friday spoke to Minister Vanclief and indicated our desire to utilize the AIDA program for the support for the farmers in difficulty. The minister's office has a call in again to Mr. Vanclief today. I have a letter drafted to the Prime Minister which will be going out this afternoon, and the minister will also be in discussion with his federal counterpart to try and get to the bottom of this.

We also understand that the federal minister is planning to be here this week, and so we will ensure that all efforts are made to have him understand completely the breadth and depth of the problems that are being faced by the farm producers, by the people of southwestern Manitoba. This is an issue that, as has been pointed out, is not just concentrated in the southwest corner, that is north of the Yellowhead and includes areas in the Minnedosa, Neepawa, Grandview, Gilbert Plains area and all the way to the Saskatchewan border.

It is an issue that is of extreme seriousness, and we take it as such. As I indicated last week, we have made a commitment that all of the various programs that were available in any of the disasters that have faced the farm community either here or elsewhere in Canada will be made available. As a result, we have also contacted PFRA or suggested that PFRA be looked at for possible programs such as the late seeding, the cost for chemicals, forgone costs for chemicals and other issues. They are all being looked at.

All of the stops are being pulled out at this point to ensure that we address this as comprehensively as we possibly can.

Mr. Doer: I thank the Premier for his answer.

Madam Speaker, in the House of Commons on Friday, a statement was made by the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Vanclief, that to date the Province of Manitoba has not asked to call on the disaster funding assistance agreement. It may or may not apply. This, of course, was reported back through the media to a number of producers who were quite frankly shocked when they heard that the minister did not say that the provincial minister had called him. There is a fair degree of uncertainty on the political side to go along with the horrible uncertainty of the weather and certainly of the difficulty that the weather has produced.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): in light of the fact that on June 2 he said in this House that the matters would be clarified within 24 to 48 hours, would he ensure that that letter goes to the Prime Minister with copies to the federal minister immediately so that the farmers, producers and municipal officials can be reassured that the application is in and there is not finger pointing between jurisdictions but action between the jurisdictions to get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am surprised and I cannot account for that particular response by the federal minister in the House of Commons. It was a full week ago, not last Friday but the Friday before, that I had a lengthy telephone conversation with the federal minister, telling him that we are facing an emerging crisis that is getting regrettably worse with every rainfall. My immediate suggestion at that time was, as members in the Chamber know—we have a commitment, this government has a commitment of upwards to \$60 million of support through the AIDA program, supported as well by the federal government of \$90 million on a 60-40 sharing arrangement.

My discussion with him two Fridays ago was how we could best apply some of these significant funds to this problem. I am pursuing

that this morning. My office called Mr. Vanclief's office, and as the First Minister indicated, we are in the process of setting up a schedule and an opportunity of having both myself, the federal minister, along with municipal leaders and farm leaders meet in the affected areas possibly later on this week.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: I thank the minister for his answer. As I understand it, the two issues that are at the meeting today are, one, why has the provincial government not notified the federal government—in brackets, in writing? We have had the answer from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) on that issue. The second issue is: what is the contingency plan for unseeded land? Will the government be bringing to the federal government an actual contingency plan for the unseeded areas, Madam Speaker, so that, rather than getting into they have not talked to us, we have not talked to them, producers need some certainty here. We need a contingency plan. We should be proposing it to the federal government in very specific terms so producers will know what the contingency plan is.

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, within the next few days we will be doing just that. There are a number of issues at stake, but let us understand that this is a unique situation developing. All of us recall the floods of the Red River Valley, as late as two years ago, when 700,000 acres were under water. All but 1,800 acres of those acres were reseeded. So we are facing a different situation. That is why, as the First Minister mentioned, we are talking to the PFRA organization to talk about making sure in the first instance that all those programs that apply to unseeded acreages, loss of fertilizer, the offer of reseeding, which is not the case here because the farmers have not been able to seed in the first instance, but there was a \$10 offer, a federally sponsored program that was applicable in '97 to the Red River Valley. We want to put those programs together, together with how we can rearrange the dollars allocated to the AIDA program to see what precise form the compensation program will take.

Let me take this opportunity, Madam Speaker. This government is extremely aware of the seriousness of this situation. This is going

far beyond the immediate borders of the southwest. This is beginning to represent 12 percent, 15 percent of our total agriculture output in this province, and this government will be there for farmers' support. We will hopefully have details later on this week, particularly once we have had the opportunity of meeting directly with the federal authorities.

Health Care System Cardiac Surgery Cancellations

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my questions are directed to the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health recently has tried to justify the cancellation of surgeries over the summer months by saying that people just want to go to the lake, and at the same time, though, he is making claims that heart patients all have their surgeries within 12 weeks. My question is to ask the minister why Mr. Howard Porter of The Pas, whose heart condition is rapidly deteriorating, was told that his surgery would be put on hold because there is a quota on heart surgeries here in Winnipeg.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I will certainly look into this individual's situation, but in responding to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and providing some information on the current status of cardiac surgery in the province of Manitoba, if it is an urgent emergent situation I believe those are done in a day or two in the province of Manitoba. I am told the average waiting list is up to a maximum of about 12 weeks. We have shown significant growth in the numbers of cardiac surgeries we are doing in the province of Manitoba. That is because of the dedication of additional resources, additional support to do just that.

So I can certainly provide the member for The Pas with information in terms of the growth in numbers of open-heart surgery procedures being done in the province of Manitoba, significant improvement, better access, better support for Manitobans. But in terms of the individual that he brings to this House today, I am certainly prepared to look into that individual situation.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, secondly, I want to ask the minister this question, because Mr.

Porter and his wife were apparently told by the cardiac surgeon that the surgery quota is due in part to an acute shortage of qualified nurses at the Winnipeg hospitals, when he will put into action this nursing strategy that he talks about quite a bit these days so that critical patients like Mr. Porter will not have to wait for their surgery.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the strategy of attracting and bringing more nurses into our health care system is currently underway on a number of fronts. This 1999 budget that the members opposite supported includes some \$32.5 million for 650 nursing positions. We have set up a \$7-million fund to deal with the issue of retention and recruitment of nurses. Nurses who have left the system, want to come back into the system, want refresher courses, retraining, they can access that fund. We are also working with the educational institutions. The Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba alone last year had an increase in enrollment of 23 percent, and I was told this year's graduating class of 40 graduates, in April of this year, 39 of those 40 are staying right here in the province of Manitoba.

In terms of the upcoming need of ICU nurses, there is a graduating class in I believe September, October. I think that again is in the range of about 40, and a significant number of those will end up at the Health Sciences Centre addressing the very important need in that area. So, Madam Speaker, on a number of fronts, we are doing exactly what the member for The Pas asks about, putting in place aggressive strategies to bring more nurses into our health care system here in the province of Manitoba.

* (1350)

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, finally, I wanted to ask the Health minister: given that Mr. Porter's physician in The Pas has told him that his surgery should be a priority and his health is being seriously compromised, what action is the minister prepared to take today to ensure that surgery scheduled this summer is adequately staffed so that people like Mr. Porter can get his triple by-pass operation?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, as I have indicated in terms of the individual raised here today, I am certainly prepared to look into their

situation. As I responded to the member for Kildonan to a previous question, there is nothing new in the province of Manitoba in terms of a summer slowdown. That has happened for many, many years in the province of Manitoba. In fact, the information I have been provided by the authorities is that we will continue to do more procedures this year than we have in many other years. If you look at the whole issue of cardiac surgery alone, at Health Sciences Centre alone it has gone up from 400 to 600 procedures in this year, significant growth, by dedicating more resources to provide the kinds of services that the member for The Pas is asking about.

So we have continued to dedicate resources to provide more support, to do more cardiac surgery, and in terms of the individual he raises, I will look into that matter, Madam Speaker.

We Care Program Students Traffic Accident Investigation

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, on September 11 of last year the nursing aide students from the College of Health and Family Support Studies, which is the We Care program offered at the Misericordia Hospital, were ordered to go to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, to take part in a cleaning exercise after the students had already completed their cleaning portion of the nurses' aide program. They were unfortunately involved in a very serious car accident in transit on the way back.

My question to the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) or the Minister of Education is: have you investigated this situation, and what supports have been offered in place to these students, many of whom are having trouble finding jobs as a result of this accident that occurred while taking this training program?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I had heard about that unfortunate incident, and we will undertake to bring back a response to the honourable member upon reviewing whatever investigations have taken place.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister also investigate the fact that the students from the course, who

were sent from the course here in Winnipeg, were sent to clean the house of the aunt and uncle of the director of the program? Will the minister also investigate that fact, that they were sent from Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie to clean the house of the aunt and uncle of this program and subsequently were involved in a very serious car accident?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Madam Speaker, we will review that.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister also review the fact that the students were ordered to go to Portage la Prairie, were told they could not take their own vehicles, and the family members of the aunt and uncle were the ones who took the vehicles, and that was the vehicle that was involved in the accident? Will the minister also investigate that as well?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, yes.

* (1355)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, on a new question. Would the minister, with respect to this accident, this situation that occurred, also investigate all of the students involved because many of the students were on social assistance or on EI and were sent to take part in this program so they could obtain employment, and as a result of this accident many are having difficulty finding and obtaining employment for something they were sent to by government and by government agencies to a supposedly sanctioned by the Ministry of Education and Training program? Will the minister investigate the situation of these students and provide support and assistance to these students?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Madam Speaker, we have undertaken to investigate, find out the things that the honourable member is asking and ascertain the appropriateness of everything that takes place in programs like this.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister also investigate the fact that, after the accident, I am advised the students were told not to contact the media and that the director of the program attended and visited some of the students in hospital and others and told them to

sign a waiver form absolving the College of Health and Family Support Studies from any liability in this regard? Will the minister investigate that as well?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: My final supplementary to the minister: will the ministry or the joint ministries undertake to investigate this particular college and its services offered to students who go in good faith trying to be re-educated and try to get their education and improve their lot in life and unfortunately encounter circumstances like this, and ensure that these students in this program, some of whom are in a very sorry state right now, will get assistance from the government for retraining or future employment as a result of the failure and the accident and injuries that have occurred to them as a result of this horrible situation?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to accept any of the allegations the honourable member makes as fact, but I have undertaken to review this matter and to report back to the honourable member. We will take account of each and every question that he has raised today in addressing the matter.

Political Donations—Tax Credit Out-of-Province Campaigns

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, last week, inside the Chamber, I tabled a document which clearly showed that the New Democratic Party made a cash donation in New Brunswick to help finance an NDP candidate. Unfortunately, we understand, we have been informed that it is not in fact an illegal act. Yet you will find that a vast majority, I believe, of Manitobans would recognize that this is definitely an abusive use of an important aspect of The Elections Act. My question to the Premier is: what is this government prepared to do in order to address this very serious violation of ethics?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, subsequent to the question being raised in the House last week, I wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer and asked for him to investigate the matter and report back to me. After we receive

the report, if indeed what the member for Inkster says is correct, that it is not illegal, then discussions should take place to discuss whether or not such an activity should be deemed illegal and whether or not we should look at changing legislation to accommodate that. So I think we would have to wait to get a report from the Chief Electoral Officer and his recommendation on the matter.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: We are looking to the Premier to demonstrate some leadership on this critical issue and ask the Premier to recognize that the tax credit is for provincial politics in the province of Manitoba. Would the Premier of this province not agree to that and bring forward the legislation that is required to prevent provincial tax credit dollars going to help finance other candidates of the same political party outside of the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I indicated last week that I question the morality of taking tax—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: I know the New Democrats find it funny. Their judgment of morality is whether or not they do it. They believe that anything they do is morally right.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the government is attempting to abuse the rules and not answer the question directly that was posed to them, which of course is contrary to our rules. Elections Manitoba in their submission has only proposed that one party broke the—well, actually two parties. The Liberals were convicted in the '95 election, and Elections Manitoba has said that the Tories broke the law in the election of 1995. We will stand by the findings of Elections Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition did not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, of course, with respect to morality and—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) implied that the Liberal Party bribed an individual. That is a very serious allegation, and I believe that the member for Transcona should put forward the names—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, after hearing some more of the heckle, I understand that they are referring to a specific case in which there was a conviction, so I will just leave it at that.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: With respect to the statements from the very sensitive Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), on pages 57 and 58 of the Monnin inquiry report, we see—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Point of Order

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe Beauchesne would direct you to the fact that the member for Inkster asked a question of the Premier. The Premier is now using the opportunity to try to defend himself against the point of order of the Leader of the Opposition as well as deal with the Leader of the Opposition.

I know the Premier is very sensitive on this, but a specific question was asked by the member for Inkster, and the Premier ought to answer the member for Inkster. If the Premier wants to

reflect or deal with other questions, he can, but I suggest that he should answer the question and not provoke debate because that is clearly in the rules. The question was specifically asked what the Premier would do, not how the Premier tried to defend himself against the serious allegations in the Monnin inquiry.

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

Mr. Filmon: I find it not only ironic but somewhat hypocritical that the first time that somebody is suggesting that the Monnin commission report should not be able to be discussed in this House is the opposition. They are the ones who are sensitive because they have something to hide, and that is the embarrassment that the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has brought upon them. The Leader of the Opposition does not have the courage to be able to stand up to his member for Crescentwood and tell him that what he did was wrong: counselling people before the inquiry not to be able to appear before the inquiry and counselling them to break our laws.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I recognize this is a very serious matter and a very sensitive matter, but I would ask all members in this Chamber to please comply with the rules of the House, not rise on invalid points of order that continue to provoke debate, and those responding to points of order to speak to only violations of our rules not the subject matter under discussion.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to respond to the question raised by the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Filmon: As I began in my response to the member for Inkster, I indicated last week that, whether or not the matters contravene our Elections Act, it clearly is an issue of immorality in taking contributions that were made under a Manitoba tax exemption to a party in Manitoba and contributing them to a party in Nova Scotia. Clearly, there is a lack of morality in that kind of initiative, but the members from the New Democratic Party do not understand morality.

They believe that anything they do is right and anything that anybody else of a different party does is wrong. I am afraid that the public will have to educate them on that matter.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask that we remain relatively focused on the issue at hand and ask the Premier to acknowledge the simple fact that taking provincial tax dollars that are meant for provincial campaigns here in the province of Manitoba and sending cash dollars to another province is morally wrong, and that this government has a responsibility to bring in the required legislation to rectify this loophole, and that we are asking for the Premier to bring forward the legislation. Stop talking about the Monnin report; we are talking about this particular case.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member for Inkster must have been talking to his seatmate because that is precisely what I said to him in the answer to his second question. In answer to the first question, I told him that the legislation would be considered after I receive a response from the Chief Electoral Officer. So, on both counts, I have already answered the question.

Manitoba Telecom Services Executive Compensation

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, since the Manitoba Telephone System was privatized, more than a thousand jobs have been eliminated, less than 20 percent of the shares are held by Manitobans, phone rates are up 40 percent with another 30 percent planned. The pension-related tax break which was supposed to keep rates down has gone mostly to shareholder entitlement, and executive compensation has increased between five and tenfold, including the value of the stock options.

I want to ask the minister responsible for Manitoba Telecom still or the so-called golden share, whether he supported the increases in executive compensation that totalled between five and 10 times when you include the value of the stock options. Did he support that?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the company that the member is asking questions about now is in

the private sector. They are governed by a board. Those decisions are made by them, and that is appropriate.

* (1410)

Employee Layoffs

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the minister has four directors on the board. I am asking him what position he took.

Does the minister support, and did his directors support, the layoffs of more than 1,000 Manitobans, in spite of his Premier's promise that as a result of privatization no jobs would be lost?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows that he misrepresents what I said. To every single question, I said that there would be no more layoffs under private ownership than there would be under public ownership, no more increases under private ownership than under public ownership. Those are always the responses that I said. They have to live in the real world. They have to operate in the real world. All he has to do is look at Saskatchewan where the layoffs continue in the publicly owned and where the increases in rates have been greater under public ownership than they have been under private ownership in Manitoba.

Employment-Contracting Out

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, since the Premier is obviously interested in answering these questions, perhaps he would tell the House whether or not he believes it is an acceptable option for the Manitoba Telecom Services to contract out jobs that start at \$12.58 an hour, to contract out those jobs to other provinces or to the United States of America in the current labour dispute. Is he in favour of that?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, what I am interested in doing is correcting the inaccuracies that the member for Crescentwood consistently puts on the record and that is what I rose to do in response to the last question.

What I believe is essential to the people of Manitoba is that they maintain the services of their telecom provider and that they do so in the best way to ensure public security, safety and all the other things. Only the member opposite wants to get involved in issues with respect to unions and not consider the best interests of the people who have a service that they depend upon.

Breast Cancer Screening Program Age Criteria

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I have received a letter signed by 80 women in the Westman area who are mainly in their 40s and who believe the present Manitoba Breast Screening Program, which is limited to the ages of 50 to 69, is unfair. Although they could go to the Brandon general hospital for diagnostic mammography if they were referred by their doctor, they believe that the program offers many benefits not available from a hospital test or visit. So my question to the minister, Madam Speaker: would the minister review the situation in Brandon and modify the program to enable more women to be in the Manitoba Breast Screening Program from the Westman area?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Breast Screening Program, which we introduced in 1995 and of which we are very proud, now screening some 33,000 women each and every year in the province of Manitoba, is based on the best clinical evidence that we have been provided, and the program in Manitoba is actually similar to programs across Canada where it is available to women between the ages of 50 to 69 years of age. We continue to assess all of the criteria around the program, again based on the best medical and clinical information available, and we will do just that in terms of continuing to review the program. But I think it is important to recognize it is a very valuable program, it is providing screening to women in that age group. Women beyond those age groups, either below 50 or over 69, if they have any concerns, can certainly go to their doctor, and they can also have a screening done. In fact, outside of the screening program itself, as I have indicated in this House before, in terms of other screening

and other diagnostic testing, there are another 30,000 women every year who have screening outside of this program. So actually, on an annual basis, there are over 60,000, about 63,000 Manitoba women receiving this kind of support.

Hours of Operation—Brandon

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, is the minister aware or knowledgeable that the Brandon Breast Screening Program, the program in Brandon, is only using their machine three days a week, and it is possible that 50 more women could be screened each week? As a result, the waiting list now at the Brandon general hospital for diagnostic mammography could be reduced. So, therefore, would he not acknowledge that there would be more cost-efficiency as well as improved service?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): No, I will not necessarily acknowledge any of the things the member for Brandon East has outlined. As I have indicated, this program was introduced in 1995 in the province of Manitoba. It is done on the basis of medical information provided to our government. As I have said, I think the program is fairly similar. I think other provinces that have a breast screening program have a similar age criterion, but we do continue to assess our program on an overall basis, recognizing it is a province-wide service being provided not only in Brandon but in Thompson, in Winnipeg, right throughout our province. We have two mobile breast screening units that travel around the province providing this service, and it is because of those kinds of services, Madam Speaker, that we are able to support some 33,000 Manitoba women.

Mr. L. Evans: I thank the minister for his answer.

Age Criteria

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I am going to table this letter signed by 80 women in the Westman area who are very concerned about the way the program is discriminating against them. So these are the views of 80 women from Souris, Deloraine, Brandon, et cetera—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am certain the honourable member has a supplementary question.

Mr. L. Evans: Does the minister understand that the Breast Screening Program offers women educational services and an excellent follow-up, that many women under 50 and over 69 believe that these benefits are being denied to them because of the existing age limits?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): As I have indicated, we review the program on an ongoing basis. In fact, the age criterion is in accordance with the Canadian guidelines. In fact, for the benefit of the member for Brandon East, the national committee for the Canadian Breast Cancer Screening Initiative has a committee dedicated to identifying and addressing issues such as reviewing the benefits of organized screening for women outside the targeted age groups. Obviously, Manitoba Health is in contact with that organization, and as I have indicated, we continue to look at our program to be sure it is meeting the needs of Manitoba women, recognizing we draw on the best medical and clinical information we can.

Breast Care Clinic Future Status

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, last week the Minister of Health confirmed that though the Breast Care Clinic at the Misericordia Hospital closes on June 15, the new St. Boniface version will not be open until some nebulous date, perhaps in the fall. He did not know the date. But he tells women not to worry, be happy, go to your own doctor. I would like to ask the minister today if he will now confirm that indeed the best a woman can hope for this summer is a badly fractured system with a little service here, a little service there. In fact, the concept of holistic service has been put on the shelf.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely wrong with all of her preamble and all of the information that she puts on the record. Manitoba women can still access the services through their own physicians. Those services will be provided through the clinics, and I can absolutely assure her that the consolidated unit at 400 Tache will be functioning no later than September 1 of this year.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister, who knows that his plan to consolidate surgery really means eliminating the number of surgical sites, what a woman is to do if indeed her doctor does not practise at Grace, Victoria or St. Boniface. Is she supposed to delay, go to another physician, get on a long waiting list?

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

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, Manitoba women will receive the same access, the same levels of services that they have received up until this current point in time. We have expanded a number of initiatives to provide the kind of support that is in place, so again, the member opposite is absolutely wrong to generalize. She does not bring any specific example and tries to again, as we have seen before, strike fear in the hearts of Manitobans. I think that is totally inappropriate when it comes to any issue, let alone the health care issues of Manitoba women.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I think it is inappropriate for the minister to evade answering a question—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the honourable member please pose her question now?

* (1420)

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a very straightforward, simple question, and perhaps he could answer in these terms. Why did he close the Misericordia Breast Care Clinic before opening its replacement?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, let us remember that basically none of these services were available in the province of Manitoba, nowhere near the extent they are today, under the previous administration. The Breast Screening Program alone was introduced by this government in 1995. The expansion of all of these services has been provided by this government in budget after budget after budget that members opposite voted against, time and time and time again. But I think what is most important is that the services will continue to be

available for Manitoba women. The consolidated centre at Tache Avenue will be open no later than September 1 of this year and services will continue to be provided, with probably the most comprehensive breast cancer screening initiatives in all of Canada.

Education System Dated Textbooks

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, in Thompson, Manitoba, Grades 7 and 8 students are reading geography textbooks so out of date that they are learning about the people in the land of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. They are learning that Canada has a population of 24 million people and that its Prime Minister is Pierre Trudeau. They are also learning that we have a serious concern about an energy crisis. Why are they so out of date? The textbook was published in 1982. Will the minister confirm to the House today that his government's deep cuts to our public school system have resulted in our kids using textbooks and classroom material that is two decades old?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the honourable member, who is a former school trustee, knows very well of the myriad resources available to history teachers throughout Manitoba, including tens of millions of dollars worth of technological advancement that enables teachers to access all kinds of resource material, off the Internet for example, up-to-the-minute information about the historical development of this world in which we all live. I think school divisions could help answer the question the honourable member raises. I think she knows the answer very well.

She also knows that the amount that the province makes available for students from the textbook account has increased very, very significantly just in the last few years and that the question she has may well be put to the school division involved. But we need also to remember that, in order not to rush New Directions any more than is acceptable or something that teachers can deal with, the new history curriculum is on its way as well, which would call at that point for decisions to be made about textbooks.

Parental Fundraising Activities

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): To the Minister of Education: now that he has admitted that Manitoba parents are going door to door raising funds to buy classroom materials like textbooks, can he tell the House—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): I have done no such thing as to admit what the honourable member has just said. I have said that if people are doing that, they ought not to be because there is sufficient funding available for textbooks. In many of our school divisions' accounts related to textbooks, they have surpluses. So in no way have I admitted to any such thing, and I would ask the honourable member to correct the record.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Would the honourable member for St. James please pose her question.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, now that he has admitted that parents are out—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am certain the honourable member has a supplementary question. Would she please pose her question now.

Ms. Mihychuk: Would the minister tell us how many parent councils are going out door to door raising money for textbooks in Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member has totally lost any shred of credibility that she has. I do not accept what she said in the preamble that was not supposed to be part of the question anyway, but she did say that we had made this admission. I have done no such thing. Parents ought not to be out fundraising for textbooks.

I am a parent, Madam Speaker. I believe in fundraising for things that are important for our kids; but for the essentials, that is supposed to be looked after by the funding formula and by the school divisions, and there is sufficient money there to do it.

So the honourable member has no credibility at all especially when she turns around and supports the budget that we brought forward recently that put 2.6 percent more into the budget for education than last year. Frankly, the honourable member simply has not got a clue on this point, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Fisher Branch Personal Care Home

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Recently, I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the new 30-bed Fisher Branch Personal Care Home. This was a very special event for the people of Fisher Branch because there was a great desire among the residents to have a personal care home in their community, and they took the initiative to turn this vision into a reality. With a population of just over 1,000 people, the community was able to raise \$400,000 towards the capital costs of the approximately \$4.2-million facility. The province committed about \$3.4 million, and the remainder of the funding came through a federal employment grant.

The new personal care home has three 10-bed units, each with independent activity and dining areas. This unique design will provide a home-like atmosphere and will help the staff to provide the best possible care to the residents. A total of some 26 new jobs are being created with the opening of this facility.

I would like to take this opportunity to again express my congratulations to the many volunteers in the community who worked very hard to ensure the building of this facility. I am sure that it will serve the people of Fisher Branch and area for many, many years to come. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I, too, on Thursday, June 3, had the honour of participating, along with the member for Gimli and the M.P., Mr. Hilstrom, at the grand opening of the 30-bed Fisher Branch Personal Care Home, and along with over 400 residents and people, many of whom have waited and worked for over 10 years to achieve this dream, to have this facility in place so elderly people could stay at home and be supported by their families and still receive the much-needed care and the service that this facility will be providing for many years to come.

There are many names that come to mind, and I, too, want to congratulate the efforts of many of those people who worked hard and volunteered, met with government over all these years so that the seniors in the Fisher Branch community area could have such a personal care home that was much, much needed, people such as Mr. Ray Dion, Mr. Fred Packulak, Mr. Morris Meilleur, Mr. Bert Vandersteen, all these people who brought the idea to fold over 10 years ago.

One other such person I want to commend is Mr. Tom Magnusson who chaired this board for many years, who fought diligently and worked very, very hard in seeing this dream come true. Unfortunately, Mr. Magnusson passed away a little over a year ago and was unable to be with us and see the reality that he worked so hard for.

I just want to say, Madam Speaker, this personal care home is unique and is the first of its kind in Manitoba as it was planned, designed and constructed using the chez nous concept, translated as our home. To all the residents, all the hard work in the community, I congratulate them on a job well done.

* (1430)

Dr. Ed Kenaschuk

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise before the House today to offer congratulations to Dr. Ed Kenaschuk on receiving a meritorious scientist award from Canada's Deputy Minister of Agriculture in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Canadian agriculture.

Dr. Kenaschuk has worked at the research station as a scientist in the Morden research station for the past 34 years, and during that time he has developed and released 50 new varieties of flax. Today, the majority of flax grown by farmers in Manitoba and across Canada is of varieties developed by Dr. Kenaschuk. This includes the Norland variety, which was released in 1982 and accounts for one-quarter of the flax grown in Manitoba, and the newer-released AC Emerson, which accounts for close to one-fifth of Manitoba's flax crop.

Dr. Kenaschuk's work with flax varieties has made an enormous and positive impact on agriculture in Canada and has contributed to the Morden research centre's international reputation of excellence in agriculture research. It also reminds us of the importance of supporting agricultural research initiatives here in Manitoba.

Once again, I would like to congratulate and commend Dr. Ed Kenaschuk on his contribution to Canadian agriculture. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask those members having little meetings if they could do so quietly either in the loge or outside the Chamber. I am having difficulty hearing the members with their members' statements.

Breast Cancer Screening Program

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, during the Question Period I raised the matter of the Breast Screening Program as it affected the women in the Westman area and the concerns that these women had with the particular operation of the program and the limitation to the ages of 50 to 69 years.

I received a letter signed by 80 women who live in various parts of Westman, and they believe that the discrimination that is now existing is totally unfair and that they believe that they should be able to go to the Breast Screening Program as it now exists in Brandon. They give some reasons for this. They want to be in a clinic that is relaxing and where they sit with women and not hospital patients. They want to be educated with the breast self-

examination video. They want to receive their results in the mail, and they want the excellent follow-up that is provided from this program. So what I am stating here are the views of these women who are primarily in their 40s.

So they have signed this letter, which I have tabled and made available to the minister, that all women over age 40 who require a screening mammogram should have their mammogram at the Manitoba Breast Screening clinic where it is combined with the clinical breast exam and that this limit, now 50 to 69 years of age, should be abolished and it be made available to these people.

So I put this on the record, and I would surely hope that the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) will review this matter. I have given him a copy of the letter. I have given him a copy of the signatures, and I trust, the sufficiency of the argument, especially the fact that the machine in Brandon hospital is only being used three days a week and 50 more women could be screened each week if they were permitted to utilize the Breast Screening Program. Thank you.

Ontario Election Results

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, on Thursday, June 3, 1999, the electorate of Ontario spoke, and with that voice they sent Premier Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservatives of Ontario back to Queen's Park with 59 seats for the PCs, 35 for the Liberals and nine for the NDP.

An Honourable Member: How many?

Mr. Sveinson: Nine. Premier Harris and his common-sense revolution won a resounding second mandate. According to The Globe and Mail, Premier Harris's success last Thursday was due to ordinary folks standing by Harris. It would appear that ordinary people want their government to reduce spending, lower taxes and create an atmosphere where the economy can flourish. Mr. Harris did all three and then some. While he had his detractors, in the end there was only one true measurement, election day. It is clear, Madam Speaker, that on election day the people of Ontario remembered the economic

turmoil caused by Bob Rae's former NDP government. Despite attempts to reinvent themselves and their party, Ontario's NDP failed to achieve even official party status.

Madam Speaker, my congratulations go out to Premier Harris on his and his party's victory. Standing tall in the face of ceaseless opposition, rhetoric is never easy. But with the people of Ontario firmly behind him, it may be somewhat easier during his second term in office. Congratulations to them. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committee Change

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the deputy opposition House leader and I are doing some work to see if we can reach an agreement to waive private members' hour. That may or may not happen today, and that is part of the negotiation of House business. I would ask if, at five o'clock, the Committee of Supply could be suspended to allow Madam Speaker to take the Chair to determine whether or not in fact there is leave at that time rather than end the committee. If there is not leave, then we will be back for private members' hour. If there is, then we will continue. It is just, I think, a much easier way to do it as discussions progress this afternoon.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to have the Speaker return to the Chair at five o'clock to determine indeed whether private members' hour will be waived at that time or not? [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural

Development (Mr. Derkach), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Most Gracious Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

* (1440)

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

LABOUR

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 Labour. When the committee last sat, it was considering item 11.2. Labour Programs (a) Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 115 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I want to go back for a few moments, if I might, dealing with the desktop computer issue. I looked at the numbers that the minister referenced with respect to the costs for this year. Last year we were told it was going to be \$250,000 a year, and this year we learn that the minister is talking about over \$320,000. So I would like to have an indication why there is a discrepancy between the numbers that were given to us in Estimates last year and what the minister is referencing this year.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): I can advise my honourable colleague that last year the figures that were circulated were best-estimate figures. There was no amortization issue yet computed or introduced. The correct figure this year for the desktop is \$299,000, which is an amortized cost, which I am told is an accurate cost now from the department. The \$21,000, which is an additional figure, is an amortization of the SAP, which is the accounting software which has been introduced into the department, which is something separate and distinct from the desktop. So the two figures are 299 and 21.

Mr. Reid: I did not quite understand. The 299—I missed the last comments; \$299,000 I think the minister is referencing there, perhaps he can go over what he just indicated, and the \$21,000 was for the software. The acronym SAP, I am not sure the meaning on that, so perhaps you can—

Mr. Radcliffe: The \$21,000 for the SAP is the systems application programs, which I am told is a technological accounting program which has been introduced into government departments so that information is inputted at the department level. There is still the overriding control from Finance, but it eliminates the necessity for preparing paper vouchers, batching them, having them entered and the somewhat cumbersome system that we experience at this point in time. It is a much more direct technological issue.

The desktop management initiative is amortized at \$299,000, and that is the cost for hardware. It is amortizing the cost of the hardware. This is fresh information which is now hard and specific information whereas last year the information that was given to my honourable colleague, I believe on the record I am told by the department, were best guesses or estimates of the proposal. Nothing at that point had been costed out. It has now been costed out.

Mr. Reid: Then I take it the \$299,000 or \$300,000 a year, that is the amortized cost over the period of the four years that the minister had referenced to me when we were in this committee last week.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for that information, that clarification. I want to switch back to the focus that we had here in this committee when last we sat on Thursday, dealing with the issue of minimum wage. We had just started our discussions at that point, and we did not conclude that particular topic as I wanted to raise it here again. The minister referenced that there was somewhat sensitivity on the part of the government with respect to wanting to strike a balance. I know he has used that phrase and so had his predecessor when the announcement was made with respect to the minimum wage at the beginning of this year or end of last year.

I want to go back to the report that the Minimum Wage Board that had been struck by the Ministry of Labour came back with a report and had referenced that the minimum wage should be increased, and it should be increased to over \$16 an hour. I believe that the minimum wage report, which I have a copy of here in front of me, indicates that if we were to keep pace with over the last 11 years, for example, since 1988, the minimum wage in the province of Manitoba would have to be \$6.19 an hour.

Now I guess the question that would come to mind from that, since the government has only increased the minimum wage and we are only at the \$6-an-hour point right now: would it not be fair and reasonable for the people that are working at such a low income level and having to eke out a living at that point to expect that the least that they should have as an expectation would be to maintain pace with the cost of living? The question is: why has the government opted not to at least maintain that particular level?

* (1450)

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, in response to my honourable colleague's suggestion, arising out of his analysis of the minimum wage report, suggesting that a more appropriate level would have been \$6.19 for a minimum wage, I believe he referenced at one point in his question or his preamble, or at least I heard the figure \$16 and I believe he meant \$6. So may the record show that, in fact, we are talking about \$6 and \$6.19.

With regard to addressing the issue of \$6, I would advise that, in fact, what this government did was look at the sister province of Saskatchewan, look at the market that we were competing for. We took into account a number of issues that impress or prevail upon this question, one of which is that many of the people who are involved in the minimum wage, who receive their earnings at the minimum wage, are people in the service industry who receive a significant earning by way of tip. There are a number of individuals involved who are students or people who are entry workers into the job market. I will repeat what I said last week, that if the bar is set at too high a level, then the economic impact will be to reduce the

number of positions that are available because employers will not be able to have the means. They only have a limited number of dollars which they can devote to this level of employment.

So we looked at the market available, what was being paid in Saskatchewan. We looked at an analysis across the country. We looked at the level of costs, at the cost of living, which I think has euphemistically been referred to as the Manitoba discount, and took this into account as well, because everyone knows very well that it is far cheaper to live in Winnipeg or to live in some of the other urban centres or even in rural areas of Manitoba, it is far cheaper to live here in Manitoba than it is say in the streets of Toronto. A lot of our fixed costs are significantly less. The issue of the general inflationary rate was taken into account. So all of these issues played a force or played a factor in the decision to come to \$6, and it was on a consideration of all of the issues, not just the inflationary engine of computing, doing the mathematical computation from the last time the minimum wage was adjusted and then moving that one forward, because that process suggests more of what my honourable colleague was referring to last week, of the fact that we should build in or legislate or mandate an automatic increase year by year. My response at that point was no, because government wants to have the discretionary factor, the discretionary authority to be able to control or speak to the issues of inflation in our economy.

Mr. Reid: If you want to speak to the inflationary pressures that are there, then one would think keeping up with the cost of living for our province would be the minimum point you would want to maintain. You do a market comparison between Manitoba and Toronto, which I think is an unfair comparison. There are many other centres, northwestern Ontario, for example, or Alberta, which has obviously a lower minimum wage and is not as interested in maintaining a minimum wage level like Manitoba. In fact, I think Alberta was even talking about scrapping the minimum wage there for a period of time. That may still be their position.

You talk about the reduction in positions, that employers have a pool of spare people just

kind of floating around a business and not doing any real productive work. That was the impression you are leaving with, if they are going to reduce positions. I do not know a business in this province that just keeps a pool of people there and that if the labour costs go up, then they just dump people out the door and lay them off. To me that is not a reality. I do not think businesses operate that way, and they just do not keep spare people around. For you to say that they are going to reduce positions, if they have customers to serve and they require X number of employees to do that, they are going to have X number of employees there regardless of what the minimum wage level is. Yes, it is going to be a factor in their decisions with respect to how they run their business, but I do not expect it will be a decision in how many employees they require realistically and efficiently to run their business operations. I would expect that they would be running very close to the line in that regard in the first case.

I have to say that with respect to the position Manitoba discount, I do not think it is realistic for us to compare Manitoba's cost with Toronto, for example, that is just one small market when compared to the overall country. We have the same situation in Vancouver. You could use that as an example, or Montreal, any of the large population centres where you have different influences.

Yes, perhaps our housing costs are somewhat cheaper than other jurisdictions; the larger jurisdictions like Toronto, that may be the case. When it comes to the overall costs of housing and other jurisdictions of Canada, I think we are probably somewhat competitive in that regard. So I am not sure why you made that decision with respect to not keeping up with the inflationary pressures in the province, but I would expect that that would be the point you would want to at least maintain. When you look back to the minimum wage report that came out earlier this year, two of the parties, the chair that the government chose to sit in on that advisory committee recommended the minimum wage be higher than the level that you have currently set, as did the labour component that the ministry also appointed to sit in on that advisory body.

The question that I have is: if you have two out of three partners at least recommending that

the minimum wage be set at a minimum, at a level that would keep up with the cost of living, why would you not accept that recommendation, essentially since you chose the parties to sit in on that advisory committee? You are discounting the opinions of the majority of that committee.

Mr. Radcliffe: First of all, I would like to respond to my honourable colleague's reference, I guess, to the averaging or the comparisons that I used. I would like to put on the record and share with my honourable colleague that in fact, as of June 1, 1999, Alberta's minimum wage was \$5.65, New Brunswick was \$5.50, Nova Scotia \$5.50, Prince Edward Island \$5.40, Newfoundland \$5.25. So those were all significantly lower than Manitoba. Saskatchewan is at \$6 and Manitoba is at \$6.

The other jurisdictions which are paying above Manitoba is Northwest Territories at \$6.50, Ontario at \$6.86, Quebec at \$6.90, B.C. at \$7.15 and the Yukon Territories at \$7.20. One of the points I am trying to make is that Manitoba tries to gear its economic decisions in relationship to where Manitoba rates in the economy. One can clearly see that the cost of doing business or the cost of supporting oneself in the Yukon Territories is far in excess of something that would happen down here in the south. I only chose the issue of Toronto to show that there are radically different costs of supporting oneself. There was an illustration to the points of the cost of living between Winnipeg and Toronto and not to be blindly accepting it.

The issue of the labour representative on the board and the chair on the board making recommendations, I believe, only goes to show that many of the individuals that are appointed to committees to advise government do come in. They are independent free thinkers, and they come in with their best knowledge that they have available. They advise government, but ultimately it is a political decision. It is not something that is blindly accepted.

There was a divergence of opinion, I believe, on the board, and so this also was something that this government weighed at the time when the decision was made. I can only point to the fact that we do not blindly follow

every scintilla and iota of advice that is given to government. We try to absorb it and be guided by it, and then come up with a rationale decision which makes sense, having in mind the broader picture, which I have tried to explain today on the record, of showing where Manitoba rates in the whole spectrum across Canada.

* (1500)

Manitoba tries not to be a leader. Manitoba tries to match its expenses and its environmental decisions or its economic decisions, I should say, in the context of where the majority of opinion seems to be going in Canada and matching other populations of a similar demographic and economic base. I can only point to our sister province to the west of us, which is governed by a party of a different philosophical persuasion than ours, which has chosen to adopt \$6 as a reasonable minimum wage.

Mr. Reid: Does the minister feel that an individual or a family living on \$12,480 a year is a reasonable level of income on which to survive?

Mr. Radcliffe: I cannot give an absolute yes or no answer to that, because it would have to depend upon the expenses that that individual or that group of people were experiencing. I can only recommend to my honourable colleague's attention a book that I happen to have read this winter entitled *The Millionaire Next Door*. If he would like, I can get the name of the publisher and the author on that. But the context of that was that you can have somebody who is earning \$90,000 and \$100,000 a year or even \$150,000 or \$200,000 that is living from pay cheque to pay cheque because of their style of consumption. You can get somebody who is living on a very modest income—and I agree, I do not for a moment decry the fact that \$12,480 is a very modest income. But the point is that somebody living on a very modest means can still save. They spend less than they earn, and their expectations are much lower than somebody at the other end of the economic spectrum.

So, to say in black-and-white terms that \$12,480 is or is not acceptable, I think you have to qualify that and look at the frame of reference in which that person is living, what their

expectations are, what the demands on their income are. For somebody who is retired, who has all their assets paid for, who has no children, who has no demands upon themselves, access to public programs, \$12,480 might be a reach. Somebody who does fit that context has no demands. Mr. Chair, \$12,480 might very well be very appropriate. In fact, I know individuals who do live on \$12,000 a year because a lot of their fixed costs are covered.

So you have to put that in context, and I think to ask the question simplistically with no frame of reference does not really bespeak a truthful answer, an honest answer. I think it has to be framed in the context of some other more individualistic description.

Mr. Reid: All right, I will give you that description. Do you think that an individual employable under the age of 65 years or the earliest possible retirement age which can vary in our workforce, sometimes down as low as 55, that an individual or a family, a sole-support individual should have to live at \$12,480 a year, knowing what our cost of living is in this province?

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, I think again I would challenge my honourable colleague's supposition—and I can only be guided by what I have found in the community of River Heights—but I would suggest to him that probably 90 percent to 95 percent of our working-age community today, both partners are out in the labour force working, and both are bringing in an income. I think the days of the single economic producer with a stay-at-home parent who raises the children and goes out and does charitable works is a thing of the past. That whole lifestyle has disappeared, partially because of ever-ascending and ever-increasing demands and lifestyle that we are taught, and that around us we want a high-end consuming lifestyle, that it is quite appropriate today for everybody to have a microwave oven and CD player and probably two cars in the garage and a lot of electronic toys, possibly a computer and a lot of software. So, no, you cannot do that lifestyle on \$12,480.

But, if you were living a very simplistic, reduced, minimalist lifestyle in a rural setting where you did not have any education demands

or that they were met solely by the state, that there was no emphasis on transportation, that you could produce a lot of your foodstuffs out of your own garden from your own sweat and toil—and I can only cite for my honourable colleague the example of a large group of people in Manitoba for whom I used to work as a solicitor, and that is the Hutterian Brethren. I would suggest that these people lived a very complete and very comfortable lifestyle on—

An Honourable Member: And so do monks.

Mr. Radcliffe: My honourable colleague says, "and so do monks," but I do not know the relevance of that response.

But the communal lifestyle of the congregationalist communities in our province—they live very frugally and yet very completely. There is never anybody who leaves their table without a full belly. In fact, if one goes calling at these communities, you often drive away with a full trunk of foodstuff. They have very adequate clothing. It is very plain and very simple, but nobody goes without their needs being met. Their housing is very comfortable and decent and clean and very, very adequate, I can advise. So, to arbitrarily peg somebody's living style, their dignity, their worth, their needs, at an economic level, an arbitrary economic level and numeric level, I would suggest, is not appropriate.

With regard to the minimum wage earners, I can shed some light on, some statistics on, that issue. In the last year, there were 16,900 people who earned the minimum wage or less in 1997. That is 3.9 percent of the total number of employees in the province of Manitoba. Mr. Chair, 68 percent of this class were 24 years or younger; 46 percent were students; and 58 percent were sons or daughters of the family head. That puts some context around the type of people we are talking about. One has to take into account the individuals who are involved in this.

* (1510)

Now I would not want my honourable colleague to think for a moment that I am minimizing the modestness of a \$12,400 figure.

It is modest. There is no doubt about that. I know that a lot of our students and a lot of our young people, as well as family heads who are earning close to or at the minimum wage, are hardworking, honest people who are struggling trying to pay their bills, but I would ask my honourable colleague to take into account some of the reference that I have tried to bring to this question.

Mr. Reid: Well, it is interesting to note that in the minimum wage report, the labour representatives recommended that the minimum wage be increased in two steps, first to \$6.15 per hour and then a year later in the year 2000 to \$6.90 per hour. The chairperson of the board, which the government chose, recommended that the minimum wage be increased to \$6.19 per hour and that further considerations be undertaken to increase the minimum wage to \$6.25 per hour in October of this year. Yet the business community recommended raising the minimum wage from \$5.40 an hour, in two steps, up to \$6 an hour. That was the position the government took, to increase it to \$6 an hour.

So I guess the question is: why did you choose the business community position in that regard and ignore the other two? It is very clear that there were recommendations that were somewhat comparable that the government could have chosen and at least achieved a semblance or an appearance of wanting to maintain the cost of living in that regard.

I guess the further question in that regard is: is the government giving any consideration to the other recommendation that was made by the chairperson that the exemption under The Employment Standards Act be reviewed with respect to coverage for the minimum wage?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am having a little difficulty with the information that my honourable colleague is bringing to the table, because my information of the recommendations of the Minimum Wage Board report, which was filed and completed in November of 1998, I believe, late 1998, was that the chair was recommending an increment to occur on the 1st of April at \$6 and a subsequent increment on the 1st of October at \$6.25. The employer representative was recommending \$5.65 on July 1 and \$5.90 on

December 1, 1999. The employee representative was recommending \$6.15 on July 1 and \$6.90 on July 1, 2000. [interjection] Oh, then I misheard my honourable colleague, because I thought he was saying that the chair was recommending \$6.19. I thought he must be meaning \$6.90.

But, in any event, that was the range that I received and that helped me to make a decision. There were in fact opinions that were all over the map on this, ranging from as low as \$5.65 by the employer representative to \$6.90 by the employee representative.

So, in fact, government chose, because we had a wide range of opinion here, a middle ground, which was \$6, increased effective, I believe, April 1, 1999. This was announced in January so that employers would have an opportunity to adapt their menus or their costing and bill this into account and prepare their economic basis.

With regard to employment standards and the exemptions, I believe that exemptions are granted to minimum wage earners or lower than minimum wage, to people who are working in sheltered workshops or who are in peculiar circumstances because they are intellectually challenged or handicapped. So this is done on an ad hoc or case-by-case basis in order that these people have the advantage of a job and the respect for a job and that they are in fact valued and respected in their workplaces.

I can share with my honourable colleague that I have had the opportunity to go to annual meetings of Sturgeon Creek Enterprises, which is an employment agency which takes handicapped people and puts them in mainstream employment situations. We heard a number of reports from a number of people in the workplaces as to how successful this has been. But in fact special economic circumstances are taken for people in that condition. Other than that, employment standards apply to all minimum wage individuals. I point to the regs on employment standards. It says that the employment standards do not apply to people who are in a training scheme which is approved jointly by either the provincial or federal government or by an authority from those governments. Other than that, or for agricultural individuals, employment standards do apply.

Mr. Reid: The minister referenced exemptions to the minimum wage for the province. Can you tell me how many exemptions have been approved by the department, and what were the criteria, the circumstances for those exemptions being approved and the applications?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that there are approximately 65 permits at this point in time. They are done on a case-by-case basis, and the criterion by which the wages are assessed is that a rehabilitation individual, somebody who has some degree of skill in this field from the Department of Family Services, considers the individual involved who is seeking to be employed and assesses their ability to perform the task which is being assigned and then assesses a rate of reward comparable to the ability of that individual to function. For example, if there were a job that normally commanded an \$8 wage or reward and the person could function at 50 percent of the normal capacity because of handicap, then that person would be paid \$4 an hour. I said there are 65 of these individuals. Yes, so that I believe covers the criteria and the number of cases at this point in time.

Mr. Reid: So then, if I understand correctly, the 65 exemptions that you have given to the minimum wage in this province are dealing strictly with Manitobans who have disabilities or are delayed in some way or unable to meet the full job requirements as a result of a disability. Am I correct in my interpretation of how those exemptions are applied?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that these exemptions do not apply to the sheltered workshop environment. They function on a totally different basis. The employment standards that we are discussing right now speak to Manitobans with disabilities. They are individuals functioning with mental handicaps, mental challenges. Approximately 40 percent of these individuals are found in the retail business or the hospitality business. The balance are in either personal care or light manufacturing. The only exemption is the exemption as to the minimum wage. All other rules governing the workplace apply to these individuals. So the only thing that is exempted is the rate of return.

Mr. Reid: Do you have an indication in your notes or information that you have, do most of these applications come from within the city of Winnipeg, or are they spread evenly throughout the province and the various communities? I am just looking for an indication here where a lot of these 65 applications may be effective. I know in my own community I think Palliser Furniture perhaps may be one of the operations that have people with disabilities working in there. I have seen and spoken with them in their worksites. I am trying to get an idea here of where these exemptions are occurring throughout the province.

*(1520)

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that in fact there is a 50-50 division between these exceptions being found inside the city of Winnipeg and outside of the city of Winnipeg. Of those individual exemptions that are found outside the city of Winnipeg, they are confined, for the most part, to urban centres because these are where the jobs are found for these individuals, i.e., Portage la Prairie, Brandon. I would not want to leave on the record any misapprehension that we are thinking that anything outside of the city of Winnipeg is rural. In fact, they are all in urban centres of one degree or another.

The permits used to be issued by the Minister of Labour. They are now, I am told, issued by the executive director for Employment Standards.

Mr. Reid: I am trying to get an understanding here too. I would hope in situations where there are exemptions that are applied for and granted, there would be some flexibility here. Is it left up to the employer in these cases where the exemptions are applicable to determine the level of wage, or is the individual who is fulfilling those job duties trapped at that income level, that minimum wage exemption level?

I am trying to get an idea here on whether or not they have to remain at that level. Or is it up to the discretion solely of the employer whether or not they move beyond that? Does anybody evaluate whether or not the individual perhaps is exceeding what the job requirements would be, in other words on a merit-based system to allow

them to progress at least up to the minimum wage level or perhaps beyond?

Mr. Radcliffe: I would direct my honourable colleague's attention to 13, paragraph 1 of the regs for minimum wage, which basically outlines the authority for what I have just explained of the evaluation that is done by the director.

I am told that Family Services does, on a periodic and intermittent basis, evaluate the individuals who are the subject of this inquiry. If there is a change in their capacity then this information is shared. So in response to my honourable colleague's question, are these individuals trapped, no, they are not trapped. Is there an evaluation? Yes. I am told that there is a database that Family Services has just introduced which is an improvement in order to electronically record these individuals and to share this information. We do not have any further information as to the frequency of this evaluation or any of the particulars as to how it is done. In fact, any further questions on that issue I think would be more properly found in examination of Family Services.

I guess what I did want to key off of was the verb "trapped" that my honourable colleague mentioned. In fact, I have had the opportunity to meet and discuss with a number of individuals who work in this sort of environment. They are very proud of the fact that they have these sort of jobs, that they have this life cycle. In fact, two doors away from me on the street where I live is a group home with a bunch of young men who were young boys when I moved onto the street with my children. They are Down's syndrome, they are FAS individuals.

I think of Gary, who is one of the lads, one of the young men today. He is very proud of the fact that he now is competent to take a bus, city transit. He goes to his workplace every day, and he comes and tells us about it. From his perspective, it is the doing and the dignity and the worth of living that lifestyle and being like everybody else as far as he can see in his eyes that makes him an important person. So it is not a question of the pejorative of being trapped at an economic level. These people are very proud of what they do.

On the other side of the scale, I had occasion when I have gone to the Sturgeon Creek Enterprises AGM of listening to the testimonials from Bison Transport, which I know is one enterprise here in the city of Winnipeg who does employ people with significant handicaps. These people were giving testimony to what happens to a workplace when you have somebody in the workplace of diminished intellectual capacity. They bring a cheeriness, they bring a commitment, they bring a sense of pride which often in our workplaces with the individuals that we relate to every day, many of our colleagues suffer from the vagaries of mood swings and depression and things like this which many of these people do not. These people are really cherished in their workplaces. I guess I just wanted to put on the record how important I see this as a facet of our employment opportunities in Manitoba.

* (1530)

Mr. Reid: It was not my intention to denigrate the contribution that individuals make both in terms of quality of lifestyle or their contributions to the work environment. I am just trying to get an understanding of whether or not the individuals that have exemptions applying directly to them have the ability to achieve a higher level of income. I mean, if their expectations are similar to what ours are in this room, they would want to improve their quality of life as well.

One of the ways to do that is to increase their level of income. If it gives them the opportunity to achieve that, I am trying to get an understanding of whether or not, when I use the term "trapped," it means that they are locked into that and that they have no room or growth potential as a result of this exemption in effect. That is what I am trying to determine here, whether or not they are locked into that and is it left solely to the discretion.

Now, the minister references Family Services and the new database that they have implemented to track. I would hope that the Family Services department would review this. I guess the next question that follows out of that is: are these exemptions that the Department of Labour grants to the minimum wage reviewed annually and do they have to be renewed annually?

Mr. Radcliffe: There is no annual reassessment at this point in time. The exemptions, once they are issued, are issued and they are open ended. I can tell my honourable colleague that there have been discussions between the Department of Labour and the Department of Family Services with the very point that my honourable colleague raises of reviewing these situations on an annual basis. Nothing specific has come of that yet, but this is a topic that has been raised and is under consideration.

The Department of Labour has done a general mailing to all 65 exemptions in the province setting out the specifics of information of the minimum wage to the employers. There have been several responses from employers seeking more information so that there is a line of communication that is open to the individual employers in the workplace on this issue, but the focus and the thrust of it is more from the Family Services side than it is from the Department of Labour side.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for that information. I hope that Family Services will conduct those reviews to make sure that things are handled in the appropriate fashion to which they were intended when the exemptions were granted. Are there other reasons or other exemptions that may be granted to the minimum wage as a result of actions of the department? Are there other criteria that are taken or used other than people that are displaying disabilities? I am trying to get an understanding of whether or not the exemptions are granted in other cases.

Mr. Radcliffe: These are the only exemptions that we have discussed.

Mr. Reid: Dealing with the minimum wage, does the minister see that the level of the minimum wage in the province affects the poverty level of the province?

Mr. Radcliffe: Again, I think that question raises issues. When we say poverty level of, you have to define what you mean by poverty. I do not want to sort of paint a rosy, glorious picture of love in a cottage and all that sort of stuff, but you can go into a home where people are again making a very low income. These are proud, proud people who are very self-sufficient and

very competent and very satisfied and very happy. Are they poor?

By standards of somebody living in Transcona who worked in the shops, who had a union environment, or somebody who came out of River Heights who is a professional and earned a professional income, maybe they are, but if you are an agricultural worker who lived by shooting a moose every fall or a deer every fall, who has a back garden, who share their community of goods, who lived a subsistence lifestyle and only went out and got cash when they needed to buy something, that came from some of the remoter regions of our province, are they poor? I do not think so. Would they be insulted or angered if you called them poor? Quite possibly.

Now, are we talking about somebody who is in the inner city, who is marginalized, who has no skills, who is a refugee from violence, who is feeling despair and hopelessness? Those people are poor in many cases, but can we equate that absolutely to minimum wage? I do not think so. I think that there are many, many other social issues, cultural issues, spiritual issues that play on that fact, and that it is too simplistic to just say, well, the minimum wage drives everybody to the bottom of the barrel. So I think that to ask that question or respond to that question, one has to look at the broader spectrum of human activity and human relationship.

Mr. Reid: I take it then you have statistical information here with respect to the number of Manitobans that are earning minimum wage, and I know you gave me some global numbers just a short time ago. Do you have a breakdown on, for example, the number of Manitoba women that are working at minimum wage jobs? Do you have the number of youth that are working at minimum wage jobs, people under the age of 25, and I say youth, to me that is youth. So I am trying to get an understanding here of the breakdown by numbers of Manitobans that would be in categories that you would have a breakdown for minimum wage jobs.

Mr. Radcliffe: Our best figures are 1997, and that was 3.9 percent of the employment workforce: 62 percent were female, 38 percent male, 71 percent are single, 68 percent were

under 24, 33 percent are between 17 and 19 years of age, 16 percent are between 15 and 16, 46 percent were students, 43 percent work full time, 57 percent work part time. I believe I said already that 58 percent were sons or daughters of a family head, 26 percent were the head of a family, and then we did discuss the breakdown of food services, retail, et cetera.

Now, here is an interesting point that I think bears out, touches on part of my previous answer. Forty-eight percent of minimum wage earners did not complete high school, 19 percent are high school grads, 18 percent have some post-secondary education, and 14 percent have completed post-secondary. Minimum wage earners worked on the average of 26.6 hours per week and earned an average of \$6,872 over the year. Those are the stats that we have on these sort of people.

Mr. Reid: You referenced I think earlier the total number of people working at minimum wage jobs in the province for your latest statistics which is '97, I think you said.

*(1540)

Mr. Radcliffe: '97. It is 16,900.

Mr. Reid: So we have a fair number of people, and I am looking here, one-quarter of the people working at minimum wage jobs are head of families, over one-quarter, and of those, 57 percent of those numbers are working part-time jobs at minimum wage. That is a fair number of families that have an impact on their family incomes. I would take it that 26 percent as head of family. I do not know if your statistics have this, whether or not these are single-parent families or not.

Mr. Radcliffe: All I can tell my honourable colleague is that 26 percent of the 16,900 people were the head of a family, and 71 percent of this class of people are single persons. So I think that statistically, although I am not good at computation of statistics, I am sure that a good percentage of these people would be single wage earners, would be heads of families that would be single parents, single individuals.

One of my employees has indicated, Mr. Chair, that in fact these figures, and quite

appropriately, deduce that 1 percent of the group of individuals of 16,900 would fall into the category which my honourable colleague is referencing. What we have done is 26 percent, or the head of family, which is roughly one-quarter, and 3.9 percent of the total number of employees or 4 percent. So a quarter of 4 percent is 1 percent and that is very rough figuring.

Mr. Reid: The other startling statistic that the minister referenced here is involving women: 62 percent of the 16,900 are women working at minimum wage jobs. The other issue is 71 percent of them are single. So if you go back to my original argument, living on jobs that are \$12,000 a year, the minister knows full well what it costs to rent an apartment complex here in the City of Winnipeg and the associated costs with respect to that. I use my own community which is an average residential community, middle income to a large degree. To survive as a single person your costs would be a little under a thousand dollars a month. If that is what you have got to live on, at \$12,000 a year I am not sure how these individuals, even as single people, are able to survive at that level. I know the minister references lifestyle and quality of life. I am still not comfortable that that argument holds much water, carries much weight with respect.

I guess it depends, as he says, where you live in the province, but if you can confine yourself where the majority of our population is, we have two-thirds of Manitobans living in the city of Winnipeg, and if you want to count the other major population centres of Thompson, Brandon, Flin Flon, Dauphin, Swan River, et cetera, not to mention our First Nation communities that are also very much underemployed and have horrendous unemployment levels, having visited many of them in this province and the conditions under which they live, I would think that there would be an expectation to want to take steps to assist with respect to the standard of living, and I see the minimum wage is being one of those ways that we could address those problems.

The other question that I have resulting from the minimum wage report is there were several other recommendations that were contained in

the report. For example, the business community wanted to have a limitation on the number of terms a person could sit on the minimum wage review board. They wanted to have some consideration given for those people that are working earning tips and also further consideration dealing with a training wage rate which would be substantially or somewhat less than the minimum wage level of the province. The chairperson has recommended pursuing the federal government for changes in the income tax act to allow for exemptions for individuals that are living at such low—his terms—poverty income levels. Also dealing with other issues, linking the minimum wage to the composite wage for the province or the consumer price index. Is the department or the ministry or the government making considerations to address any of these other issues that were contained within the minimum wage review board report that came to the minister earlier this year—or end of last year I should say?

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Radcliffe: In response to these other issues that were contained in the report, first of all addressing the issue of the number of times an individual can sit on the particular board, this goes to the general policy, I guess, of government appointing individuals to serve government. This particular board is now functus or complete and its job is over. So when there is a requirement for reconsideration of this topic, government will go and appoint a new board. Government tends to like to rotate the individuals that serve on all its boards and committees so that nobody gets stale, so there is no one particular point of view that is represented in perpetuity. My experience in dealing on a general basis is that people do sit for a term or two and then they move on. Depending on how often or how intensely they are called upon, the government tends to rotate them. I do not want to be deprecating in using them in terms of inventory, but there really is an inventory of knowledge and skill that is recycled through advice to government. Often individuals themselves will come to us and say, all right, I have served my term on this board, on this controversial or contentious issue, I now want something different, or I want another challenge

because I am not getting challenged enough. So there is a constant ebb and flow or flux of people. Again, government hesitates to handcuff itself or tie its hands to saying that one can only sit once or twice or mandate it, and we get into, I guess, the difference in political thought between what is flexible and what is crystallized, written down and engraved in stone. I guess that would be the difference, I would reflect, between a British constitution and an American constitution. By the time the American constitution evolved, everything was solidified in a code.

An Honourable Member: The right to bear arms.

Mr. Radcliffe: Ah, yes, indeed. My honourable colleague says the right to bear arms, and I would hesitate to say I prefer a nation who came into being by evolution and not revolution because if you are born in violence you tend to die in violence, but that is another reflection for another day.

In terms of board appointments, this is something that is flexible and is subject to the demands and needs of the moment from time to time as government sees fit. With regard to both tips and the training wage, I can tell my honourable colleague that these issues were both considered by government. The recommendation that we heard and listened to was that if we were to make a particular exception or class or stratification for people earning tips, No. 1, it might be challenged under the Charter as being discriminatory, and that was a warning that we received. But as well, we were creating an administrative nightmare for employers, and it would just be onerous, I guess was the best case.

* (1550)

With regard to the training wage, one of the fears that one runs into there is, and again I guess I cross over to the other side of the coin on this, saying, well, there might be some predation going on, that employers might say, well, employees are continually in a state of training. So therefore this can be used as an authorization or justification for not employing the actual fixed minimum wage and you get into trying to assess and measure what is training, what is full value. So rather than getting into complex

stratification, the thinking was to broad-brush it and make no exceptions for fear that we would be then employing people to go out to look at, to try and assess and measure cases, and to try and be fair to individuals, so instead we are saying the minimum wage is what the minimum wage is, and it is a broad-brush fix rather than levels and stratas and exceptions and complications.

Mr. Reid: So then there is no work underway and no policy planning within the department, the Ministry of Labour or the government to move on any of these other issues that have been identified and not resolved at this point with respect to the report that came out from the Minimum Wage Board last fall.

Mr. Radcliffe: I think that government is a composite of many, many individuals in policy, and it is always ebbing and flowing and flexing and changing. Is there anything on the order paper now coming out of policy management for adopting these recommendations? No, there is not. Is it something that could form the subject of a future consideration? Possibly. Will there be future changes to the minimum wage act? Yes. Is anything on the books right now? No, but it is something that is never discounted, and reports like this and recommendations like this are always taken seriously and are readdressed from time to time to see if in fact decisions that we made in 1998, are they still valid or should they be readdressed? And I always call it reviewing the bidding. One is perpetually going back and touching base and saying, all right, are the values and the principles on which I predicated a decision in 1998 still relevant in the community today or should I be readdressing it because there has been a shift or a change in what is our reality or our relationships or our values.

Mr. Reid: So there has been no policy direction given by the minister or his senior department staff to the department to undertake a review or a consideration then of these issues that are outstanding with respect to the latest Minimum Wage Board report?

Mr. Radcliffe: No is the quick answer. The report was considered in its entirety by cabinet, and government took it very seriously, looked at

it and came up with the conclusions it did mindfully, seriously and conscientiously, discounting none of the recommendations that were made. They were looked at, and if we chose not to follow some at this point in time, that was done conscientiously.

Mr. Reid: Can you tell me, because the statistics that you referenced a few moments ago, while they are disturbing in some of the content of someone looking at the number of people that are affected, I am wondering, can you tell me what the unemployment levels are in First Nations communities of the province? Are they taken into consideration when you are using the statistics that you referenced here today?

Mr. Radcliffe: I am told that, in fact, the Manitoba Department of Labour obtains its information, the source of its information, is Stats Canada, and this is a body or pool of information that is purchased from Stats Canada.

In fact, the individuals who reside on reserves, who are First Nations or treaty people, who reside there and stay there, are not computed in these figures. These people form part of the federal responsibility and are governed by the federal Department of Labour, so therefore do not figure in the statistics. If somebody leaves the reserve and moves to the city of Winnipeg or any other centre or, in fact, just basically leaves the reserve, then they fall into the Manitoba jurisdiction and are computed and contained in these figures.

So do I have any knowledge as to what the level of unemployment is on reserves? I have nothing first-hand. I can only share with my honourable colleague, and I am sure it is common knowledge, that I know it is to be very high. In many cases, especially on some of the northern reserves, and I had a window or picture to that when I was assisting the Minister of Family Services chairing a small committee that went around the province, taking testimony with regard to reform to the child welfare act, or The Child and Family Services Act as it was, and that gave me certainly a picture, in some cases a very bleak picture, of individuals in some of the more remote communities.

One thing that I just want to repeat on the record, because I think it really bears repetition

and is very significant, is the education levels of people at the minimum wage, and the fact that 48 percent of these individuals did not complete high school. I think that has got to send an incredibly important message to us as government, to my honourable colleague as a critic in opposition, to administrators, to all of us, that education has to be the key to freedom. I know our Premier says that there is no other social force that can change a group of people inside of a generation than that of education, so we see this, as a government, to being one of the primary engines to effect change so that it is not going out and mindlessly handing out handouts. It is, in fact, educating people so that they have the skill and ability themselves to help themselves which has got to be the final determinative factor which will improve our social lot.

* (1600)

Mr. Reid: In part I agree with the minister on the effects of not completing high school and being stuck in what many might call dead-end jobs with no room for advancement or progression in quality of life, based mostly or in large part upon level of income. I tried to raise this in the House with the Minister of Education in the past with respect to off-campus programs or post-secondary training and trying to make sure that those programs are available for upgrading of skills.

I have one of those programs in my own community functioning out of the high school in Transcona, Murdoch MacKay Collegiate with their off-campus program. That program I think provides crucial service to people that need and want to retrain, to give them the marketable skills. Yet portions of that program have been begging for provincial government assistance in the sense of continuation of the programs. We had many letters from employers utilizing skills from students or young people, not only them but others that come back for retraining, a variety of ages, that want and need to have people with those skills levels, but the Department of Education has not lent them the support necessary to allow them to continue. That particular off-campus program has been floundering. I would not want to see it dissolve and disappear because I think it provides a

useful support for not only the east end of Winnipeg, but also surrounding rural communities in Springfield, for example, where residents can come in and take advantage or use those facilities that are already paid for by taxpayers but are there and available if there was some guidance and support lent through the Department of Education. So I am making a soapbox statement here about that particular program. That is why I have raised it with respect to retraining, looking at the 48 percent who do not complete high school, that we want to make sure that they have opportunities, but also for the others that would require some upgrading as well.

With the respect to the issue of minimum wage, I will leave that for now, and I have another question with respect to out-of-province contractors. Perhaps if the minister wants, I will just hold off with my question for a moment, Mr. Chairperson, to allow him to attend to this piece of business.

I will leave the minimum wage issue behind, even though there are perhaps many more questions that could be asked. The most recent report that I think came out of—perhaps it is The Globe and Mail from last week, talking about the effects of a flexible workforce, in other words, flexible in the sense of having part-time jobs at lower wage levels for those who may be seeking full-time employment, I think is probably one of the issues that still needs to be dealt with.

Even though our unemployment stats that came out just recently on June 4 last week indicate that—the way they paint the picture at least, using the Statistics Canada data, there is perhaps still room that we need for us to give further consideration to those who are actually underemployed inside of our workforce. If you look at the numbers of people who are unemployed—I should say those who are perhaps employed in the workforce but not fully utilizing their time available for work and perhaps are seeking out full-time employment. So these statistics can be somewhat misleading. I think we should always take them with a grain of salt and look further or deeper behind the first-blush message that they are giving to us.

The other issue that I want to raise in this part, because it deals with policy, I have had

calls, and perhaps the minister's office has, with respect to out-of-province contractors. This has been a problem that has been lingering for some time. I had asked this question some time ago dealing with out-of-province contractors bringing in out-of-province labour. I am not sure what the government policy or the Department of Labour policy is with respect to this, but I will reference two cases. One is dealing with the pipeline work that is going through the province of Manitoba. There are several contractors that are involved in that work. Some of them are Alberta firms, and they have brought in their own labour, which does not assist Manitobans who are seeking out work and have the skill and qualification level to do that type of work. I know I have talked to the plumbers and pipe-fitters association with respect to skilled trades-people they have who are seeking work. There are people who are looking for work, yet we have out-of-province contractors coming in and bringing in labour with them to do work within Manitoba's borders. So I would like to know what the minister's and his government's policy is with respect to that issue.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, just before I move on as well, I wanted to respond on one last salvo I guess to my honourable colleague on something, an experience that I underwent this winter. I had occasion with my colleagues to do caucus and cabinet tours across southern Manitoba, and I was particularly struck with going into firms in the Steinbach area who were desperate for employees. These were light manufacturing, highly skilled workplace environments.

*(1610)

The Winkler area is another area which has a similar work ethic, where these employers said to us: ladies and gentlemen, we are desperate for people who want to learn, who want to move to our community. We will pay them \$12, \$15 an hour to learn in our community. We will take a high-school grad and make them into a lathe operator or to a computer-assisted technocrat on an assembly line. This is clean, inside assembly line work, high-end work, to my mind, from a labour perspective, at a good wage for those communities where you could live very comfortably. They said we cannot get people

who are willing to cross the glass boundaries of their own home communities and travel the 40, 50 miles to our community to live and work and raise their families in our community. Part of that I know is an insular parochial attitude that we all have to some extent, that if we cannot find work within our own communities, we tend to sit back and say woe is me, instead of following the opportunities. I think that many of our ancestors who settled this country followed the holy grail of opportunity.

So I know right now that there are areas of our communities, of our province, that would gladly snap up individuals who have a minimum of technical education at this point, or training or skill, but who are willing to learn and are willing to work and are willing to move. I guess those are big criteria.

I do not want to be deprecating of people who are suffering because too often we do blame the victim. Sometimes people who find themselves in straitened circumstances, either through lack of knowledge or lack of courage or lack of perspective, confine themselves to ghettos of poverty and despair, and part of the job of government is to overcome those feelings. I have often heard our Premier (Mr. Filmon) say that the biggest thing he can do is to help people change their attitudes of themselves, and all the rest flows once they gain confidence in their own innate, inherent ability.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Moving on to the issue of out-of-province contractors, Manitoba is a signatory to what is called the AIT, which is an interprovincial trade agreement which, among other things, speaks to the mobility of labour work forces, so that the provinces of Canada are not silos unto themselves, but in fact we are enjoined from discriminating against individuals who are employees from another province coming into Manitoba.

My honourable colleague references the issue of people working on the pipeline, and in particular I know that firms that have expertise in pipeline work often emanate from Alberta. But if we were to raise employment walls at the edge of Manitoba on the east and the west, then

there is that old adage that what you do unto others gets done unto you, that our employees would not be able to migrate to the oilfields of Alberta to get jobs.

I know many, many young students who have put themselves through university working as muckers and labourers in the oilfields. I know young people today still looking for opportunity and fast, big dollars head to Alberta. I think that the interprovincial trade agreement is well founded in saying that we are in fact one nation and that we ought not to throw up interprovincial boundaries against one another when this is our own people.

I have heard, and I do not know this first hand, but there was a pipeline that was doing work out in the southeast part of our province with a pipeline that was going through. They were being picketed, and there was labour action, labour violence on the lines where local labour unions were trying to prevent employees from out of province crossing these lines to do their properly appointed work. I find that abysmal; I find that disgraceful; I find that just obscene. This should not happen, and especially when we are signatories, as a government, that we are members of a larger community than just the parochial issues and interests of Manitoba.

So I hope I have made myself clear to my honourable colleague as to where I stand on this issue, that I think it is a very important issue and I think that we probably will end up disagreeing on this issue.

Mr. Reid: The minister talks about people who are parochial and perhaps not wanting to relocate. My experience is that when people work on pipeline projects, pipeline projects do not occur inside the city of Winnipeg to any significant degree, and the people that work in that chosen field are more than willing to relocate to where that work is. So that is not a factor in these particular situations. What I see happening in this situation is that—and there is a difference in the way I define what is occurring here, because where you move, as the minister references, to work in the oilfields of Alberta, the term "move" is what is occurring. People actually relocate their homes. They are no longer a resident of this province. They become

residents of that province. So, in other words, they are residents of Alberta, for example, in that case.

* (1620)

What I see occurring in this case is that there is labour coming into this province. There is not a relocation of the families. So they have not moved here and set up shop and raised the families and are contributing to our communities and to the well-being and the future prosperity of our province. What we are seeing is an export of the wage out of this province, back to the home province where the individual resides, so are net exporters of dollars in those circumstances.

If it was a case of the families relocating here and the company hiring people that relocate, fine. I mean we have an increase in our population for the province and they bring a skill level with them to our province. But the difference in these situations is that we are importing the people from other jurisdictions and we are exporting their wage dollars back to those provinces, and those tax dollars and those monies are spent inside of that province, not for the benefit of the province of Manitoba, but for the benefit of the provinces for which those families and those dollars go back to.

So I am trying to get an understanding here why you would have a policy that would allow for firms to bring in their employees when it in no way enhances the province of Manitoba in the sense of those dollars going out of the province. Yes, they may spend a few dollars on lunches and perhaps the odd pair of work boots or coveralls to do the job, but for the most part those monies are spent back to where the families are residing.

Mr. Radcliffe: I understand the concept. I have my honourable colleague's concept, but I just invite him for a moment to think what would happen to our country if we were to say that only people resident in Manitoba would be allowed to work here, and vice versa, that this would be reciprocal, so therefore no Manitoban could be employed outside the boundaries of Manitoba. Manitoba would then become a sovereign state, and I think we would condemn ourselves to a race to the bottom of the pail economically.

This would mean that no individual whose family reside in Manitoba could take a job in the Northwest Territories or up in the Arctic. I think of all the young people and I think of a number of wage earners, head of homes, who have jobs on the DEW line and in some of our far-northern communities. They go up for six months at a time to do a tour of duty, and that would not be allowed. I think of people who live in border communities, say The Pas or Russell or areas along our western boundary, who may very well earn their living in Saskatchewan. I think of people who live in West Hawk Lake and Falcon Beach, who could not travel to Kenora to earn a living or vice versa. I think that this type of thinking leads too quickly to a silo mentality, to a protectionist society.

Philosophically, I come from the other part of the spectrum where I applauded federally when we entered into a free trade agreement with America, where we opened up opportunity, and I think that a protectionist mentality leads to introspection, to ultimate failure of a community. I can only look from an historical basis to, say, medieval Spain. Medieval Spain sowed the beginnings of its decline and eventual collapse when it drove the Jews out of Spain, when it stamped out every foreign thought in that one must be a pure Christian as determined by some intellectuals living in some university. When you start down this path, that is where it leads to, and that leads ultimately to social collapse.

I think that in fact today we are members of a global village. We are members of something much larger than ourselves individually and socially from a selfish perspective. We are members of a planet and we happen to live in a province, but a country. I think that we have organized ourselves into a country where there must be freedom to move from province to province to seek your opportunities. If we restrict that, then we will be throwing up artificial borders and artificial limitations which will tend to destroy the human spirit, will diminish opportunity, will diminish economic prosperity.

In fact, we can only point right now, I can point to the prosperity that Manitoba has enjoyed since the passing of the free trade bill federally,

to what that has meant to us as a province with exports. I am sure that many colleagues on the opposite side of the House had many fears, and legitimate fears, of free trade opportunities—and I relate free trade to free employment— but they were groundless. They were in fact without any substantiation on and over provincial. Yes, there were adjustments, but on a pan-provincial basis their fears proved to be groundless, so I think to prohibit individuals who were working for companies, who were the most efficient, the lowest bidder doing work on a Pan-Canadian basis, would be iniquitous.

If we started to restrict movement of employment opportunity across the country, we would then very quickly move to restriction of goods, so that we would not be able to use goods that were not produced and manufactured in Manitoba or that the people in Ontario would not be able to consume finished goods that came from Manitoba, and then we would balkanize our whole state. I would predict that would be the demise of the Canadian entity as we know and treasure and enjoy it today. I think what my honourable colleague touches on is a serious philosophical issue, and I see it as probably one of the definitive differences between my colleagues and my honourable colleagues, associates, who form opposition to date, because we hold this principle very importantly, very dearly. In fact, we have entered into an inter-provincial treaty which goes to the root of our being. So I think he has touched on something that is fundamentally a wedge issue between us.

Mr. Reid: I do not disagree with that last part of your statement with respect to philosophical differences. I am sure we are all in this room, because we want to do, hopefully, the right and appropriate thing to try to build our province and make it the place that we all want to live in, and we want our children to stay here and live and to work and to build our province as well. I am trying to get an understanding here of your philosophy and ask the question: how does this help build Manitoba, if we have labour coming to the province of Manitoba to work on a project solely within the borders of our province, to have people who are unemployed not working in the very field of expertise required to do that type of work, to do that construction work, and to have the tax dollars that would normally be

generated as a result of the employment on those projects leave our province to go to another jurisdiction to help them build their province? How does that help the individual jurisdictions? How do we build our province when those tax dollars leave here and when the people are unemployed and seeking work?

Mr. Radcliffe: First of all, I guess, I would remind my honourable colleague, and I am sure he is very aware of it, that 5.1 percent of Manitobans are currently unemployed right now. We are enjoying one of the busiest periods of our collective experience in our history.

An Honourable Member: . . . First Nations, again.

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, excluding First Nations, of course. This high level of activity has come into being not because we just rolled off the last load of kumquats. It was done as a result of deliberate, concise, thoughtful policy, and part of that policy is that we want to encourage people to move to Manitoba to do business, but that we are members of a nation. There is something larger than Manitoba. I would remind my honourable colleague that, when we were involved in the debate over the Headingley water issue, which is a contentious issue, and sewage in Headingley, I was astounded at people who said that residents of Headingley ought not to have clean water or residents of Headingley ought not to have sanitary sewers.

To me, that is incomprehensible. Likewise, I think if somebody can perform a function and is prepared to follow a job, we allow them in this country to go from province to province to follow their employment. If we had stock-brokers, who were limited to the Winnipeg Stock Exchange, because they would not be allowed to do trades on the Toronto Stock Exchange or the Montreal Stock Exchange or the Calgary Stock Exchange, what would that do to the investment industry here in Manitoba? What would it do to say that you ought not to write an insurance policy unless an insurance company was founded and wholly contained within the province of Manitoba?

You can extrapolate that simile right on to the horizon, and I am sure my honourable

colleague would say, well, that is ridiculous. You cannot do that, that the source of capital in this country for the large part is founded in Toronto. A lot of our economic exchange happens in Montreal or Calgary or Vancouver, and, in order to enjoy the benefits of finance, the opportunity for employment, we have to look beyond our own borders. If we restrict people coming in, then we, too, will be restricted going out, and then, as I say, we condemn ourselves to an insular group of people who have nothing to feed on but our own despair. I do not think that is something my honourable colleague would want or advocate for a moment, because I truly do believe that my honourable colleague, like me, shares a vision that we want the best for the people of Manitoba, but our means of getting to that conclusion is where we radically differ. This is one of the touchstone points on which we radically differ.

* (1630)

I believe that one of the major reasons why Manitoba today enjoys the prosperity it does, which is far and above even the levels of employment and productivity that are going on in other parts of the country, is as a result of the cosmopolitan employment issues, employment decisions which we have made here and the economic environment that we have created for people to do business here in Manitoba. This one issue is related to that whole fabric, so that we are saying we are open to do business here in Manitoba to all comers. Whether a corporation is headofficed in Chicago or Toronto or Bismarck or Winnipeg, we are happy if they are doing business here in Winnipeg or in Manitoba and bringing the spin-off prosperity.

Now, one of the things that I think that my honourable colleague is probably very aware, that the Manitoba government does have employment policies when we are dealing in government contracts, say, with Manitoba Hydro, when we are dealing in the North, and we want to introduce a level of employment in the North. So we will make it a government policy that hiring, if it exists, if it is possible, labour or skilled artisans or journeymen or tradespeople be employed given first opportunity out of the North when those are our tax dollars going out. I do not think my honourable

colleague is referring to that issue, what they call legitimate objects. I think he is referring more to the Pan-Canadian corporations who are laying pipelines or doing business right across the country. That is what he is advocating, that they should dismiss all their employees or hold all their employees at the Saskatchewan border and hire only Manitobans, then when the Manitoba pool is exhausted, then maybe resort to other people. I would say that that is an artificial, an arcane and unreasonable way to take industry and economics in Manitoba.

Mr. Reid: There are several points, Mr. Chairperson. The minister referenced the Headingley sewer and water program. I disagree with his analysis of what the public was saying. I know I have talked to people in my community. In fact, I did a survey on it. They were not saying do not provide them sewer and water and that they are not entitled to that. I think what they were saying is if I have to pay for the rate that the residents do for sewer and water program, we want to make sure that there were others who are coming on stream with that who have decided they no longer want to be part of Winnipeg, why should they then be entitled to a service that is paid for by residents of the city of Winnipeg and was provided for that benefit for which those who chose in Headingley to withdraw made a conscious decision? I think that was what the public at least in my community was telling me. It was not that they do not deserve to have sewer and water programs, but it was the method in which they are no longer part of the larger well-being, in other words, the city of Winnipeg.

With respect to the employment, maybe I should ask this in the form of a question. No doubt this issue has been brought to the attention of the department dealing with outside firms coming into the province of Manitoba, in particular in this case pipeline employers or pipeline contractors. Are they 100 percent out-of-province employees on each of those firms?

Mr. Radcliffe: In response to my honourable colleague's question I can say, to our information, our best available information, it is not a hundred percent employment by firms out of province. If there are construction jobs, if there are jobs where there are individuals available in our community, there is a mix of employment,

and we have been told that supervisory, high-level management jobs are coming in from out of province, in this particular case with the pipeline, Alberta. Often economics dictates that if there are individuals who are available here in Manitoba, it is cheaper and more efficient to hire an individual here to do some functions and some work rather than importing a worker from Alberta where one has to be responsible for housing and feeding and all the other attendant supports that would go with importing work gangs from out of province.

Another point that I think bears on the issue for discussion as well is that local Manitoba legislation applies to individuals working in Manitoba if they are covered by our legislation, and that is a bit of double-talk, but to say for example the construction wages industry, those individuals, if they are in the construction industry, fall under the aegis of our legislation. So it is a mixed bag. What are the percentages? I do not know. Do we have any way of knowing that? No. It is not a hundred percent appointment from out of province. There is some cross-pollination. To what levels or extent, I cannot say, and we have no way of knowing or discerning that.

I guess, my concern on this issue is that one cannot legislate and say specifically pipeline workers cannot be portable across the country, but if we were to generically say labour cannot be portable across the country, what about the running trades in railways? What about airline people who deal in transportation? There are a lot of jobs that are, by their very nature, Pan-Canadian.

An Honourable Member: Your change point is at the border.

Mr. Radcliffe: That is right. My honourable colleague says that we would have change points at the border. That would remind me of sort of those old grainy late movies of sort of prewar Europe where all the carriages were changed at the border as one was rushing from Poland to Russia and all those sort of things. I know my honourable colleague is not recommending that in any seriousness for a moment, but I think that today our vision is a bigger vision than just our provincial issue. That is why Canada is the

second-best or the best place to live as voted by the United Nations. That is one of the reasons why people want to immigrate to Canada.

One of the points that I guess my honourable colleague was touching on earlier was the workforce in Manitoba and the cherishing and the encouragement of the workforce in Manitoba, and that is something I do believe in. I think that our government encourages immigration of workforce to Manitoba. If we were to restrict the purity of our workforce only to Manitobans, then it is a very slippery slope to saying, ah, well, then you must be people who were born in Manitoba or you were people who belong to an identifiable group in Manitoba. I do not think we want to go there, and that is not what we are saying. This interprovincial trade treaty speaks to a wider picture.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, just picking up on what the minister says and following along his line of thinking with respect to his party and his philosophy on out-of-province labour coming in and occupying or filling the jobs inside of this province, he used the term looking "beyond our own borders" and having "a bigger vision." Does that bigger vision and looking beyond our own borders also include going beyond the borders of Canada and perhaps allowing labour from the United States to fill the jobs within our jurisdiction?

* (1640)

Mr. Radcliffe: I do not think that, at this point in time, save migratory agriculture workers, who do, I know, come to Manitoba for specific purposes at specific times—again, there, you are looking at a very small window and a very specifically trained group of people who work very intensively for a short time, whether it is picking peas or beans, or some very particular issue.

An Honourable Member: Cabbage and rutabagas.

Mr. Radcliffe: Cabbage, rutabagas, yes. You know, that is a niche issue. I do not know, I guess in an ideal world, I would like to think that my children could get a job in America if there was an opportunity that opened itself.

I can tell my honourable colleague that, when I was born, my father was a British subject, so I am entitled to a British passport, which I took out so that my son, when he was living in England and he will be there in a couple of weeks to follow his studies, could have the opportunity to get a job as the son of a British passport holder so that there would be a wider opportunity for him.

I regret what we as mankind throw up as artificial boundaries between one another. I like to think that I am just as good as somebody from Borneo or from Indonesia or Japan or wherever, France, and that we are all human beings that should have equal opportunity. To restrict people from earning a living or living their fulfilment of their life span, I think, is regrettable. Now, is that possible within the confines of our national state today? Probably I am being idealistic, and probably it will be a long time before that happens, but on an ideal level, I guess I am saying I would like to see that in the ultimate, in the fullness of time.

Does that mean that I want Manitobans or Winnipeggers walking the unemployment lines? Absolutely not. I want everybody living to the fullness of their destiny.

Mr. Reid: Well, the minister referenced earlier artificial boundaries, and it does not support the concept. The 49th Parallel is an artificial boundary. So in the sense of using your philosophy about allowing for the migration of workers and having them come in and fill jobs, what is to prevent, outside of the existing perhaps restrictions on treaties which are also artificial and made between governments of both countries, in the future, following along your philosophy and line of thinking, American labour from coming into Canada and into our province in particular to do those jobs versus other Canadians from other provinces coming into Manitoba to do those works? Do you believe in the bigger picture of allowing for the migration of labour from any jurisdiction to come into Manitoba to do those jobs?

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, Mr. Chairman, I am the son of an immigrant. My dad walked into this country in about 1923 or '24. Actually he rode in on a train coming up from Minneapolis. He

had \$7 in his pocket and he was a British subject. He was a British sailor who got lost, who was a long way from his boat. He hit Winnipeg and he got himself a job in the Grain Exchange. He was good with mathematics and he was a trader. He came from the outside. He was a foreigner. He was not born in Manitoba. He remained a British subject because that was important to him. But he got a job here in Winnipeg; he settled here. He went home during the war to see his people as an artillery officer, but he died here.

An Honourable Member: He moved here.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, and my honourable colleague says and "he moved here." But, if we were to say we are going to object to people coming from the outside and working here, then we would cut off people like Leslie Radcliffe. We would say, I am sorry, you are not welcome, the borders are closed to people like you, and we are only going to look inwards. I am saying that is wrong. I am saying that I also have faith and I am confident in the ability of our workforce, the skill of our workforce, the aggressiveness of our workforce to flourish in any competitive community. I think we are showing that day after day, month after month, year after year in all the arenas in which Manitobans are functioning. I do not think that we need to take a backseat to anybody. We are educated here in Manitoba, we are skilled, we are motivated, we have a wonderful work ethic here, and we continue to show that.

To say if we opened our borders interprovincially, are people at risk, no, of course not, because our people are good, they are skilled, they are resourceful, and they are winners. So I have no fear but that they will prosper. What we were touching on a moment ago was a little philosophical reflection of an ideal world. As I said in part of my answer, I do not think in yours and my lifetime we will go there, but I think it is an ideal to look at.

Mr. Reid: Well, then I understand what the minister is saying with respect to the freedom or mobility of labour to go wherever and employers to take that labour wherever within our Canadian jurisdiction. I am not saying that I agree with what he is saying, but that is his position. That

is why I asked the question about the bigger picture. If it is with respect to labour mobility and the rights of employers in that regard for Canada, would the same also apply to the ability of American employers bringing labour into this country to bid on contracts, to bring the labour here, or Canadian employers bringing in American labour to work on contracts here and employment projects here while we have Manitobans?

I know there are some on the list for the plumbers and pipefitters union that are skilled and can do that work and yet they are not being employed here in projects that are solely within the borders of Manitoba. So I raise that for you. I know that the issue has perhaps been dealt with by the department before. There has to be, I think, a better way devised to make sure that our Manitobans are in a position of being able to be fully utilized within our province.

I do not know if there is any room in the agreement. I think you said the AIT was the agreement that allows or the agreement between the provinces. I am not sure what the acronym stands for again, but perhaps you can explain that to me and also explain, if we have the ability to do preferential hiring for northern hiring, for example for the Hydro projects, for Conawapa, should that become a reality in the near future. Does this AIT preclude or prevent us from having northern hiring preferences, or hiring preferences for Manitobans versus contractors who may bid on that work, may be successful in achieving the contract and being able to bring in their own labour? Why are we able to do it for one component of our community's economy but we cannot do it for other components? I do not understand the distinction between the two.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, the AIT is in fact an agreement on interprovincial trade. That is the acronym. The agreement speaks to legitimate objectives, and states very specifically, I am told—I have not had the advantage of reading the agreement—that individuals who are disadvantaged on an employment basis by virtue of location can receive preferential first hiring, first opportunity for hiring. So that translates into first-level opportunity, I guess, an advantage for some of our First Nations people who are living in the North.

However, the agreement then goes on to speak specifically that we cannot discriminate against interprovincial workforce, that a Canadian is a Canadian, first and foremost, and that there are no boundaries on this basis, save and except as is specifically set out. So that, in response, this has been specifically designated for social purposes, for purposes of helping individuals who are functioning under a disadvantage, but that our general labour force is not disadvantaged, that our labour force in Manitoba in fact is highly employed, well employed. In fact, we are experiencing one of the best employment levels right now that we have ever had in our recent history.

* (1650)

It would run counter, I would suggest, to the charter of human rights that we have signed, that we declared to be a rule of behaviour amongst all of us as Canadians. This agreement speaks to a freedom of trade between provinces, which I have touched on in the area of finance and transportation. There are a whole myriad of other issues where there ought not to be barriers or trade tariffs between provinces. That in fact was one of the fundamental reasons why Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritimes came together in the first place was to share and to become part of a larger whole, rather than to be isolated and independent British colonies. So that really is a philosophy that is rooted in our history, that goes right back to the beginning of the formation of our country in 1840 and then on into 1867.

Mr. Reid: I knew you should have paid more attention in those history classes.

Mr. Radcliffe: My history professor used to say if you do not understand history, you are cursed to repeat it.

Mr. Reid: For the minister's information, I did reasonably well in history. I will let my academic achievement stand for itself.

So if we proceed with Conawapa as an example, a project, what restrictions are there, or is there anything that prevents this government, any future successive governments, from having a Manitoba-first hiring preference, or are we

restricted solely by nature of that agreement, the AIT, to employing First Nations people or underemployed communities or cultures as part of that agreement? In other words, does it preclude our Manitoba government from employing tradespeople who live in Brandon or in Dauphin, should we start a project like that?

I am trying to get an idea here, and I do not know if you have a briefing note or an executive summary on the agreement that can provide us with some guidance or some clarification or understanding about how this agreement functions. I am trying to educate myself in the process. The minister says he is not fully aware of it, so perhaps both of us can learn in the process.

Mr. Radcliffe: I believe that Chapter 7 of the AIT, or agreement on interprovincial trade, speaks to the mobility of workforce. More specifically, I had a vision flash into my mind right now. I have had the opportunity to go to Whistler a couple of times to go skiing, and there are a lot of young people there from Newfoundland. They have left Newfoundland because of a lack of opportunity because the fisheries have closed, and these are young, single people. They are making their way to a hot spot in the country which right now is Whistler and Blackcomb, and they are lifties and they are waiters and they are all sorts of individuals. There are probably many of them living on a hot bunk system, if one gets out of the bed as another gets in. Have they established families and built little houses in a row with picket fences? Absolutely not. Are they a migratory workforce? Probably. If you asked them to examine their souls, would they love to go home to The Rock? Yes. Are they there for a short time? Probably. But should we restrict that? No, I do not think so.

With regard to the agreement on interprovincial trade, the agreement speaks to legitimate objectives, and in fact the Manitoba government has the opportunity on a project such as Conawapa, which we are talking about, to say to the employer we want X percentage of the workforce in a particular component to be given the first opportunity to hire locally, and with that there would be a training facility as well so that we could take folks who maybe have

Grade 12, maybe do not have Grade 12, maybe are literate. I would presume they would have to have some competence, but there would be an opportunity for them to be trained so that they then could join the project and then have a wider opportunity.

This speaks, I guess, to one of our goals that we were discussing earlier of the advantages of education, so that it would bring education to these people as well who are territorially economically disadvantaged. Then the call would go out to all the trades right across the country. We would start probably here first in Winnipeg to the trade halls where there would be a call for plumbers or welders or pipefitters or whoever we needed, and it would be on a first-come, first-serve basis. Likely there would be uptake here pretty quickly before the message would get out to people across the country.

But I think that it is a very slippery slope to travel down, as I have admonished before, to say, well, it only has to be Manitobans and Manitobans who establish a home here or have roots here. Then you are really getting into some imponderables that work against being a Canadian.

Mr. Reid: I am not sure if you have a briefing note on this or you have an executive summary. Perhaps you can advise, and if you do, perhaps I can read up on it and educate myself to what is in the agreement. I am inquiring as whether or not that is available or not.

Mr. Radcliffe: I advise my honourable colleague that in fact we do not have at this time a briefing note or executive summary, but we can create one very quickly. We have copies of the agreement and I am sure it comes by the pound, but we can give my honourable colleague an overview. I would in fact enjoy an overview of the agreement as well, so we can produce that so we can each get a grip on it.

Mr. Reid: That would be fine. I know it will give the staff the chance to do something on the weekend when they prepare this and go through this extensive document, so I look forward to that.

Mr. Radcliffe: The assistant deputy minister has this document at this fingertips and can

recite it from memory, so it will be no problem for him to engender such a document.

Mr. Reid: I will look forward to receiving that whenever it is available. I mean it is not a pressing issue at this time, but when we have the opportunity, sometime in the next couple of months perhaps will be more appropriate.

Questions regarding issues surrounding vacancies and secondments, and I know in past years I have asked for that by individual subdepartments, but perhaps if you have that information available for the overall department and a breakdown of that, I would appreciate receiving that information, and also if you have vacancies, if there is some information with respect to posting a bulletin for those for filling up those jobs, what your plans are, and also a question dealing with LMRC, Labour Management Review Committee and when that committee has met and recommendations perhaps that have come to the department and the minister, if he can share that information with us.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, very quickly.

Mr. Radcliffe: Very quickly. This will not be quick.

Mr. Reid: You can bring it back tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

ENVIRONMENT

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 Environment. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 31.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (I) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 62 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Last Thursday we were just at the very end of our discussion. I

raised the issue of the potential diversion of Devils Lake into our watershed, and the minister was answering the question but did not have enough time to complete it, I believe. Maybe she could just continue with that now.

Mr. David Faurschou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): I thank my colleague for being patient because we are a few minutes late starting, and I appreciate him taking the time for us to settle some things we were working on.

In answer to his question, I started to indicate when we closed off last time we do not want to see those waters infiltrating the Red River waters because there is a possibility they could be bringing with them things in the water that we do not want to see in the Red River water. So, to that end, we are working with authorities at all levels, from officials through to the political levels internationally and nationally. The federal government in Canada has taken the same position that we have taken, and so their support is very much appreciated. We are working to ensure that we do not have those waters infiltrating our waters or waters coming into Manitoba through the Red River from Devils Lake.

Mr. Dewar: Do you know if the Premier has raised this issue with the governor of North Dakota or South Dakota, as the case may be?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, he has raised it, and they have discussed it.

Mr. Dewar: Just on another issue. I heard just over the lunch hour, just a sketchy media report, regarding a pesticide spill in Winnipeg and understand that three litres of this pesticide was spilled out of, I guess, a container of 10 litres. Again, it was just sketchy in the media, and maybe you can update us today and, as well, reassure Manitobans that both the safety of those workers who work in this plant and the environment in the immediate area of the spill is not compromised at all.

* (1500)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am not overly familiar with the incident, but my staff has informed me that there was a spill, indeed, over this weekend at Day & Ross, which is a— [interjection] This morning, was it, I am sorry. We have emergency spill regulations under The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act, and they provide very strict requirements for handling pesticides and other dangerous goods. We will be able to provide the member with more full details later this afternoon as information comes in. We did have our responder team out, I understand, right away as soon as we were notified, to comply with the regulations that are spelled out for spills of this nature.

So if the member would like, we can bring back additional information as the day goes on, and with his permission we will just interject when the information comes and provide it when it arrives, if that is all right. Okay.

Mr. Dewar: I thank the minister for that, and I look forward to her providing us with that detail.

I will talk a bit about recycling initiatives and so on. I know last year the government announced a program to help remove some used oil from the waste stream or recycle it and treat it. Can you provide us with an update as to how that program is succeeding? I hope it is succeeding so far.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: We have, in terms of the waste oil program, facts and figures. In 1998, we collected 10.9 million litres of used oil, which is up significantly from the 6.3 million litres in 1997. So it is quite a jump. The used oil filters collected in 1998 were 1 million, up from an estimated 200,000 in 1997. The used oil containers collected in 1998, we collected 90,000 kilograms, and there was really nothing to speak of in 1997. It was negligible. Currently there are 17 ecocentres and three private depots operating, up from about six approved depots in 1998, and four new centres are in the approval stages. We have discussions underway, well advanced actually, in Portage and Brandon for ecocentres there. On the used oil, that is the data that I have here on the used oil program.

Mr. Dewar: In terms of the collection depots, how many are there now in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: There are 17 ecocentres and three private depots, and that is compared to six that we had last year, so six approved last year and about 20 this year.

Mr. Dewar: As members know, when you purchase oil or you purchase an oil filter, there is a levy attached to fund the program, similar to the Product Stewardship Program. Can the minister indicate the amount of revenue generated by that and how that revenue is being used?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is around \$2.5 million, that is, the revenue that comes in to run those now about 20 depots and, as I say, two under discussion for Brandon and Portage. I have the 1990 annual report called Making Every Drop Count from the Manitoba Association for Resource Recovery Corporation. I would be pleased to table that for the member's use. I think I just have the one copy here right now, but I could get other copies. If you would like, I could leave this for you. I am supposed to, every time I table something, table three others. So do we have extras around that we could get?

Mr. Chairperson: Just three in total you have to table.

Mrs. McIntosh: We will table that then for the member's benefit, but I would be pleased to answer any other questions he has right now.

Mr. Dewar: The minister indicated there is the receipt of about \$2.5 million in revenue. How much of that is used to fund the program?

Mrs. McIntosh: Last year they spent just under \$2 million, so it leaves about \$500,000. To be exact, the revenue coming in was \$2,434,953. The expenses were \$1,856,853. I rounded them off in my answers, but those are the specifics.

Mr. Dewar: Well, what is the program's plan to use that additional revenue? Is it to be set aside in case of problems in the years to come, or are there specific designs on that extra revenue?

Mrs. McIntosh: They submit a three-year plan to my office, to the minister, which is approved

by the minister. It is expected that, as the years progress, expenses and revenues will become fairly equal, that they will balance each other out. In the first few years of the program, it is likely that you might find a difference on one side of the ledger from the other as they get going. Experience and increased use should see these two lines balance out so there will not be such a difference. That is what we expect to see within the next year or two.

Mr. Dewar: The oil is collected in these different collection depots. How is that then treated? Is there a company that has contracted out to do that? If so, where is it done?

* (1510)

Mrs. McIntosh: In answer to your question, the collectors of the oil are paid. That would be like the ecocentres or other collectors that collect the oil and demonstrate that they have an approved end use for the product, that is, an end use that is approved of by the department. Then that is also paid for. You will see a variety of suitable end uses that are approved and currently being utilized. There will maybe be new ones introduced as people begin to study how used oil can be effectively recycled and disposed of in ways that make it useful as opposed to harmful. So those are the two places money goes.

The payment goes to the collector. It is one single payment that goes to the collector, but those are the two. They are to be collecting and have an approved end use for the material that they collect.

Mr. Dewar: The City of Selkirk, they have a collection depot, which is basically a large drum which meets the environmental standards. So the City of Selkirk then can if they choose use that oil in a responsible way within the community, or can they sell that oil to a company that would then recover and reuse that oil? Those are the kinds of questions I am interested in having an answer to.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes to both your questions. There are many ways that that used oil can be properly utilized and the department will approve the end use, what they are going to do with it, and then give the collector money that

can then be used to do whatever they need to do with the oil to make it suitable for that use. Then they can distribute it however is deemed most feasible and reasonable.

Mr. Dewar: Then they are paid some type of a contribution initially as well. So they are paid to collect it and then if they are able to recover some revenue from, say, the sale of it, they can use that or keep that. I guess the program has been in operation now for about a year. How are communities, how are these collection depots doing financially?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we do not have access to the communities', municipalities', profits or revenues on this. What we can tell you is that they report back that they are very pleased with the program, and they feel it is working positively. We see the end figures on the amount of used oil collected and properly dispersed or dispersed in an environmentally friendly way, which is our concern.

I am sorry, I do not have the answer to the question as to how the municipality is doing except to say that they have given us positive feedback, that they feel it is working well for them—whatever they mean by that. We know the oil is being treated properly, which is what our concern is.

Mr. Dewar: So the oil is recovered. Now, is the oil, the filter, is that recovered? As well, the metal container, is that as well recovered?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, it is. Just to add a little bit in terms of the uses of the oil, some is recycled, some is re-refined, and some is burned. Those are the three main categories but, yes, to your answer on the filters.

Mr. Dewar: Is there is a government representative on the board of this program? If so, who is that individual?

Mrs. McIntosh: There is no government representative on that board.

Mr. Dewar: Is there a representative from your department on that board?

Mrs. McIntosh: The board itself is a private board set up by industry. We do not have a

representative on it, but we do have a liaison with the board through the department. The department liases with the general manager and the working of the program through the board but not as a member of the board. The liaison is there, but we are not board members. We are not voting members.

Mr. Dewar: Can the minister tell us what exactly is the levy that is placed upon a container of oil, say, a litre of oil and upon an oil filter and in terms of the cash amount?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is 10 cents for a litre of oil and 50 cents for most of the commonly utilized filters.

Mr. Dewar: Does the minister know if the public then pays the provincial sales tax and the goods and services tax on top of this levy, on this levy, like they do with the Manitoba Product Stewardship 2-cent levy?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, they do.

Mr. Dewar: Well, where does that money go? Is it going to government revenues, or is it part of that money used to assist the program as it is with the Product Stewardship Corporation?

Mrs. McIntosh: The money right now that the member is referring to is sequestered. It is held with the Sustainable Development Fund, and it is yet to be determined whether that money will go back into the program or be used for some other purpose. What is clear right now is that it is not being used for general revenue, which is why it is being held in the sustainable development area pending decisions on the proper disposition of it and how to use it best to continue meeting the aims of the program and programs like it.

Mr. Dewar: When you say it is placed into a fund, which fund is that? Is that the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund or the Product Stewardship Corporation? Where is that money going? That, I would imagine, is only the provincial sales tax. I would assume the federal GST goes to the federal government, does it not?

Mrs. McIntosh: The provincial tax money is held in a subaccount of the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, and the GST money does ultimately wind its way to Ottawa. It goes there over our objections because we do not feel, and I think the member would probably concur, that on items like this we should be having to collect the GST on this kind of initiative. We have made that case, in the meantime, while we argue that the niceties of that point, the GST is still being collected and forwarded to Ottawa, and the rest, the provincial money, is being held in the Sustainable Development Fund, not put into general revenue.

Mr. Dewar: Can you tell me how much is in that fund? How much has been generated by about a year of operation so far? How much money was generated in terms of the PST on top of this 10-cent-per-litre and 50-cent-per-filter levy?

Mrs. McIntosh: The expectation is that it will be coming in at around \$200,000 PST annually.

Mr. Dewar: In terms of the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation, I do not have the most recent annual report. This one ends the 31st of March, 1997. At that time, it stated that the surplus in that account was \$5.7 million, and that was the end of 1997. Here we are two years later, and maybe you can tell us the current surplus in that fund.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it looks around—well, to be specific, \$6,700,904. Again we have this book with this wonderful cover, which distracted me for a moment from the question, called Putting the Pieces Together. It is the annual report for the MPSC, the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation, which, again, if the member would like, I would be pleased to table for him so he can have it to peruse. But that is the answer, and I will get other copies and table it.

Mr. Dewar: I want to thank the minister for that. What plans does she have for that surplus? I know we have discussed this with her in Question Period in years gone by in terms of the multifamily dwellings here in the city of Winnipeg that do not receive recycling services. I realize it is a lot having to do with the city of

Winnipeg. Do you have a plan for that surplus? I notice there has been quite an increase in terms of advertising and promotion, even in the 1997 report. I am looking here. Marketing and education, I assume that is the advertising budget, is \$185,000. That is part of the increase, part of the surpluses obviously going into those types of areas, but what other plans do you have in terms of this corporation, in terms of providing recycling initiatives to Manitobans? How else are you going to use this money?

Mrs. McIntosh: The revenue is in balance pretty well with the expenses, so the surplus is not likely to increase in size. There is a good surplus there now, not likely to increase because now revenues and expenses are pretty well in balance.

The corporation is one of those arm's lengthy ones from government so we do not tell it what to do, but a general rule of thumb that we encourage for nonprofit organizations, if they can, keep a year's expenses in surplus. That is sort of a rule of thumb, and that is roughly the size of their surplus now, would be a year's expenses which seem to be in surplus. But the corporation, of course, is continuing to encourage increased tonnage collected, and as they do that, for example as they begin to move into multifamily dwellings which, I think, you were asking about not long ago, apartments in Winnipeg and so on, as municipalities, just using that for example, the City of Winnipeg starts to move into collection in apartment buildings or blue boxes, et cetera, you will see then their surplus start to decrease in size because they will be using it.

* (1530)

The surplus is there. It is a contingency to take care of market shocks and so on if there suddenly is a year, for some reason, where the amount collected sharply decreases or sharply increases or has some other strange anomaly thing start to happen. That surplus is a contingency. It will decrease in size as they move to collect increased tonnage and, in the meantime, it does appear to be roughly the equivalent of a year's expenses and that is something that is seen to be prudent by most observers.

Could I just interject? I had said that as we got more details on the Day & Ross thing, the member was wanting to know. We have an update. Is it okay to give it to you now? Three litres of Parathion, which is a commercial grade pesticide, moderately toxic, was spilled at 9:55 a.m. today at Day and Ross warehouse, the name of the firm. Eleven people were taken to hospitals, three hospitals to be specific: Health Sciences Centre, Seven Oaks, and Grace. Some have since been released, I am not sure if all.

The full response team included Manitoba Environment, City of Winnipeg police force, City of Winnipeg Fire Department including the Hazardous Materials and provincial Workplace Safety and Health. The bulk of the cleanup was done by the City of Winnipeg Hazardous Materials. The residual cleanup was done by Manitoba Environment and the commercial hazardous waste company at Miller Environmental. Inspection during the cleanup was done by Don Labossiere of Manitoba Environment. It is indicating full compliance on packaging standards and transportation of dangerous goods requirements. It indicated no noncompliance. It was compliant. It appeared to be accidental. Manitoba Environment concluded cleanup operations at Day & Ross at 2:30 p.m. today. So that is an update as of within the last hour.

Mr. Dewar: I thank the minister for that update. In terms of the Product Stewardship Corporation, you mentioned the revenues and some of the intentions, some of the goals and so on. There are some recycling programs in the province that are having some trouble, I believe. I mention Killarney and Neepawa. Either they were shut down or they were considering shutting down because of, I guess, the low prices in terms of recyclables and products that they were able to take out of the waste stream and are having difficulties finding either markets for or the low price. Are you seeing more and more of this now across the province in terms of municipalities who are having some problems in terms of their recycling initiatives?

Mrs. McIntosh: No, we have not noticed any particular problems. We have about 140 municipalities that are participating. We have had about half a dozen from that number that have been having some difficulty. What we have

been doing is working with them as a department to try to help them. Some of them just were not aware of the cost that would be involved in their getting assistance there to come to a better understanding of what might be involved and what needs to be done. Some, like Neepawa, which I believe the member mentioned, were doing some excellent work, and they are back in business. I think they were using people with mental problems to provide them with meaningful employment, and so there were some other factors involved with the recycling. I believe Neepawa is back utilizing their program again. So they have little hurdles that they overcome.

I would imagine that with about 140 municipalities we are probably always going to have five or six that will be experiencing some difficulty, that require the assistance of the department from time to time. We see that as part of our role to go, when problems are identified, and try to help get things back on course for those municipalities.

We do not see that number increasing. It seems to be a handful at any given time.

* (1540)

Mr. Dewar: What support does the program offer to municipalities to help them find markets or new markets for their collected recyclables, and are those markets within the province? I know in Selkirk they have onsite at the collection depot a Pine Falls paper mill truck, so clearly that is where their market would be for recyclable paper products. What about other things, the different plastics and other containers that are collected? Just give me the general idea, your feelings in terms of the support that is offered to R.M.s to help them find markets, and basically what are those markets?

Mrs. McIntosh: The Manitoba Product Stewardship Program and others are always looking for new markets, new enterprises that want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. We have seen success there in Brandon and other areas, but it is an ongoing task, and they are always looking.

Mr. Dewar: Oh, good. I am glad to hear that. The minister is aware there was a situation that

was dealt with by the Saskatchewan government, and that is the fact they have a collection system for containers. There were certain Manitobans who were taking advantage of that and taking their collected recyclables across into Saskatchewan and actually were making money at it. Quite the enterprising individuals, but the Saskatchewan government passed legislation that would require tough penalties for—what do they call it—out-of-province bootleggers.

Have you, Madam Minister, or the government, looked at a deposit system for certain containers, for certain types of recyclables?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have a different approach here as the member knows. Saskatchewan is charging I think it is 10 cents, is it, whatever. They are charging a fair amount for their deposit. Their program is very expensive.

Ours comes in about \$2 million less than the Saskatchewan program, and because it is multimaterial, we are picking up newspapers and plastics and so on. We have seven different categories, I think, that we collect as opposed to just the cans, and as a result we are able to recycle a substantial percentage of waste material more effectively than the Saskatchewan program can with being limited to just one product. I am just going to check with staff here, was it 95 percent or 90 percent of materials were recycled successively?

Ninety-five percent of Manitobans have access to recycling, which is a really good result of the endeavours we have been undertaking. We have seen a substantial increase in the amount of material that is being reclaimed, reused, recycled and not just added to garbage lying around the province, so that is the basic reason we have not gone into that.

We figure the Saskatchewan program is twice as expensive as ours and collects only about one-third the amount of material that we collect.

Mr. Dewar: That was interesting. As you said, I am sure in terms of total volume of material that is removed from the waste stream, the 2-cent levy here in Manitoba that funds this

program is probably more successful, but in terms of the specific pop cans or alcohol bottles, which program in your opinion—and your research I am sure would tell you this—which program is more successful?

I know they have a collection system and deposit system in Alberta as well. So I realize in terms of the volume, I am sure the Manitoba program does, because as you say we collect a wider range of recyclables, but in terms specifically, it is 10 cents per pop can and it is about 40 cents, I believe, on an alcohol bottle, which of course someone would recover when they take the product back to a collection depot in Saskatchewan and Alberta. But I was just wondering, in terms of containers, aluminum cans and glass containers, which program do you think is more effective, the deposit one or the one that we have here in Manitoba?

* (1550)

Mrs. McIntosh: Right now the people in Saskatchewan are collecting more cans and bottles than we are; they are collecting more with their deposit return, people are taking back cans and bottles on a greater percentage than they are here, but what we are noticing is the number of cans and bottles we are collecting is increasing.

What we feel ultimately in terms of overall waste reduction that as people begin to think of programs that incorporate newspapers, plastic bottles, margarine containers, all of the things that our programs do, they become very, very conscious as they are disposing of everything in their household as to, you know, you will see so many households in Manitoba, now they will say, well, this is going on the compost heap, toss this please in the glass bottle thing, and toss this in the pile of newspapers. They are very conscious of recycling, so awareness increases an incredible amount on this issue. We have seen tremendous growth in awareness, generally speaking, and so as it grows generically it also grows specifically. You become conscious of everything you throw away, which means you get increased consciousness of throwing away cans and bottles as well. As opposed to just thinking in terms of getting money, you become part of a whole way of doing things.

We have courtesies in Manitoba that are peculiar to our province. I had visitors visiting with people this weekend from another land who were just so impressed with the courtesy Manitobans showed as they line up for things. It has got nothing to do with recycling, but a characteristic that we have is that if there are lots of people going to a place, we just kind of courteously line up and we wait our turn, whereas these people I was with come from a land where you just kind of push and shove and get to the front as fast as you can. But so too we have attitudes towards taking care of the world around us that have become as Manitoban as perogies, which used to be Ukrainian but now, I understand, are thought of as Manitoba foods.

Mr. Dewar: On May 10 of this year, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities met us. As they met with the government caucus as well that day, I always enjoy attending those meetings because they often have a number of important environmental issues, which they bring to our attention. This year, of course, they talked about the stewardship program and they talked about some of the problems associated with transportation costs. But one line I think is quite interesting. I would like to read this. We also encourage the province to place levies on a larger number of recycled products to ensure the future financial stability of the program. Are there plans by the corporations to expand this levy to include a larger number of recyclable products?

Mrs. McIntosh: The stewardship program has been looking at the feasibility of extending that to newsprint, perhaps to some other grocery products, but they are having to take a good close look at it because as they examine those feasibilities, there is a whole complex. Cans are pretty straightforward. A can is a can is a can, but some of the other products are not that easy to break out and identify because they are not all exactly the same. But newsprint is one that is being looked at, it is more the same. Like newsprint is newsprint is newsprint. So they are looking at those things. They have not yet made a determination as to where they will be going, but they are looking at it.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I am wondering if I could ask some questions not

necessarily directly following up what my honourable colleague was doing but hopefully in the same ballpark. Most of those would be questions relating to specific issues in my own constituency or issues raised with me. So they could be varied, if the minister would be so kind as to deal with them.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is fine.

Mr. Jennissen: The first one is recycling of materials. Would that include recycling of old pavement? The reason I am asking the question is there is a gentleman in Flin Flon or a couple of gentlemen that have for a number of years been trying to take sections of old Highway No. 10, the pavement, getting the rights first of all to lift up those sections of pavement and then have them shredded and have them recycled in the sense of new pavement. I am not sure how the whole procedure works, but first of all, is the department even interested in this? Have there been any inquiries into this? I am sure these gentlemen must have approached your department.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that is something I think the department has had brought to its attention in a preliminary fashion and would be very interested in examining further. I think it has been brought, or we just cannot recall right now from whence, but we know that the issue has been raised about the possibility of using it that way. The idea appears to have some merit that would say it is worth exploring.

Mr. Jennissen: If I could maybe just in the nature of clarifying just a little bit for the minister, even if I am not really up on the issue either, it came about because of a straightening of highways a number of years ago. There are a series of stretches of an old highway, Highway 10, and there is very good pavement on some of those stretches. I am estimating maybe 10-15 kilometres, and it is basically just sitting there. And these gentlemen, I think Mr. McIntyre for sure, I believe that is his name, is involved and perhaps a few others. Their theory was: why do we not just recycle it, have it shredded and, when we are putting new pavement on the new No. 10, we would incorporate the old pavement? Now, I do not know if there are contaminants in the old pavement like PCBs. I do not know that

for sure, but I am sure if it could work interdepartmentally, it would be a great way of getting rid of these eyesores, which these old highways are, and recycling that material for new highways.

* (1600)

Mrs. McIntosh: I am not sure if you are talking about asphalt or concrete or both, because the asphalt you can readily shave off into tailings and the concrete, I imagine, you can grind back into powder-like substance. I think one of the things that would, depending on where the used material is, sometimes it is very costly to reclaim, depending, again, where it is and what quantities are available. The heavy construction industry apparently is advancing this concept. There have been some projects carried out in southern Manitoba. In the city of Winnipeg, certain types, it is not a technical problem per se as it is a matter of economics. If the material could be easily reclaimed in a cost-effective way and utilized, I think that is something that people interested in cost containment would be wanting to explore. If it is hard to get at material or it is isolated or it is in small bits and pieces and requires a lot of work, then it probably would not be economically feasible.

I would think in any of those things that, if the technology is not a problem, it would boil down to how cost effectively such material can be reclaimed and how willing our municipalities and governments are able to do feasibility studies to get at it.

Mr. Jennissen: The material in question is asphalt, and I do believe there have been some preliminary investigations by these people that are interested in recycling it. I think also it would be just a very effective way of various departments working together, such as the Highways department working with the Environment department. So maybe everybody could benefit, and it could be a win-win situation. I am just flagging it as such an issue which maybe the minister should look at, and I thank her for her answer.

Another question I have, and we dealt with it to some degree last year with a different minister, is about the polluter-pay principle. I

believe it was in Gods Lake Narrows or Gods Lake where there was a fairly large fuel oil spill from a Catholic rectory, I believe. I think that has been resolved to some degree. I believe it has been. I guess the question still lingers in my mind: when you use the polluter-pay principle is that general, generic, or do we have some variance? I am suggesting that a huge corporation, a multimillion-dollar corporation or billion-dollar corporation should not be treated the same as an individual or a charitable organization or a church. I am just wondering if the minister has any views on that. I guess I am suggesting that the church over there should not be treated the same way as, let us say, Tolko or some huge corporation.

Mrs. McIntosh: We do apply that polluter-pay principle with a fair degree of compassion. We know that if you might have a mom-and-pop facility, they might have a little problem and their intentions of cleaning up are good, so we will work with them to help them do it without bankrupting them and putting them out on the sidewalk. So we do have the polluter-pay principle, we believe in it, we think it is the way to go, but we try, at the same time as we apply our rules, to be realistic and compassionate. Where we recognize that there is an intention to repay or to compensate, we provide extra time, put in resources to assist, et cetera, our goal being to get things cleaned up. Our goal is to help build awareness so that they will not be encouraged to repeat the exercise. If it has been a deliberate oversight or genuine careless endeavour, then we try to put in disincentives that will be effective without: Is it not grand; do you like it? That is good; I like it too.

Does that give you the response you are looking for? Okay.

Mr. Jennissen: Are we saying then that that particular issue from last year with the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas that involved that bigger spill, has that then been resolved? I am assuming it has been.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, that is in fact a very good example that the member has raised because it indicates how we try to approach situations like that. There we moved in to try to rectify a situation and to try to help the people

involved extricate themselves in a way that would—we try to bring about win-win solutions where we can. I think that example is one that shows how we enforced the polluter-pay principle with some degree of effort to help the individuals involved come out of it at the end unscathed, knowing they were part of a solution and not burdening them severely or unjustly.

Mr. Jennissen: One other question I had that I am not sure even if this falls under the purview of this ministry, but I am asking it anyway. Buffer zones, with regard to clear-cutting and logging operations, I have had a number of calls from citizens and citizens' groups and also lodges, and they were worried that the buffer zones were not large enough. Like sometimes for esthetic reasons we allow 100 metres but sometimes only 10 metres or 15 metres, and it seemed very arbitrary.

I talked with some Tolko people, and I am not sure who makes the decision, at what point you leave a 10-metre buffer zone or a 15 one or a hundred-metre one? Is there some kind of rule or regulation, formula that is being used?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do major forestry operations as the member knows. We have very generically described buffer zones, very generically described buffer zones in our licensing. Natural Resources then will come in, and they will outline specific buffer zones. They will tighten up the detail using the broad general guidelines that have been established by the Department of Environment, so they come in and provide the exact requirements.

Mr. Jennissen: Are there minimum standards in, like, we cannot go below 10 metres, 15 metres?

Mrs. McIntosh: Pardon me?

Mr. Jennissen: Are there minimum standards, like the buffer zones must be no smaller than?

* (1610)

Mrs. McIntosh: It is not that tight. It is prescribed by Natural Resources on a site-by-site basis. They will tighten it up and they will make the specific requirements. We just moved very

generally site by site, and they will look at each site and determine what the variances should be depending upon the locale and all of the other things happening in that particular ecosystem or that forestry area.

Mr. Jennissen: One of the reasons I am bringing this up is because I am thinking of a specific case. Well, there are many other cases, but one specific case of a lodge. There has been a rezoning taking place, and the chances are that they are going to be slapping cabin lots very close to this lodge. Now when you are in the lodge business in northern Manitoba, wilderness is one of the things you sell. You do not want sort of an urban setting right on your doorstep. That is what I am a little worried about.

I would suggest there should be at least a hundred metre buffer between that lodge and any kind of development, but it does not appear to be the direction it is going. That is why I am interested in some minimum requirements. I do not know who would enforce them, whether Natural Resources, Northern Affairs, or Environment.

Mrs. McIntosh: I was talking specifically about a logging issue. The development issue you are raising is a different issue than the one I was answering, and they may be treated differently.

On the development question that you have raised, usually it would be the local municipality, the local government, that would determine how much space needs to be left. The logging issue and the buffer zones for logging will be established provincially, but with the development ones the local government jurisdiction has authority to make decisions as well.

Mr. Jennissen: One more series, or perhaps even one question. It deals with the service station in Cranberry Portage. It was called Norwood's Service. Norwood attempted to sell out about four, five years ago, I believe, and there was a fair bit of red tape involved in terms of possible contamination or pollution because there were underground tanks. Although there were a number of buyers, he never did sell it because he apparently never could get the

authority to do so and therefore, I believe, now has either transferred it or sold it or let it go, whatever. I do not know the fine details, but he seemed somewhat perturbed because apparently now the site is considered clean. He says: well, why could it not have been considered clean a number of years ago? I could have sold it, made \$50,000. Now I face quite an economic loss.

He wondered if there had been some rule changes.

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have the particular details on the Cranberry site here, although staff has some recollection of it. That Cranberry site was investigated in co-operation with Manitoba Environment. The cleanup standards have not changed in the ensuing years, but the department operates by risk management. To explain it, if there was no risk to the environment or to public health, then the cleanup may not have been required, depending upon what the site was going to be used for. That is a big part of the risk management. If there is no cleanup, if there has been no cleanup done, then that facility remains on our records as what we call a tracked site. We keep track of it, in other words.

If it is to be sold or somebody else acquires it, depending upon the use they wish to put it to, they may have to first comply with certain cleanup regulations in full or in part or whatever because of its history. Obviously, if somebody just wants to buy the land and just have it sit there, there is no risk in terms of managing it. But if they wish to do something else more elaborate with it, there may well be a risk attended, and they would then have to be subject to cleanup requirements by the department. I do not know at the moment if it is under request to buy or for what purpose it might be being looked at, but the risk management aspect of the department would certainly swing into full gear on any tracked site that comes up for change of ownership.

Mr. Jennissen: So is the minister saying that, if it is used differently, let us say, from a service station, then it does not pose any more risk and therefore no cleanup is required?

* (1620)

Mrs. McIntosh: It could be a variety of different uses that somebody would like to buy land for and whatever that desire is—they may wish to buy it to do something, to do X with, then the department would look at it because it is a tracked site and say they want to do X with it, they would then have to check to see if X required cleanup. If it did, then the prospective owner or the prospective seller, somebody would have to clean up that site before X could be permitted on it. So it may not be the usage that it was there for before, it could be something else.

Mr. Jennissen: So a tracked site could be tracked for how many years? Is there a limit on this?

Mrs. McIntosh: There is no limit on the amount of time that it is tracked.

Mr. Jennissen: I am under the impression that there is a current ownership change happening. I do not know the details of it, and the minister may be right, perhaps there are no plans to do anything with it in the interim. Perhaps it is just going to sit there as a vacant lot, so to speak, but I am still not clear why that is any more or less dangerous than if there was a business on it. I guess there could be some problems if there were fumes or whatever. I do not know either.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, they have to determine the amount of exposure that people are going to be exposed to. If they are selling the land and they want to sell it to someone who wants to put up a daycare centre then there would be one kind of exposure. If they want to put up a parking lot, there would be a different kind of exposure. The risk management aspect from the department would make it necessary to determine what kind of risk is involved in managing the property either as a daycare or a parking lot. One, of course, would have greater exposure, greater risk than the other and would require cleanup to a certain level or completely cleanup so no contamination whatsoever for certain uses, so those are the kinds of things they look at when a property that is called a tracked site is offered for sale.

Mr. Jennissen: So, to get back to the original point, if it were low risk, for example, if this

were a lot that would be turned into a parking lot with gravel on it only, would it still continue to be tracked, say, 50 years from now if it stayed in that shape? So the tracking is not dated. It keeps being tracked.

Mrs. McIntosh: They would still be tracking it.

Mr. Jennissen: Those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much. I will turn it over to my colleague.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just before my critic begins, he had a couple of questions from last Thursday. I said we would try to have them for him today and I have got them. I will just provide them for him now before he starts the next round of questioning.

The member had asked that we ask questions about flood mould. One of the opposition party members was asking. We indicated that we were checking 5,000 basements for flood mould. That number should be 1,000, just a correction.

He had asked about the funding for Rockwood water supply, and that is Bristol, one-third; feds, one-third; provincial government, one-third. I should be more courteous and say federal government, not feds. That is not a polite way to refer to them. So it is one-third, one-third, one-third.

I had indicated earlier this afternoon I would table the annual report, Making Every Drop Count, for MARRC and the annual report for the Stewardship Corporation, and I have the extra copies here so I will table those now. Do I need to read the exact title into the record?

An Honourable Member: You just did.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, no, I just read the little abbreviation, but I think we all know which they are.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, I am sorry. The two copies were the 1998 Annual Report, Making Every Drop Count, Manitoba Association for Resource Recovery Corporation. The other one is the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation Annual Report, April 1, 1997, to March

31, 1998, and that is called Putting the Pieces Together. Thank you, Madam Minister. That is it?

Mrs. McIntosh: That is it.

Mr. Dewar: Good. I thank the minister for providing me with the copies of those annual reports.

Getting back to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities brief, they mention the chemical container program, and this is another recycling issue of importance to municipalities, the future of the chemical container program. It appears that the Crop Protection Institute still plans to replace the current system of municipal collection sites administered by ACRE with a return to vendor program. Currently over 90 percent of the containers in Manitoba are returned to municipal sites, whereas jurisdictions with a return to vendor program have a lower rate of return.

Madam Minister, maybe you can just enlighten me as to the future of this program, administered by ACRE?

Mrs. McIntosh: We share the member's concern that CPI is trying to erode the program. We do not want to go to a return to dealer because we just do not think that is—all the problems associated with that I think are known and understood by the critic as well as by the minister.

We are looking or seeking to provide interim funding for ACRE to help them continue. ACRE, I think, has done a good job. It has functioned well. People are pleased with it. We would like to see it continue. It may require some interim funding. We are looking at a way to provide that for them, but we do not see as a solution going to the return to dealer way of doing things.

Mr. Dewar: I agree with the minister, based upon my limited knowledge of this issue. But I know, from what I have seen and from the comments made by the AMM in their brief this year and in past years, they have supported the current system and have raised concerns about changing it. So I do support the minister and encourage her to continue with that program.

An issue that I raised in the House early on this session was the status of the Household Hazardous Waste Program. The minister was kind enough to return to the House with an update. I am pleased that the program seems to be going this year, but what is the long-term future of that program?

I know at one time it was placed on hold because the used oil program was coming into place, and they felt that maybe there was not a need for this as well. But I want to encourage the minister, I think there is a need for this. Again, speaking with municipal officials who partner with the government in providing this service to the residents, there I believe are 200,000 kilograms of household hazardous waste that are removed from the waste stream, which often ends up regrettably in landfill sites across this province. This year, I believe, once again, is it Miller that received the contract?

* (1630)

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Miller has received the contract for household hazardous waste.

Mr. Dewar: Then you, Madam Minister, envision this to be a long-term program?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we do. The member may be aware that we have as well put into place a task force which we are asking to look at the whole situation, because we see an increasing interest in and an increasing demand for places to send household hazardous waste, and we are very encouraged by that. We think it shows an understanding in the public that we have been hoping to see evolve; it has come. So we are looking to see if there is some way we can underwrite the program to give it even greater scope, greater ability to respond to what we hope will be an ever-increasing demand from the public. As they grow in their awareness, we want to match that with making opportunity available.

Just so you know, we have some 20 different people involved, different organizations involved, and in terms of the management of household hazardous waste, they will be consulting with stakeholders. They will be consulting with people around the province, and

they hope to provide us with appropriate recommendations so that we can bring in a new program next year that will add to what we have. We do see it as long range. We do see it as continuing to grow, and we have people from our department in the Pollution Prevention branch working on this.

We have four contracts that have gone out, all to Miller Environmental, to run the Winnipeg and the rural Household Hazardous Waste Program for the next two years. We have issued separate contracts for the Winnipeg program, the spring rural program, the fall rural program and the northern program. We have those four different contracts because it helps us track costs more effectively. We are able to zero in on how much each area is costing, and this is useful information for planning and for meeting targets.

I think I have indicated to the member the dates, times and places in my question in the House. I wanted to give a more detailed answer at the time, but the Speaker felt that one minute was fine for the answer to six questions, and who am I to argue with the Speaker? I would not do that.

I do not know if the member wants this information at this time. We have a variety of drop-off points and pick-up points. I think I did get a chance to get most of it onto the record before I got told I was taking far too long for my answer, but, in short, I can just maybe say this as sort of a summative statement. The Miller contracts commit the funds we have for household hazardous waste this year, and any unofficial sites are outside that particular envelope.

Just as a matter of interest on ACRE, it is a little bit of a backtrack, but my deputy has just handed me this little piece of information as we were discussing ACRE. For the member's information, in 1998, ACRE recycled one million containers, and there were only 1,200,000 sold in Manitoba. So of 1,200,000 containers sold, one million were recycled, which is a percentage rate in the mid-80s which is a return rate that is pretty good. I just thought I would share that information because it shows I think why the municipalities are so supportive of ACRE.

Mr. Dewar: In terms of the Household Hazardous Waste Program and its promotion, do you or does your department take an active role in promoting this, I think, much-needed program across the province?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do regional publicizing, I guess. Would that be the right word? We will announce, for example, put out a press release, as we did when the contract was awarded this year, letting people know when and where the hazardous waste could be taken and when it would be picked up. We work with the municipalities to build awareness, and we also try to ensure that we are being realistic in the amount of hazardous waste that we can pick up. We are trying to advertise appropriately so that we get to the right number of people so that we can have our depots properly utilized.

We do not have an intensive public relations campaign per se. We are trying to work inter-departmentally with our sustainable development education that is taking place in schools and so on, that people are aware of these types of things or that they learn about them. Those are the ways in which we try to build awareness.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairman, the Department of Environment detected sulfur dioxide gas on a monitor in the Tilston area on a farm owned by Mr. Bill Campbell. Can you just provide us an update in terms of this situation out in that area?

Mr. Denis Rocan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: We have been monitoring Mr. Campbell's land, and on an ongoing basis, we are in frequent communication with him and becoming very intimate with the area.

As well, we are working with Saskatchewan and Alberta, the provincial governments, their departments of Environment, to look at the effects of sulfur dioxide gas on things with which it comes in contact. Part of the difficulty has been, and continues to be, trying to make a direct link between the sulfur dioxide gas and problems that people might be encountering. No one has been able to make the direct linkage to a particular ache or pain that someone is having and the gases in the atmosphere. So that is part

of the dilemma, and if we are able to say, well, you know, if you are exposed to this gas, you will experience that and can prove it, it would be much easier to deal with this particular situation.

* (1640)

But we have, in addition to working with Alberta and Saskatchewan to try to determine what, if any, effects are harmful, also set up a committee with local governments and others in the area to keep everyone informed as we go through the process. We have regular public meetings and updates. At the end of the summer, we will decide what, if anything, we need to do in this particular situation. As I say, it is a tricky one, because no one has been able to prove any direct linkages. Yet we have the views put forth by Mr. Campbell and others who support his perspective there to challenge us.

Mr. Dewar: In the press clipping from March 25, it concludes by stating: Manitoba Environment has established a community advisory committee and promises to set up more monitoring equipment until August.

So I assume then that was done.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is the committee I just referred to that has been struck with local government in the area and that will be doing that update on air quality monitoring. We have equipment out there that we have been using to monitor the air quality. Basically, they are at two locations. We set up two trailers in each of those locations. Not two in each location but one in each location. Those trailers have specialized air-quality-monitoring equipment. They have been set up in a farmyard. They do continuous monitoring. They undertake continuous monitoring for sulfur dioxide, and they have been since the beginning of April. Also, for the measurement levels of hydrogen sulfide since the end of April. Two additional air samples for the determination of volatile organic compounds, VOC, have been taken in the area since the last report, and the results have been received and are being reviewed. Those arrangements, having been made for the VOC, or the volatile organic compounds program—it is a sampling program—will continue throughout the summer. They will take a sample once a week, and

Manitoba Environment will operate as it is now. It will continue to operate its portable analyzer for the determination of sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide.

The first phase of the vegetation and soil investigation has been done. That was done at the end of May. Locations upwind and downwind of the facility have had their vegetation inspected, and they have collected samples of foliage for sulfur analysis. Other phases will be planned for later this summer into August. But they have not found any sulfur dioxide at any of the monitoring locations since the inconclusive readings they experienced at the beginning of January. So, you know, it is kind of frustrating but, still, as I say, they are monitoring.

They have not recorded any levels of sulfur dioxide or hydrogen sulfide on the portable analyzer at the various locations in the area of complaints during the monitoring. The hydrocarbon levels for the 147 compounds in the latest two samples were within the range of levels measured in Winnipeg from 1990 to 1996. So that information is very useful, and all of the data collected will be provided to the community advisory committee that the member referenced just a few moments ago.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chairman, the provincial government, the provincial Department of Environment, was to prepare a climate action plan to bring Manitoba into line with the Kyoto agreement which mandates a 5 percent reduction in greenhouse gases, I guess, by the year 2012. Can you give us an update in terms of this climate action plan and if so, if you do have this plan, what does it tell us about Manitoba's ability to reach that target?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have a draft action plan that is being readied; it is almost ready now. Minister Newman and I, the Minister of Energy and Mines and I, are involved in this. It will shortly be available for a public consultation process. It will have in it proposals for the public to react to to determine if they have thoughts and ideas that would support or not support suggested solutions. Manitoba is very good in this area in that we are not a very big part of the problem, but we would like to be a big part of the solution. We think with some of

the proposals that are going to be in this draft action report that we can be of a real position help. So there should shortly be a report available which will go for public consultation. I am sorry I do not have an exact date I can give you, but we hope to see it while weather is still warm, available for people to go through. [interjection] Yes, by the end of the summer if all goes well.

Mr. Dewar: In preparing this report, has your department discovered that in fact emissions have gone up as opposed to the much more preferable option of them going down?

* (1650)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, 1990 was the base year chosen to start measuring, and we are up slightly; we are up about 5 percent. The second piece of that is that emissions are up everywhere, and that is part of the reason we need to get a handle on them. Manitoba has the second lowest per capita emissions in Canada, and I think that is because we have done a good job. We have a smaller rate of increase, so to speak. We have been able to slow down the rate of increase that the lifestyle in North American and parts of Europe has encouraged, and that is an important part of the puzzle. Solving the puzzle is to slow down the tendency that is there and then start reversing it.

So I think in that sense we have done a good job, although the short answer is up about 5 percent over the last decade. The encouraging part is that I think without the work we have been doing, it would be up a lot more. We hope to continue with a series of initiatives that will see that start to change, and we hope to be influential in reversing the Canadian figures as well, because we all live in the same part of the world. You know, the border does not go straight up into the stratosphere and only have things happening on one side of it, it goes right across the nation. This is one area where we really have to be part of a good, strong inter-jurisdictional effort.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Dewar: So you mentioned there has been about a 5 percent increase since 1990. Can you tell us the cause of that increase?

Mrs. McIntosh: The short answer is not the whole picture. It is one aspect that we believe is a fairly substantial contributing aspect. There is more that can be said, but we do not have all of that information available right here and now. Certainly transportation emissions have played a very discouraging role in that they have added to the problems substantially, and I guess with a highly mobile world particularly in North America, transportation emissions in all areas have been ones that are hard to contain, and they are a major part of the problem.

Mr. Dewar: So when you say transportation, are you suggesting then because of a reliance in our economy more upon the trucking of goods as opposed to once the transportation by rail would have an impact on this? Is that one of the causes?

Mrs. McIntosh: One thing that we have noticed, we have, as the member is aware, very definite increases economically in the trucking industry, and we have also lost a lot of our rail ability, so we have as the economy grows it is one of those little side effects that we are going to have to really get a handle on. More trucks means more emissions on the road. More trucks also means strengthened trade and strengthened economy, so there has to be a way to marry that increase in the trucking industry, which is substantial and desired economically and for a whole lot of other reasons. There have to be ways to marry that for sustainable development purposes, and that is something we are conscious of.

We have forest fires that were both in 1997 and 1998 incredibly heavy, and those forest fires in the neighbouring provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan, west and to the Yukon Territory, they contribute to our readings as well, because the smoke is brought in on winds, et cetera. Those two years we had very substantial problems with forest fire smoke and all the debris that comes with that through the air registering in Manitoba as Manitoba emissions.

I just wanted to check, I just got a note from my staff here. Staff has just pointed out to me that both trucks and rail will use diesel fuel so that if it happens the rail decreases by the amount the trucks increase, they can probably

balance out, but if we are using with the rail that we have got, increased traffic as much as we can, they use the same type of fuel, so the emissions would be similar in terms of their impact in the atmosphere.

Mr. Chairperson: Time being five o'clock, it is time for private members' hour. Committee rise. We might be back in case it is waived. I am not sure exactly. I have never done one of these before.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): 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 at this time?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, as we are getting ready here, I have not had much of a chance this morning to run through it, but for starters, one thing I would like to table is Supplementary Information for our review. Just a very minor aspect that was missing from the original Supplementary Information, basically, two pages long. It is just on the Capital Investment, just the quantity there. So if one could be provided to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) right away.

On May 26, the member for Kildonan requested information on the Health Information Systems branch organization and the breakdown of the FTEs by the various areas and sort of what was done in those areas, so I am tabling that information, Mr. Chairman.

The member had also asked just for some information on the VON contract status and service coverage on weekends, I believe, so I will table that.

I will just read one response into the record very briefly. On May 20, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) asked if any consideration has or will be given to holding an inquiry into the death of Mr. Wesley Kent. Manitoba Health staff have been in contact with senior staff at Health Sciences Centre and St.

Boniface General Hospital. I have been advised that neither the availability of staff and palliative care nor the use of proper protocols was at issue in Wesley Kent's care. After reviewing all aspects of the case, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner has not called for an inquest into Wesley Kent's death. I might have some more as we go along, but that is it for now.

* (1450)

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): I thank the minister. For clarification, is the minister saying that we are adding this year to capital investments \$20.7 million on behalf of the SmartHealth initiative? Do I read this correctly?

Mr. Stefanson: That is correct. That is the discussion we did have previously. Really what the supplement does is it matches, I think, what I pointed to, and we discussed it before. If you look at page 153 of the detailed Estimates of Expenditure, you can see the overall Estimates of Capital Investment for all of the departments. If you look there, it is Health at \$20,700,000. That is just the supplemental information backing it up in the Health supplement. So the member is correct, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: So where does this particular expenditure fit within the capital supplementary estimates?

Mr. Stefanson: If you were to look at the detailed supplementary information for the Department of Health, and if you go to page 119, we have discussed this previously, but this is where we show the amortization of the health capital assets. This addendum now would be 119A and 119B, so it would follow right behind that section, because this is the capital investments side that ultimately becomes amortized on an annual basis so it really—we did discuss this but all that happened is in the preparation of the detailed supplement these two pages should have been inserted behind page 119, so that is what this is correcting.

* (1500)

Mr. Chomiak: So the minister is saying the amortization of the capital expenditures for '99-2000 is \$1.3 million, and in addition there is a

capital investment of \$20.7 million that will be commenced to be amortized next year. Is that correct?

Mr. Stefanson: The member is basically correct. What happens now with capital assets is the capital investment is made, and then those capital assets are amortized over a period of time again, like we discussed before, and the \$1.3 million is basically the amortization expense of the capital assets that have been invested in. From '99-2000 there is going to be the \$20.7 million invested basically in the SmartHealth health information initiative.

Mr. Chomiak: I will return to that issue when we get to the capitalization, as I have a little bit of clarification, and I want also to compare it with one of the other documents I have.

The minister said he would get back and we would discuss Victoria Park Lodge. Has the minister been able to come up with that information at this point?

Mr. Stefanson: No, Mr. Chairman, we still are awaiting some additional information on that, so really other than what we discussed the other day about the RHA prioritizing the need for new personal care home beds which have been committed to in Souris, and then the impact on the beds at Victoria Park Lodge not being funded as personal care home beds, is really obviously the root issue that we talked about, and then the member has asked specific questions about the future of that facility, and we are still awaiting some information.

Mr. Chomiak: Just for the record, I am of the view similar to the situation that we had recommended with the Odd Fellows that at the very least, the very least, the whole facility should be grandfathered to permit individuals to stay in there as well as for the community to function. I seriously question, and I have a lot of concerns about the whole concept of supportive housing, frankly. I think the move from Levels 1 and 2 care to supportive housing is a problem. I have yet to be convinced from the information I have seen that supportive housing is the way to go, which brings me to a point that I had mentioned I was going to refer to today, that I made mention on Thursday, and that is with respect to Ten Ten Sinclair.

I was not going to ask a lot of questions about Ten Ten Sinclair. Ten Ten is located in my constituency. I have been a big supporter of Ten Ten Sinclair for years. Every June, when Ten Ten has its annual meeting and the regular minister comes through, the ministers generally come away very impressed, extremely impressed with the work that is happening at Ten Ten Sinclair. I think that Ten Ten Sinclair ought to be always prioritized in terms of the government's view of dealing with various aspects in the health care system and that one should recognize the role and function of Ten Ten. Let me give you an example, since we are talking about supportive housing.

I think that what Ten Ten does with respect to focus housing and the various group arrangements that Ten Ten makes is a model that ought to be looked at and expanded upon. I think that I would prefer to see a move towards that kind of development as opposed to—and I am not ruling out supportive housing development, I want to make that clear, but that I think some of the initiatives undertaken by Ten Ten ought to be given more emphasis and there ought to be more direction and heed paid to that type of housing.

The other issue with respect to Ten Ten is it has fluctuated back and forth with respect to the kind of facility and the kind of function and role it provides. I think we are probably in an era in health care where to totally isolate a facility perhaps to one function is probably no longer necessary, but you are looking at stroke programs, for example, and you are looking at programs where individuals have to adapt. Ten Ten, for example, has just upgraded a number of suites which the government, through Manitoba Housing, has supported, and I have met with the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) and discussed this on many occasions. I mean, there are certainly options for a role and function of Ten Ten in a variety of areas that I think ought to be looked at.

So that is the situation with respect to Ten Ten that I wanted to refer to. I do this every year generally, not just because Ten Ten is in my constituency but because in my view Ten Ten Sinclair was a very innovative and shining light in health care in the 1970s and has continued to be in a whole series of areas. I think we can

build upon some of the strengths of Ten Ten and ought to do so.

That is a long way of getting around Victoria Park Lodge and Ten Ten Sinclair and a variety of other issues, as well as putting on the record my concerns about supportive housing.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am certainly somewhat familiar with Ten Ten Sinclair, although I have to admit I have not been to the facility but would obviously like to get there at some point in time, and the member for Kildonan has added to my interest in doing that. Everything I know about the organization and the facility is they do provide excellent services. I gather they do continue to have discussions with, as the member himself indicated, either Manitoba Housing or, of course, the WCA, about their ongoing role and other initiatives and so on. So, other than those general comments, if the member has specific issues to be followed up on behalf of Ten Ten Sinclair, obviously I would be more than prepared to do just that. I am glad to hear he is at least keeping an open mind on supportive housing.

My initial impression is, first of all, that it is needed. Secondly, the limited introduction of it so far in terms of the feedback I have been receiving is positive. It just becomes one more means of meeting the needs for people at certain stages of their lives, so I think it is a part of the whole continuum of care that we want to provide to Manitobans, but I am glad the member at least is still open-minded on that issue.

*(1510)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I wanted to pursue two strains of questions, and I wonder what is the most appropriate at this juncture: questions related to various professions, remuneration and the like; and the second strain I wanted to go down was the bit about some of the programs being offered at hospitals, WHA and the related. So which would the minister prefer I do first?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think dealing with the professionals would be the most appropriate, first of all, initially.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate whether or not, under the arrangements with the Chiropractors' Association, there was an over-funding last year, this year, and in fact what that was?

Mr. Stefanson: First of all, the member is correct. The cap for funding to chiropractors has been exceeded in '97-98 and '98-99. We have had some ongoing discussions with them, whether or not there is some overlap here between at least two Crowns that have also required chiropractor services, the Workers Compensation Board and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

I recently met the chiropractors in the last 10 days or so, and they presented basically some information to me and an overview of that. I would not want to necessarily call it a position paper, but just some of the issues that they would like to see addressed as part of this review that we are going through right now. The member is correct. The cap was exceeded in those two years, and we are in discussion with them.

Mr. Chomiak: What review has the government undertaken with the chiropractors right now? I know there is a five-year agreement that is in effect, but the minister talked about a review. Is there consideration of a review of the entire arrangement? What is the review the minister just referred to?

Mr. Stefanson: At this stage the review really covers '97-98 and '98-99. As I indicated, it has been suggested to us that there might well be some overlap or some shifting of costs that might more appropriately have been the responsibility of one or both of the Crowns that I referred to, so we are in the process of doing that review.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the government considering increasing the number of visits permitted annually by Manitoba residents under the agreement? Although we are part of that five-year agreement, I was not in favour of the reduction of visits from 15 to 12, and I wonder what the government position is in that regard.

Mr. Stefanson: As the member knows, we do have two more years to run on the agreement

with chiropractors, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. It includes the number of visits presently at 12 per year that the member refers to. Even in my recent discussion with the chiropractors, the concern or the focus was more on the issue of the overall cap, the 9.6 million, and the fact that it is has been exceeded slightly now in two years and our willingness to look at the entire issue, particularly in light of the possibility of any shifting of those costs from Crowns to government. So the agreement is in place that provides for the ongoing number of treatments at 12, which is currently in the agreement.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister table for us the breakdown of payments under the various categories so that we know how much is for physician, how much is for optometrist, chiropractic and oral dental, if we can get breakdown of that?

Mr. Stefanson: If the member were to look on page 88 of the expenditures under Medical, which is really the program we are talking about right now, the first line is Physician Services, so that is the total amount paid for physician services, \$388,789,000. Under Other Professionals, that has two components: chiropractic at \$9.6 million as per the agreement, and optometric at the difference, \$3,344,000. So those two combined equal the \$12,944,600, and then Out-of-Province Physicians is exactly what it suggests it is.

Mr. Chomiak: Under the Physician Services, do we have a breakdown of how much is fee for service versus salaried, and what the government's plans and expectations are in that area this year?

Mr. Stefanson: The breakdown under Physician Services is medical fee for service \$271,362,000, alternative funding \$117,427,000, and those two together equal the \$388,789,000. As we discussed the other day, it really is not an either/or based on how we end up providing the funding, whether it is fee for service or whether it is through salary or contract. It is really based on what we and the employers would deem the most appropriate from an employment perspective, but also in consultation and discussion with either individuals or the individual governing

body, so it is not as though there is an either/or that automatically applies in every situation.

* (1520)

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister perhaps table that specific breakdown so we have an idea of where that—I mean, if the minister wants an opportunity to take out information that may not be relevant, but I would not mind seeing where the breakdowns are with respect to the fee for service versus the salary.

Mr. Stefanson: Just for clarification, is the member talking of breakdown by specialty or by region, or what further breakdown is the member looking for?

Mr. Chomiak: I am more looking for function. I am trying to get a sense of, for example, we talked about it earlier, the Assiniboine Clinic. How much is going to family physicians in terms of remuneration, how much to the northern program in terms of salary, that kind of thing? I do not want to cause a lot of work to be done, but whatever is available that we can get access to—I do not generally, I think, whatever we can get access to. If I am wrong, I stand to be corrected.

Mr. Stefanson: He brought a smile to the face of staff when he said he is not looking for lots of work, so that is encouraging. Mr. Chairman, I am told it is fairly readily available and that we can produce it on a functional kind of a basis.

Mr. Chomiak: I know what the briefing books look like. I have been on both sides of those. I have prepared them myself, so I know often what is available and what is not available. I do not really like to cause additional—but usually the staff is so efficient that generally it is all there. The question is: can the minister reveal what is all there? We could expedite the whole matter by just exchanging briefing books, but that probably would not work.

I understand that Manitoba Association of Optometrists fees are well below national average, in fact, 25 percent lower than the national average, and there obviously are ongoing negotiations in this area. I wonder if the minister can outline what the government

plans or strategies are in this regard. It is fairly clear that there is a significantly lower fee that is paid.

Mr. Stefanson: I am beginning to think, Mr. Chairman, that the member is following me around or watching what delegations came into my office.

I recently met as well with the optometrists. Of course, the member is right that we are in discussions with them about the fees. They have shared a great deal of information with staff and recently with myself along the lines of what the member just touched on—national comparisons and the last time the fee was adjusted and so on. We are right in the process of looking at that entire issue, having discussions with them about what would be a reasonable fee adjustment and whether or not we can obviously get agreement on that. I think, again, as the member knows, I believe I am correct, under our current system, the fee is established through Order-in-Council by government, but obviously we are going through a process of sharing information, having a discussion and seeing if we can reach some agreement on a fee adjustment.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister had cited earlier a projection this year of 3.3, roughly, I am going from memory, in terms of fees available to optometrists in Manitoba. My question to the minister is: is that 3.3 status quo, or does that include a proposed portion of an increased optometrist? If it does not, would I presume that the additional fees, if a settlement is reached with the optometrists, would come out of the pool that we had discussed earlier?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, the member is absolutely correct. We discussed this approach and this principle before. I do not think it is something unique to us or previous governments in Manitoba or governments elsewhere; whenever you are in negotiations, you set aside an amount in a separate account. Again, the member is exactly correct that that is how things have been provided.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister is getting back to me with information with respect to the Assiniboine Clinic and the like. I understand we discussed that earlier, and the minister was going

to provide me with—am I correct in that understanding?

Mr. Stefanson: I was just checking. I do not think until just a couple minutes ago we discussed Assiniboine Clinic, unless my memory is failing me.

Mr. Chomiak: This time I think I am right.

Mr. Stefanson: We did discuss it as an example when we were talking about the primary care model that has been introduced in the city of Winnipeg. We had talked about the need for correlating all of the activities in the primary care centres with physicians. We used Assiniboine as an example. So certainly we did have some discussion about Assiniboine then. I think the request that the member was asking for in terms of the breakdown of our medical services was on a functional basis. I do not know that we can or should or have the ability to get into breaking down all the individual clinics. I am not sure what that would serve, unless there is a specific question about Assiniboine because Assiniboine right now is back on the fee for service. That pilot project was terminated, has been assessed, and, as of now, they are on a fee-for-service basis.

Mr. Chomiak: Do you think we could see the assessment of the project?

Mr. Stefanson: I think all I can do on that, Mr. Chairman, is take it as notice and undertake to provide as much information as I can on that issue.

* (1530)

Mr. Chomiak: I am just not quite clear, and perhaps the minister can just clear this up. The increase from \$333 million to \$388 million, can the minister give us a rough idea, a breakdown, of where those increases are taking place?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, as the member can appreciate, with a \$55-million increase, there are various elements in there. Some of it is volume related. Some of it relates to some of the increases in the medical fee-for-service program that were announced last year that the member would be familiar with for basic and inter-

mediate visits, comprehensive visits, after-hour premiums, palliative care, obstetrics. So this now becomes the annualized cost of those additional services as well as the incremental costs of the relative value guide. We talked about the relative value guide with anesthetists as included in here.

Also the cost of some of the initiatives introduced as a result of the WHA, initiatives announced during 1998-99. Some additional items have to do with, again, some of the priority initiatives for the RHAs, for Brandon and the rural RHAs, again which were announced with funding increases several months ago for the RHAs, funding for the bone density testing in Brandon, funding for a few additional physicians in some rural communities, and so on. I think those would be some of the more significant areas leading to the increase in this line, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Would those figures roughly add up to the \$55-million difference?

Mr. Stefanson: Those would be the majority. There are some other lesser amounts in a few other areas, but those would certainly be the majority of the increases.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there a chance to have a copy, albeit a politically correct copy, of it tabled at some point just for general understanding?

Mr. Stefanson: We could certainly provide a summary of a number of the key elements that I have already outlined for the member but most likely without dollar amounts for various reasons.

Mr. Chomiak: Just out of curiosity, would the MMA be negotiating on the basis of the 333 or the 388 figure?

Mr. Stefanson: It is really not on either, and it is certainly not on the 388 million. It really is, as the member knows, through the arbitration process on a tariff code by tariff-code basis. I believe the position of the MMA has been using some variations of national averages as their benchmarks. So, again, you really could not go from either one of those dollars amounts and certainly not the 388.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chair, I will be pursuing some questions along the line 4 for a little while, and then we will be moving onto the balance of the Estimates book for hopeful completion today. That is where I anticipate going, just so the minister is aware of where we are going on this.

I wanted to spend a little bit of time on some of the specific programs as they relate to the WHA. Before I do that, if I have not asked for a list of the board of directors of the WHA and the like, as well as the various positions, is it possible to obtain that?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told, and I believe it is correct, I recall tabling it, that I have tabled the board chairs, the board listings and the CEOs for all of the RHAs. I think the only outstanding entity is I indicated I would provide the board members for Urban Shared Services Corporation, which I have not done yet. But I think the member should have the other listings. Obviously if not, that information is readily available, and we can certainly provide a copy.

* (1540)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, certainly if the minister says he has tabled it, then I will assume it has been tabled. I asked for an update of all the tabled information and reviewed it this morning and did not see it, but if the minister says he has tabled it then I will accept that and proceed.

In 1998, the WHA put out a listing of programs that were going to be offered at city of Winnipeg hospitals, and it broke down the hospitals by area outlining programs. I am very interested if it is possible to get an update as to what the program status is for all of the city hospitals, based on the criteria that were provided at that time. Now, if the minister wants to respond by saying that the original plan is still on as per the plan, that is fine. Then I will assume that the changes announced in the plan are still on. But what I am trying to get is an update and a status as to what programs are being offered, where within the urban hospitals in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will return with an update for the member. But certainly to

the extent of everything I am aware of, that program outline is basically still the one that is in place. But I would not want to say absolutely unequivocally in case there has been some minor adjustments, so I will return with an update for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we did request a bed map from the minister, and I know it is forthcoming. One of the issues that I wanted to determine that generally is not in the bed map that I think is quite relevant is the whole issue of the ICU beds, the number of ICU beds available.

Is it possible within the context of that to give us a number in terms of ICU beds within the confines of that bed map?

Mr. Stefanson: I think what we will do is return with that separately. The bed map is more or less being done I think on the same basis as before, but we can certainly provide information on the ICU beds.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, one of the areas that has been incredibly studied is the whole area of emergency services. Now I recognize that there is a provincial review going on of some of the related emergency services. What I would like to know is what the present system is for the city of Winnipeg, what the protocols are and the practices in the city of Winnipeg with respect to emergency situations. In other words, is the Health Sciences Centre now the trauma centre and major trauma is automatically transferred to Health Sciences Centre?

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Are there any longer situations where—the word escapes me, as usual—we are offsetting transfer of vehicles from community hospital, et cetera? I am trying to get what the sense is in terms of diversions—that is the word I was looking for—whether diversions are still on, what the protocols are. Just let me take a step back to show that it is not just a fallacious question or a probing question because I have been contacted by many individuals who are told, for example, when they phone or when they attend at an emergency centre, say, Seven Oaks or Grace,

that they are told actually they should attend at the urgent care centre first. I am trying to get a sense of what the protocols are and what is in effect in terms of emergency conditions in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I take it what the member is after is when it comes to emergency medical services, the Winnipeg ambulance service, what are the protocols in terms of accessing which facilities, and we can certainly provide those protocols. As the member also knows from previous questions and discussions, the City of Winnipeg and the WHA are in discussions on the whole issue of interfacility transfers, and I think they have set a timeline of 90 days to try and resolve that issue.

Mr. Chomiak: I would appreciate copies of that. When the WHA put out its proposals approximately a year to a year and a half ago, one of the next steps was the development of a critical path to support the major changes under WHA as well as the development of a multiyear funding plan. I am wondering if the minister can update us as to the status of the critical path and the multiyear funding plan and, if they are available, to table them.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will provide the member with a status report with as much information as I can on both those issues.

Mr. Chomiak: Does the minister, or can the minister, provide us with information as to the future and the plans for the ophthalmology program presently located at Misericordia?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, it is certainly the intent to maintain the ophthalmology program at Misericordia. Beyond that, I can return again with any status of that service. If there is any specific question the member has, again I would certainly respond and determine information on that.

Mr. Chomiak: I would be interested in the minister tabling information with respect to the status, as well as the issue of the beds that are available for use by the ophthalmology program at Misericordia, and the status of those beds and the continuation of those beds and their function.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, no problem. We will provide that information.

* (1550)

Mr. Chomiak: One of the interesting programs that was offered under the WHA announcement of the major programs was the Criti-call program. I am wondering if the minister can outline—Criti-call program was a 24-hour referral services for physicians to have access to specialists. I am wondering if that program is in operation and if we can have an update on that.

Mr. Stefanson: Probably best I return with an accurate status report for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, this is not specifically related to this area; it is indirectly related to this area. Do we have any information with respect to the timetable for the construction and the functioning of the various components of the cancer treatment facility? Can we have information on that?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told that it is going to open in stages, so I will return with that information for the member. The final completed facility, 100 percent operational, I am told will be January 2002, but various aspects are going to open prior to that. I can give the member a summary of basically the functions and the estimated opening times.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. I would also, if possible, like if the minister could provide as well a similar summary for the redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre and the William Avenue projects and related.

Mr. Stefanson: I will return with that information as well. It is somewhat different, I am told, that the entire new facility will open all at once, but it is going to be done in stages in terms of some of the relocation requirements, renovations and improvements. So, again, I could provide that information to the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister give us an update as to the status of the process in the city of Winnipeg for providing accreditation to doctors to function at various facilities? Can the

minister update us as to where that is in terms of permitting doctors to be accredited and to have access to facilities as a result of shifting programs?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, maybe if the member could clarify whether he is talking accreditation of doctors at certain facilities for certain functional areas like ICU, or whether he is talking admitting privileges at hospitals in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Chomiak: Both, if it is at all possible, because they do affect each other.

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I will return with details on both of those issues. I am certainly told that the issue of admitting privileges has not been a problem in terms of the shift of programs to different facilities and doctors having admitting privileges, but I will return with a status of both of those issues for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: I note, as I go through the information provided, the fact that the minister had tabled the listing of all of the members of the various regional health authorities, as he had indicated.

In the Supplementary Estimates book on page 86, it is indicated under the Provincial Health Services line, subappropriation 21-4B, that, and I am quoting, under Expected Results: "Financial assistance is provided to Manitobans requiring assistive devices."

Can the minister outline what the extent of that financial assistance is, what programs they are and what is offered?

* (1600)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think we did touch on this briefly before, and we are providing a list of the various devices that are covered. It is the prosthetic, as it says on page 87, the prosthetic and orthotic devices, the hearing aid support for children and so on, so I think we did undertake to provide a summary of everything that is covered under those programs.

Mr. Chomiak: I agree the minister did undertake to do that, but financial assistance implies

some kind of program or something else. That is what I am basically trying to determine, but if that is not the case, then I will await receipt of the other information.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, again, I think, as the member probably knows, there are quite varied approaches here from deductibles to reimbursements for expenses and so on, so really financial assistance is meant to cover the various ways that it is done, and when we return with a summary of the programs, we will also show whether it is reimbursement, direct support, buying the devices or how the programs function, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Again, by way of clarification, whether or not we are waiving private members' hour is a bit of a factor, but I intend to proceed through Section 4, a complete Section 4 in the very near future, then pose questions under Section 5, which is the Addictions Foundation for a little bit. The questions will not be particularly difficult or specific and finally probably closing out on Capital Grants and the like. Having said that, I do have a question on one of the pieces of information that was tabled by the minister and that was the grants and transfer payments from Manitoba Health.

There was a grant of \$33,000 to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. It is indicated the agency's goal is delivery, maintenance and enhancement of MIS. Can the minister give me more information as to who the Canadian Institute for Health Information is?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the chair, the CEO, is Mr. Michael Decter, a familiar name to most of us in this building. This is our share of the funding or the support for that organization, ours being the Province of Manitoba. I am told that they in theory report to the conference of ministers of Health. They do a number of national analyses, health data. They recently were the source for that health publication in Maclean's magazine. They have recently put out some additional health information on comparisons across Canada, so they really are a health information and research body done on a national basis for national

comparisons of health indicators, health statistics, health financial information, and so on.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister also provided us with information on the Victorian Order of Nurses backup service information. I wonder if the minister can provide us with a little bit more detailed information as to the kinds of services that are available both from VON as well as from WCA in terms of services that are provided on the weekends, backup and emergency-related services. I know that there are initiatives in that area. That may come with some of the other information that is coming, but I wanted to specifically highlight those particular areas.

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we could provide that information.

Mr. Chomiak: Under the Pharmacare item, just a general question. At one time there was a monitoring from the Department of Health as to the costs and fees charged for dispensing fees and drugs that are offered under the program. Is there any kind of a system in place now to deal with that?

Mr. Stefanson: We do continue to monitor the issue of the dispensing fee on an ongoing basis. I think, as in the past, that fee is really driven by market conditions. There is no cap, no fixed amount, but we do continue to monitor it to ensure the reasonableness of those fees charged.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not like dancing around in terms of going back and forth in questions, but the time structures are such that I am doing that. So I apologize.

There are needs assessments being done in rural Manitoba with respect to services to be offered. What is the ongoing process that is going on now outside of Winnipeg to determine what programs are going to be offered where?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I am told that the RHAs will continue to update their needs assessment. It is not as though it is just a one-time document and then nothing happens with it after that.

As the member for Kildonan knows, there are core levels of services that are to be provided

in our health care system. What we do each year is we get a health care plan from each of the regions, and that is an opportunity to obviously assess the recommendations and decisions the regions are making in terms of the provision of those services, their requirements in different communities, and so on. So again, it is likely discussed with a few other issues, that it is very collaborative between the RHAs and the Department of Health in terms of reviewing their plans for the services they are providing.

* (1610)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, so essentially the process is that the annual needs are budget-based or needs-based assessment that is done with each RHA. There are the core services that are mandated by the provincial Department of Health, and that is assessed on a yearly basis.

Is there any kind of a five-year or rolling plan in terms of a future direction and/or needs?

Mr. Stefanson: I think, like some issues, that is where we will end up, with longer-term plans of three to five years. We are not there yet, for obvious reasons, in terms of the transitions that the system has gone through and in terms of the RHAs doing their needs assessment and doing their annual business plan. So I certainly see us ending up where the member has asked, with five-year plans, but right now it is done on an annual basis.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, perhaps we should take a break at this point. Generally, I think I am going to move on to Section 5, followed by Section 6. We will also have some determinations as to whether or not private members' hour is waived, which could affect the—but maybe we should take a five- or 10-minute break at this point, if that is acceptable. We could pass or we could wait. We might want to wait for Marcel, because he has got it all in his head maybe, but I do not know.

Mr. Stefanson: We will then just take a five-minute break.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): We will take a five-minute break. We have the agreement of the committee to take a five-minute break, I believe. Good. Okay.

The committee recessed at 4:16 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:25 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will come to order.

Mr. Chomiak: We certainly could pass the items under Section 21.4., or would it be more advisable just to go through and pass it all? Whatever is most expedient.

Mr. Chairperson: I will just pass that Section 21.4. now, and then we will move on to the next one, make it easier.

Section 21.4. Health Services Insurance Fund (a) Funding to Health Authorities, Acute Care Services \$870,311,300—pass; Long Term Care Services \$300,477,700—pass; Home Care Services \$147,220,900—pass; Community and Mental Health Services \$97,688,500—pass; Emergency Response and Transport Services \$11,581,600—pass; Less: Third Party Recoveries (\$5,295,600)—pass; Less: Reciprocal Recoveries (\$29,878,000)—pass.

Section 21.4.(b) Provincial Health Services, Out of Province \$18,658,800—pass; Blood Transfusion Services \$25,273,900—pass; Federal Hospitals \$1,859,700—pass; Prosthetic and Orthotic Devices \$4,093,100—pass; Healthy Communities Development \$10,000,000—pass; Nursing Education \$5,748,200—pass; Other \$82,900—pass.

Section 21.4.(c) Medical, Physician Services \$388,789,900—pass; Other Professionals \$12,944,600—pass; Out-of-Province Physicians \$13,384,600—pass; Other \$1,225,200—pass; Less: Third Party Recoveries (\$2,433,400)—pass; Less: Reciprocal Recoveries (\$6,365,400)—pass.

Section 21.4.(d) Pharmacare \$72,338,400—pass.

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$1,937,706,900 for Health, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

We will now move on to Resolution 21.5. Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Board of Governors and Executive \$185,200.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have only some general questions in this area, and I do not know if the minister has the personnel available. Certainly, like most other information, we look forward to the subsequent follow-up responses.

Mr. David Faurichou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) knows, but joining me is the executive director of the AFM, Mr. Herb Thompson. I did not introduce Linda Bakken, who is the director of Capital Planning who joined us earlier.

Mr. Chomiak: This is just for perusal and information purposes. I wonder if we can have a description of the methadone management program that is offered in Manitoba in terms of an outline of how the program works, the number of participants and general information respecting its effectiveness, as well as whether there are any plans to continue and/or expand the program.

* (1630)

Mr. Stefanson: I am certainly prepared to return with some more details, but as the member would know, it is a program that was taken over from St. Boniface Hospital. I am told there are three staff and now some 78 persons on the program. It is certainly being described to me as a very successful and obviously worthwhile program. I can certainly provide further information on the status of the program, again confirming the numbers of people and the staffing and the resources directed towards it and the overall objectives and results.

Mr. Chomiak: Without resulting in a lot of additional work, I would appreciate it if the minister could return with just that written information. As well, I wonder if it is possible

to have a listing of all of the programs available. I am thinking of residential programs for young and adolescents for drug dependency treatment, if that would be possible.

Mr. Stefanson: I will return with those details. I think, as the member knows, there are really two adolescent programs funded by the Manitoba government, St. Norbert Foundation and then the AFM program that now is going to be opening at the facility opening at Southport in Portage la Prairie in the next few months. There are two programs, I am also told, running through the federal government, one at Sagkeeng First Nation and one at Thompson. So that is just an overview, and I will return with more information for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. I look forward to the information. Unfortunately, more often than not, we as MLAs experience the difficulty and the problem of parents approaching us as MLAs or others saying they suspect their child may be involved with drugs and the like.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Is there a primer or is there any kind that we all typically follow courses of action with respect to that? Is there a primer or is there information sheet or a flow chart or a description that can be provided to ourselves that can outline the steps that can be taken by the parent in terms of dealing with the—I mean I know this happens all the time. Is there a primer or a sheet or information available for us as MLAs?

Mr. Stefanson: The short answer is, yes, I will make that available to the member. It might be timely. I will certainly look at whether or not the time has come to circulate that to all members of the Legislature.

Mr. Chomiak: Can I have a description of the community-based dual diagnosis program in Winnipeg?

Mr. Stefanson: I will provide greater detail, but it is run by the same staff that run the methadone program. I gather one is running in the morning, the methadone, and the dual diagnosis in the afternoon. It is run out of

Misericordia. Once patients are stabilized, they are provided this service. Again, I will provide greater detail on that program for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Would it be possible to get a listing, again, if it is available, of all of the programs offered by AFM?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, there is an annual that is published, and we can make a copy available to the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Can we get a sense or an understanding as to the number of staff and the extent of the AFM's involvement with EAP programs?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I think that would be another program I could return with greater detail. Generally the Addictions Foundation goes into an employer, develops a program, provides information, education, and so on. They do counselling if there is a need for an intervention, but the intervention is really done through the human resources of that particular employer. But if there is a need for further follow-up or further treatment, again the AFM is involved. So that is an overview of the program, and I will return with more details for the member.

* (1640)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, every year I make a determination in Estimates that we will spend more time in this area, and every year the same thing happens; so I apologize. There are some significant issues that need to be addressed.

Can we get an update as to what is happening in terms of the sniff and nonpotable alcohol abuse process in the province; in other words, where programs are available and what programs are available both residential and nonresidential?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, the same as other questions, I will provide greater details. But St. Norbert Foundation provides support for individuals up to, I believe, 24 years of age; I think 20 beds provided at St. Norbert. AFM has basically an outpatient kind of a service to

individuals. They also go into a number of schools, 19 or 20 of the schools. Again, the federal program through the two sites we talked about, Sagkeeng First Nation and Thompson, provide support in these areas. So that is again a snapshot of the program, and I will provide greater details.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I think because I want to ask a few questions in terms of capital that I think we can probably pass this area. I am curious though, and I will just throw this out. Has there been any examination or review in Manitoba of the medicinal use of a particular substance that shall go unnamed and what the status of that is?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, a timely question. AFM is doing a review of that very issue, and I expect a report within the next couple of months.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, will that report be a public document? Of course, I recognize the whole issue of timing; the minister did say a couple of months. I suspect there is a timing factor it involves, but I still pose the question.

Mr. Stefanson: I would expect that at the appropriate time that would become a public document.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.5. Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Board of Governors and Executive \$185,200—pass; Finance and Personnel \$352,900—pass; Drug and Alcohol Awareness and Information \$532,000—pass; Program Delivery \$11,115,000—pass; Gambling Addictions Program \$1,652,100—pass; Less: Recoveries from the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation, Third Party Recoveries \$1,652,100 and \$1,817,300—pass.

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,367,800 for Health, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

21.6. Capital Grants (a) Acute Care (1) Principal Repayments \$28,674,400.

Mr. Chomiak: I actually wanted to jump up when you were going through that and just ask,

if it is at all possible—it does indicate that there is a gambling program that is being aimed at the at-risk populations, seniors, aboriginals, and young people. I am wondering if it is possible to get an allocation of the government's determination of the at-risk populations, if that is at all possible, if the minister can undertake perhaps to provide us with that.

Mr. Stefanson: I believe that information is available. I will certainly make available whatever is on that issue for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Returning to capital, I do not think I will get through my briefing book on the capital issues, but I did want to determine and establish again the issue. The minister tabled the document that indicated \$20.7 million in terms of capital. Does the minister's provision of this addition to the Supplementary Estimates indicate that our capital allocations for this year have increased by \$20.7 million or was the \$20.7 million already included in the budgetary Estimates? If it was included, where is it?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, it has been included all along. All that happened is that in the rush to have the detailed supplement of Health ready, knowing we would be the first department up, there was an oversight in not including those two pages in the Supplementary document. In the Detailed Expenditures, you can see on page 153 and then carry forward to 154, on 153 is the summary, 154 the details of Health. So it has all along been included. It was just an oversight in the preparation of the supplement document.

Mr. Chomiak: What would be correct to state what the capital expenditures in terms of Health are in total for this budgetary year for the province? Clearly, it is \$72 million under Capital Grants. There is amortization of \$1.3 million and then again of \$1.3 million and then we would add the \$20.7 million. Would that be a fair and accurate compilation of what the capital is for the province for this year?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told this is always a confusing issue for members, and I am certainly prepared to take the time with the member. That is not correct what he indicated. Our capital program is \$123 million on the building capital that we discussed before, the personal care

homes, the hospitals and so on. Where that ultimately shows up as an expenditure will be under the Principal Repayments line, 21.6.(a)(1), so you do not see the \$123 million here at all. All you ultimately see is the paying back of the debt on the \$123 million.

On the equipment we discussed previously, \$10 million of the equipment is also financed as a capital investment, so, again, you only see that as a payment of the debt. On the information technology, the capital investment, all we are seeing as an expense here is the amortization of those investments, so the \$20 million is separate.

So, if you really wanted to look at the capital investment this year, you would have to take the \$123-million capital for buildings. You would have to take the \$27.5 million roughly for equipment on a combined basis with the debt and what it is in here, and you would have to take the \$20 million for investment in the IT project. So, in terms of total capital investment in Health, you would be up at about \$170 million. So that differs from what you see as the expense portion, which is the amortization and the principal repayment of the debt.

* (1650)

Mr. Chomiak: Has the department been approached by the Refit Centre with respect to a need for a capital infusion, and can the minister indicate what the position of the government is in that regard?

Mr. Stefanson: The short answer is we have had a request from Refit for an expansion and upgrade of their services. Certainly, we are generally supportive of the facility itself, the services they provide and so on, and I expect to be able to provide further details on that shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: That sounds like a fairly positive response. Would that mean an additional capital appropriation that would be required in order to meet those needs, or could those be found within the existing capital funds?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, we are looking at it from both a health perspective and also from a community perspective. So if we end up supporting it, it might not necessarily be from

one of these accounts. There are some other accounts that we could potentially support the Refit fund, but you are right, we are generally positive in terms of the overall service it does provide.

Mr. Chomiak: It seems to me that rehabilitation programs have been transferred from St. Boniface Hospital to Refit in order to undertake that, so that only lends credence to the argument about the particular provisions.

Mr. Stefanson: That is correct. We provide some ongoing support for that program that was transferred through the WCA, so the member is correct. That is one element of the service they provide that is important to the community.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairman, being very much aware of the time, I am posing a question quick and concise. I understand the minister has the chiropractor's legislation as proposed amendments. I have had conversations with a couple of physios. They wanted to find out in terms of what the government's intentions are with proposed legislation. Is the government looking at bringing in legislation this session with regard to physios?

Mr. Stefanson: The earlier legislation we are actually looking at is for physiotherapists. It has been on the order paper. I intend to be bringing forward first reading very shortly. There is some interrelationship with chiropractors. I have met with both groups, had discussions about those issues, but we do intend to bring forward certain amendments to, I think it is called, The Physiotherapists Act.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall I pass that capital stuff?

An Honourable Member: Yes, pass.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Staff can leave now.

Item 21.6. Capital Grants (a) Acute Care (1) Principal Repayments \$28,674,400-pass; (2) Equipment Purchases and Replacements \$16,202,000-pass; (3) Other \$20,201,200-pass; (4) Less: Recoverable from Capital Initiatives (\$5,000,000)-pass.

21.6.(b) Long Term Care (1) Principal Repayments \$6,506,200-pass; (2) Equipment Purchases and Replacements \$1,282,200-pass; (3) Other \$4,850,500-pass.

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$72,716,500 for Health, Capital Grants for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

21.7. Amortization of Capital Assets - Provides for the amortization of capital assets \$1,326,300-pass.

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,326,300 for Health, Amortization of Capital Assets for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

We will now return back to the first resolution: 21.1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$27,000.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just two brief comments.

Firstly, I anticipate that there will be more discussion concerning the physiotherapy bill. I am not sure if the minister is aware of some interesting developments in that area, and disagreements. I think that we will be saying more about discussing that in more detail.

Secondly, I just want to indicate at this point I appreciated very much the minister's co-operation. I think it built on a tradition that was started by the previous minister of perhaps less rhetoric and more information exchange. I wanted to thank the minister, and his staff through him, for the co-operation.

Finally, while certainly we voted in favour of this budget, one of the reasons we voted in favour of this budget was because, from our view, for the first time in 11 years a lot of what we have asked for has actually been announced. We certainly do not agree with everything that the government is doing in the area of health care and have made our position known, but the reason for support in most areas is that it is better to accept some of these programs and initiatives that we have long sought after at this

point rather than reject them when in fact we had called for a lot of them for a number of years.

Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, I can indicate that I am not even bringing in an amendment—at this point.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,760,200 for Health, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

That concludes the Estimates of the Department of Health. The next department up will be Executive Council.

Is it the will of the committee to call it five o'clock? [agreed]

Five o'clock. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker. Time for private members' hour.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I understand that there is not leave. There is not leave to waive private members' hour, so that the committee should rise, and we should proceed with that part of the day's business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., and time for Private Members' Business.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 14—Child Poverty and National Child Benefit

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that

"WHEREAS the National Child Benefit was specifically designed to address the issue of child poverty in Canada; and

"WHEREAS 25% or 1 in 4 Manitoba children are living in poverty, which is the highest rate of child poverty in Canada; and

"WHEREAS children make up over 40% of Manitobans who rely on food banks; and

"WHEREAS cuts in provincially and federally funded programs including programs in health, education and social services have been demonstrated to be major contributing factors to child poverty and to the numbers of children in the care of Child and Family Services; and

"WHEREAS in its 1998 budget the Provincial Government promised to invest \$20 million of "new money" into low income children and their families; and

"WHEREAS part of this 'new money' is the result of the Provincial Government clawing back the National Child Benefit for children of social assistance recipients and redirecting a portion of it into short term pilot projects that target only a small number of low income families with children.

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Family Services to consider allowing the federal funds for the National Child Benefit to flow, as intended, to all low income families with children."

Motion presented.

Mr. Hickes: The National Child Benefit was specifically designed to address the issue of child poverty in Canada. The National Child Benefit was intended to go to low income families so that they could better provide for the basic needs of their children. This added assistance is vital in Manitoba where one in four children live in poverty. Year after year, we almost shamefully admit that this is the highest rate of child poverty in all of Canada. That is not a record to be proud of.

When we see and hear the government of the day stating that our economy is booming and

Manitobans are way better off than they were 11 years ago yet we hold the record of being the child poverty capital, it is no benefit to the hungry children who have to go to bed at night without food for their little tummies, Madam Speaker.

In 1988, there were virtually no children using the food banks, virtually none in 1988. Yet by 1998, over 6,300 children were forced to use food banks to get the basic nutrition they need. Between 1991 and 1998, the number of children using food banks in this province has increased by 1,000 percent—1,000 percent. I do not think any government that has an increase that affects our children that drastically can state that they are doing an excellent job. They might be doing an excellent job for some, but the most needy are not accessing the benefits of the rest of the province.

Madam Speaker, two out of five people using food banks are children, that is, two out of five people who come and get the food from Winnipeg Harvest and food banks are children. Over 41 percent of Winnipeg Harvest users are children, yet only 26 percent of Winnipeg's population consists of children and youth. Our children are disproportionately represented among the poor and the hungry.

If you just look back 11 years of the Conservative government, one has to question where the priorities are. It is fine to have the economy so-called booming as the Conservatives say, but they forget the children, and they forget the increases in our food banks. In fact, I have heard that there is even a food bank in Steinbach—Steinbach, Manitoba. That is one of the most thriving communities, so why is the government of the day leaving some of the individuals behind?

Why not do something to help the individuals gain training and employment opportunities instead of having to resort to using food banks across the province? In fact, there are food banks at the universities. That was unheard of, but because of the increases in tuition fees and the other programs that students could access and the costs going higher and higher for students to get their education, that is why a lot of the students have now had to resort

to using food banks. There has to be a fair level playing field for all citizens of Manitoba whether you have or you have not. There is not an individual that I know or that I have spoken to that would not take the opportunity to access training and to better their own careers and better the lives of their families. But those programs have to be there, those have to be meaningful programs to be accessed by the individuals. They do not want a handout, they want a hand up.

All I have to look at are two programs that were vital to a lot of the individuals that I represent. When you had the cutback of the Access programs, that impacted negatively on a lot of the individuals that today, because of the unfairness of the government to access training and training dollars to further their careers and their wishes and hopes of bettering the lives of their families, the negative impact that those cuts have created are totally unfair.

The other program that I am very familiar with was called New Careers. That program took individuals, whether they were from social assistance, unemployment, or low-income positions, and brought the individuals in for training programs and had a very high success rate. This government totally cut the funding to that program right off. One hundred percent of it wiped out. There is no program as New Careers, and yet today you can walk the streets and you meet individuals and their families that benefited greatly from those kinds of training programs.

So how could a government that says we are doing all we can for all citizens of Manitoba cut such valuable resources and opportunities for individuals where, as I said earlier, they wanted a hand up not a handout and they wanted a better life for themselves and their families? How in all conscience could they cut 100 percent of that funding? Another cut that was made by this government that I think is totally, totally unfair was elimination of the funding to the friendship centres right across Manitoba. I have visited virtually all of the friendship centres at one time or another either through friendship or through my previous careers. I saw the benefit to the individuals of the services and the programs the friendship centres were delivering.

Yet the government, in their misguided wisdom, cut 100 percent of the funding, the core funding to the friendship centres. Now we are slowly handing back where they have created, they pass on \$400,000 for training and they say: you should be happy with that. But yet they have cut \$1.2 million year after year for six years. Do not tell me that has not had a negative impact on a lot of the people that have had to resort to using the food banks today.

Some of the individuals that were involved and working at the friendship centres I meet and see today. A lot of them are not gainfully employed. They are very good workers. They wish the best for themselves and their families, but they do not have the opportunity.

Madam Speaker, there are 12,000 more people on welfare now than there were in 1988. Now, why is that? Yet we hear the economy is booming. Well, how could 12,000 individuals be left behind? Is there something wrong with the recruiting process?

* (1710)

There is something missing where if you leave that many people behind. You are stating that you have a robust economy and all Manitobans are being positively impacted by the economy that is created by the government. I assure you, those 12,000 people would not agree. They would wish to have the opportunity that some individuals have had. There has to be cracks in the system. How do you fill those cracks?

It is not an overnight miracle, because this has taken 11 years of a Conservative government to fall this far behind, where the poorest of the poor are being left further and further behind.

We have to start looking at reinstating some of the horrible cuts that we have seen over those 11 years. I gave you a few examples. Even the Social Planning Council, the National Council on Welfare, the Canadian Council on Social Development, even the United Nations have all expressed alarm at the rising levels of child poverty in Manitoba. That is not just Manitobans stating that. People are seeing it and recognizing it. The government has to recognize

it. Government has to do something in partnership with the people who are impacted.

The Social Planning Council would be a good start. Meet with the Social Planning Council, hear their ideas, get some of their input. They deal with people all the time. The Harvest. What is wrong with meeting with individuals from Harvest and saying, look, in partnership, where are the problems, what can we do to try and help individuals?

Like I keep stating over and over, they want a hand up, they do not want a hand out. But it has to be done in co-operation with the people and the individuals who run these organizations and put in countless caring and their time to try and make people's lives just a little bit better.

Despite economic growth in the province, more and more of our children are living in poverty. More and more of our children are getting trapped in the cycle of poverty that is increasingly difficult to break out of. That is what I was stating earlier, Madam Speaker. When you have a cycle of poverty over and over within generations and generations of families, if you do not break that cycle, that cycle will be there whether five years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years.

That is where some of the education programs that this government in their misguided wisdom cut. It used to benefit the individuals. You used to be able to break that cycle. Then you see the generations and the generations after succeeding very well whether it was in the social work area, whether it was corrections officers in the adult system or the youth system, whether it was Natural Resources officers, whether it was mechanics, painters, janitors in the schools, what have you. Those opportunities are there, but you have to help the individuals access the opportunities that are there for some individuals but not for all. Our unemployment rate drops, but our child poverty rate just keeps on increasing. Is there not something wrong with that? There is something wrong with that picture. Our unemployment rate drops, but the child poverty rates increase.

Between 1989 and 1996, 9,000 additional children fell into poverty despite the fact that

one of their parents held a full-time job. Wage levels in Manitoba are so low that even with both parents working many children still live in poverty. The minimum wage was raised to \$6 recently, but with both parents working full time it takes an hourly wage of \$8.75 to take that family above the poverty line. These families need help to ensure that your children get the kind of shelter, nourishment and the simple things like books and bus fare that are necessary to give these children the solid base they need to succeed in life.

When we hear over and over of all the opportunities that this government is creating and our unemployment rate is going down, that is fine. But they have to be meaningful jobs that you could sustain and feed a family on. Creating a multitude of jobs at \$6 an hour is not going to cut it. There is no one in this Chamber, no one in this Chamber can feed their families on \$6 an hour. Pay your rent, buy your food, clothe your children, produce bus fare, and a lot of children like to read, purchase some books and stuff, you could not do it on \$6 an hour. That is why we have tried to stress the importance of creating employment opportunities that pay more than the minimum wage, because those kinds of programs benefit some if you are single or if you are a student, but not when you are trying to raise a family. There is no way that I know a family could sustain and live on a \$6-an-hour job.

Manitoba, for one thing, has the highest rate of youth violent crime in Canada. Manitoba has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in Canada. Manitoba has the highest rate of school dropouts in Canada. Study after study has shown that these rates are intimately tied to poverty. The only way to reduce these rates is to reduce poverty. Madam Speaker, it is a whole cycle of poverty. [interjection] The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) states it is our fault, the government's fault. If you look at some of the cuts you have undertaken, I only named you a few—friendship centres, the New Careers program, the Access funding. You have to take some of that responsibility; you have to take some of that responsibility.

When you live in poverty—I mentioned earlier—the cycle of poverty over and over and

over, the children, for one thing, do not see a future. So they sort of give up hope, and they do not after awhile look and know where the resources are. I think that our job, to make sure that people are aware of where the opportunities are and when they are available, to ensure that the message is sent out there and the resources are put in place in order for people to get gainful employment, first training and gainful employment.

For instance, Madam Speaker—I know I do not have much time—we have schools that sit in neighbourhoods that are empty. Why do we not utilize those classrooms for the families, their children and for the whole community? Thank you.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I really want to thank my honourable friend for bringing this resolution forward. It certainly gives us an opportunity in this House to discuss the kinds of things that have been happening not only in Manitoba around child poverty but right across the nation. It has been an issue that has been on the agenda of ministers of social services right across the country for many years now and something that not only we in Manitoba have a need to address but certainly respective jurisdictions, regardless of political stripe in every province and territory across this nation, but also at the federal level. I think that this is one area where all provinces and the federal government have found a way to work in a very co-operative fashion to try to address the issue of child poverty.

The National Child Benefit is the initiative that was agreed to by both levels of government and certainly has been applauded by many, many throughout our country as the right direction to go. It is not very often that you see both federal and provincial governments and provinces of different political stripes, Madam Speaker, working together to try to address the issue of child poverty.

I want to indicate what the goals of the implementation of the National Child Benefit were. Number one, it was to reduce the depth of child poverty; No. 2, to ensure that people were better off working than on welfare, and we know

very often that the additional benefits that people get when they are on our welfare system are benefits that are greater than those that might be obtained or achieved as people move into the workforce. So it was to develop that kind of attachment to the workforce and ensure that families were better off working than on welfare, and, of course, with any other program, to try to reduce some of the overlap and duplication between different levels of government and within governments internally. I think we have been fairly successful in accomplishing, or making a start on accomplishing, the objectives that were set out when the National Child Benefit was introduced.

* (1720)

Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear members of the opposition in the New Democratic Party in this Chamber talking completely differently from NDP administrations that are governing other provinces across the country. I find that very interesting because when you are in government and having to make decisions, and sometimes very difficult decisions in your respective jurisdictions, you have to take some responsibility and be held accountable. But in opposition, you can criticize and you can say we would do something different, but the reality is when New Democratic parties across the country, in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, endorse wholeheartedly the approach that was taken under the National Child Benefit, I have to question where the New Democratic opposition party is coming from in Manitoba.

We have always said in opposition you can have it all ways. You do not really have to indicate exactly what your position is or you can talk about spending more on all kinds of different programs, but you do not necessarily need to talk about where that money might come from or where you might reduce a government budget in any significant way to try to find the money that they talk about. Both Saskatchewan and British Columbia have adopted the same process as Manitoba has. I should say, too, one of the underlying principles of the National Child Benefit was that no one would be worse off as a result of the National Child Benefit. That is exactly what has happened here in Manitoba. As the federal government puts extra

dollars into the hands of low-income families, dollar for dollar, those dollars have been reinvested in Manitoba into areas of early intervention.

If we as a government were just looking for a quick fix, we certainly would not be putting money into early intervention programs because we know that there are long-term, lasting positive effects as a result of early intervention, but there is not any quick fix in the four years of a term of government to try to find the solutions and the answers. And there are not any easy solutions or easy answers, Madam Speaker.

What we have to try to do is ensure that every child gets off to a healthy start to life. By working with families and children at birth, we can try to have some positive impact on the cycle of child poverty and the cycle of welfare and the cycle of unemployment because we know that the best form of social security is a job. We are working very proactively, as a government, to ensure that people have the opportunities to move into training and into some sort of meaningful program that will move them from the cycle of poverty on welfare into the workforce. When they have children, the National Child Benefit kicks in and provides additional support over and above the salary that they make until they reach a certain threshold. I think that is a positive and progressive way to go.

I am extremely pleased that our government has made the kinds of decisions around reinvestment into children and families that we have made, so much so that the C.D. Howe Institute just recently did a study of how provinces have reinvested their dollars through the National Child Benefit. Quite frankly, I was really pleased to learn that after careful analysis the C.D. Howe Institute endorsed Manitoba's selection with the National Child Benefit.

I just found a quote from the paper that they did, and they are somewhat critical of Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia with the way they reinvested their money in earned income supplements. I guess as a result of the tax regime, families are not much better off as a result of the reinvestment.

Madam Speaker, the research goes on to state: "Instead of using its welfare saving to fund cash benefits, Manitoba used it to implement a 'ChildrenFirst' strategy, involving early intervention programs for families having problems, improved school nutrition, and 'head-start' education for preschoolers. These initiatives, Sayeed says, do not raise welfare walls because eligibility is based on neighborhood and family characteristics rather than on income.

"Sayeed argues that the other provinces should adopt variations of Manitoba's strategy rather than further raise their cash benefits to low-income families. High clawbacks on cash payments put punishing tax rates in front of low-income families taking on paid work. Support aimed directly at children growing up in disadvantaged circumstances may be more useful in combating the cycle of poverty. "

So it gives me some comfort to know that we are moving in the right direction. Is there more that needs to be done? Absolutely. Any level of child poverty is too much. What we need to do is try to address the root cause of the issue of poverty right across this province and try to find the common-sense solutions, the early interventions that will, in fact, lead to a healthier Manitoba and healthier communities.

Madam Speaker, I do want to speak just briefly about some of the reinvestments that we have made under the National Child Benefit. In this year's budget alone, in addition to the money that was put in last year, over \$20 million to support children and families, there is another \$25 million in the budget this year that will go to early intervention programs. A significant amount of money has been put into our child care system to ensure that the spaces are there and the flexibility is there for nontraditional work hours, so that as people move off of welfare and into the workforce through programs like Taking Charge! and Opportunities for Employment, just to name a couple, the child care is available when they need it. So a significant amount of money has gone into child care.

One of the programs that we have implemented here in Manitoba and that many provinces are looking at and the federal

government has applauded is the Women and Infant Nutrition program, where in the last trimester of pregnancy and the first year a child is born, if in fact a family is on welfare, we provide an additional \$65 per month if parents enroll in nutrition and parenting programs. It is a program that has been hailed as one of the best ways of investing in children and families right across the country. Many provinces, including Saskatchewan, are looking very closely at this program that we have implemented to see whether it might be something they might want to introduce in their province.

Madam Speaker, our BabyFirst program, which looks at every baby that is born in the province of Manitoba today, some 14,000, and does a risk assessment, and if in fact there is a sense that that family needs some support, mentors will actually go right into people's homes and help new moms and dads learn how to parent, learn how to feed their children nutritiously and get their children off to a good start to life. Our EarlyStart program is working with child care facilities, and we have 35 child care facilities today that are running EarlyStart programs. We have more money in our budget this year to increase the number of childcare facilities. I know my honourable friend, my colleague from Burrows, has these programs running in his constituency, and I am hearing some good things from the community organizations that are running the programs and the families that have been involved.

Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that these programs are not top-down driven. Government has not said: this is the program we are going to run right throughout Manitoba, and you will have to conform as communities to these programs to receive the funding. These are programs that are initiated at the community level.

* (1730)

One of the differences between a New Democratic administration and a Conservative administration, quite frankly, is that we believe that community has the ideas and the solutions, and we believe in building from the bottom up, not from the top down. We have heard many times, in Question Period over the last number of

weeks, members of the New Democratic opposition saying: why do you not direct school divisions or why do you not direct communities to do this or that.

Madam Speaker, that is not our style and that is not our approach. We believe the people that live within communities have the ideas and the answers to the solutions that impact them. If you build programs, family by family, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, community by community and give the resources and empower the people in the community to work, to make a difference, they will rise to the occasion. We have seen it time and time again. We see it with the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the leadership of people like Mary Richard, who has in fact—and quite frankly, and I know very often members of the opposition, especially of the female gender across the way, agree that the solutions and the answers are going to come from the women within the community. We are working with the women in the community, the women that are the nurturers—[interjection]

The member for Burrows says it is a sexist comment, and he is somehow inferring that women do not have a role to play in nurturing and building families. Well, there again is where we differ. We believe that empowering the women and the people within neighbourhoods and communities to deliver the programs that are going to impact in a positive way, not only on their families circumstances but on their community circumstances, and ultimately for the betterment of all Manitobans. I believe that we are moving in the right direction with the National Child Benefit, and I know that Manitobans support the direction that we are going. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I would like to also thank the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) for an excellent resolution. It begins by saying that the National Child Benefit was specifically designed to address the issue of child poverty in Canada. Now it is true, and as the minister says, that the federal and provincial governments worked jointly on enhancing the National Child Benefit; however, it was probably one of the worst agreements in Canada or at least an agreement that had the worst

bottom line I have ever heard of in terms of addressing a problem when the federal government agreed with the provinces that no child would be worse off. So they started off by adding \$805 million, I believe it was, but every province except two chose to claw back all of that money from people on social assistance.

I was quite surprised to find that even people who are working full time and getting a partial subsidy from income assistance in Manitoba are losing all of the money. [interjection] The minister says no. I would be quite happy to have the minister clarify that for me in Estimates, because that is what I was told by somebody who is working full time as a teaching assistant. If I am wrong, I will withdraw those remarks, but that is what I was told by somebody who is working and on social assistance. I am not going to withdraw it until I see the facts.

The resolution goes on to say that 25 percent or one in four Manitoba children are living in poverty. In fact, I have a brief from the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, who met with the Premier and cabinet ministers on Thursday, March 11, this year. They have a research capacity. They have statistics. I would like to quote from them in their brief.

They said: At 26.6 percent, Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in Canada, 3.1 percent higher than that of Nova Scotia, which has the second highest, and 5.5 higher than the national average.

So this is something this government should be ashamed of, and that is being far above the average in Canada for poverty.

Certain groups are overrepresented among the poor. In 1996, the poverty rate for female lone-parent families in Manitoba was 71.4 percent compared to 18.4 percent for children of two-parent families. Aboriginal families and their children tend to be overrepresented among the poor. Unfortunately, the Manitoba child poverty report card does not contain data from First Nations communities.

So we know that Manitoba has a disgraceful record in child poverty, that the latest statistics were not the only year that we were the child

poverty capital of Canada, but that we have had that dubious distinction several times. We know that 40 percent of Manitobans who rely on food banks are children. We get this from Winnipeg Harvest, who regularly send us statistics. In fact, I was reading that this means that children are vastly overrepresented among the users of food banks.

The resolution goes on to say why we have such an abysmal rate of child poverty. It attributes this to cuts in provincially and federally funded programs, including programs in health, education, and social services, which have been demonstrated to be major contributing factors to child poverty.

The resolution goes on to say that the provincial government promised to invest \$20 million of "new money" into low-income children and their families. Well, not all of it was new money, as I am sure the minister would admit, because most of it was the clawed-back money. In fact, I think in the first year at least \$10 million was clawed-back money. I think on a 12-month basis it was more like \$14 million. The province topped it up with approximately \$6 million of their own money.

The minister, of course, likes to talk about what is happening to all of this money and the pilot projects, which is why of course we call her the minister of pilot projects, because they clawed back this money, most of the money, from families on social assistance, and put it into the minister's pet projects. It would be interesting to see how long they stay around, whether some of them will be evaluated and terminated or whether they will be permanent. The good ones, of course, we want them to stay.

But there are a number of problems with pilot projects. One is, if you happen to live near the Andrews Street Family Centre, you are lucky, because you get to take advantage of some of these pilot projects, the funding, the parenting and the good programs targeted at children. But if you live in a community where all the money is clawed back and there is no program, how do you benefit from the National Child Benefit programs of this government? You do not benefit at all if you do not live in a community that provides the money and provides the programs.

In fact, we got phone calls from people who live adjacent to First Nations communities. What is happening there is that, on reserve, the money is clawed back, but then it is put into programs on the reserve. But if you live on the other side of the reserve boundary, the money is being clawed back. It is coming to Winnipeg and maybe some other communities. I do not know if there are any pilot projects outside Winnipeg, but the people in the community adjacent to the reserve have nothing. They do not have the money from the National Child Benefit, because it was all clawed back, and they do not have the benefit of the program. So they lose twice.

Now, what the intent of this resolution is, which I know that this government will never agree to, is to consider allowing the federal funds for the National Child Benefit to flow as intended to all low income families with children. The government has made their decision. I am quite sure they are not going to change their minds. Low income families on social assistance will never see that money.

I would also like to quote from the Social Planning Council report, because they made a number of important recommendations. For example, they requested a Premier's council or a round table on child poverty. Now the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the cabinet ministers who met with the Social Planning Council had a problem. That problem was that they could not bring themselves to say the "p" word. They could not possibly agree to a round table or a Premier's council that included the word "poverty," so they watered it down and they called it something else. I cannot remember what it was. I am sure I could look up the minister's news release, but they just could not admit that we have a problem with poverty in Winnipeg or in Manitoba, so they agreed to it but they changed the name.

The Social Planning Council had a number of recommendations on income support issues, and they recommended that the Manitoba government allow all families with children to retain the new money from the federal government which has been added to the National Child Benefit starting with children from zero to six. I presume that they would increase that in future years in terms of their

recommendation of staging it in. They also recommended that the Manitoba government work out a plan to restore the full amount of the Child Tax Benefit to families. So they began with zero to six, and then they want the full amount restored.

Now the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) said some interesting things. Of course they are in the documents, and I would even like to thank the assistant deputy minister for sending me the National Child Benefit progress report 1999 which is a very interesting document to read. It explains how the benefit works; it explains what different provinces are doing including Manitoba; it points out that Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick are allowing all families to keep all of the money, which Manitoba could have done.

* (1740)

It also mentions something that the minister mentioned and that is that the provinces and the federal government are redefining poverty. They have a problem because with the existing low income cutoffs Manitoba and other provinces have a very high rate of poverty. So in order to get rid of this problem, instead of actually doing something to help families with their income disparity problem, they decided instead it was easier to change the definitions. So for example, in the progress report it talks about measuring low income, and they actually have charts and graphs that show that as compared to the low income cutoffs, the low income measure means that a lot fewer children are poor. Then they go on to the market basket measure, which I am sure that this minister supports, because probably using an absolute measure of low income, as the report describes it, many fewer children would be living in poverty.

Now it really depends on what kind of market basket measure you have. For example, if it was the Department of Agriculture in the province of Manitoba and their market basket approach to how much it costs to raise a child, it would be very high, or if one used the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, their acceptable living allowance, it would be in my view realistic, because they had poor people and

others go to stores and find out the cost of tenants insurance and housing and clothing and actually did supermarket surveys to find out what it would cost to buy nutritious meals, and they came up with an acceptable living allowance. But, of course, it is much higher than what people get on social assistance, and I do not think this government would ever agree to an acceptable living allowance. But this absolute measure of low income, I am quite sure that the government of Manitoba and other provinces and the federal government will endorse because it is probably going to have a very low level of income required to meet that measure of poverty.

Now the minister in her speech said that the goal was to reduce the depth of child poverty. Well, that is partially true. It is not true if you are on social assistance, because all the money is being clawed back. It is true if you are working and low income, particularly because working parents will be able to have their benefits enhanced, and yes, this does help them because in some cases it means more money in their pocket or it means that barriers to employment are taken away.

First of all, the minister made a criticism of us and said that it is easy for us to criticize, but where are we going to get the money? Well, we actually introduced a resolution, not a resolution, a motion in committee, in the committee of Industry, Trade and Tourism. I am sure the minister remembers it well. Well, I know the member for Charleswood remembers it well because I referred to it in a debate the very next day at Garden City Inn. We know that the motion was defeated in the committee. What we said was take \$5 million of grants to businesses and use it to allow people on social assistance to keep the National Child Benefit instead of having it clawed away. It was defeated in committee. So we know the government would rather give their business friends grants than alleviate child poverty.

Point of Order

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the member is referencing an action that took place in this House in which he is indicating that

a particular motion moved by his party was defeated in committee. If Madam Speaker checks the record, it very clearly indicates that Madam Speaker ruled the matter out of order which is a very significant difference. I would ask the member, in the interests of the accuracy of the record of this House, to acknowledge that he is in error, that he is not giving correct information to this House. It is not a dispute over the facts, it is in fact the ruling of the Speaker before this House that the particular matter was not in order. Nowhere was it defeated by this Assembly because the New Democrats were not able to correctly bring it and properly bring it before the Chamber for a vote.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, well, the point remains that we do know where we would take the money, and the first \$5 million would come from grants to businesses in Manitoba. The minister says that we need to look at the root causes of poverty. Well, we know that children are poor because their parents are poor. That is usually because of one of two reasons, either they are unemployed or they are employed at low wages. If they are unemployed, they are on social assistance, and all of us here want to get people off social assistance and into paid employment which has a huge benefit to children usually because people's income goes up and they get off social assistance. But not always and not necessarily, because there are many people who are working at low-wage jobs or working at minimum-wage jobs and they are still living below the poverty line, and therefore their children are still living below the poverty line. Now why is that?

Well, one reason is that the Manitoba minimum wage has been very low until a recent increase when I believe it was the lowest or the second lowest in Canada. It got bumped up a little bit, but probably the government has no intention of raising it again, and they probably will not have another chance to raise it again before the government changes. The second reason is that many people are employed at low-

wage jobs because what we are moving to is an economy with high-income jobs to low-income jobs. We see that in the call industry and many other industries where good-paying, unionized jobs are being replaced with low-income, nonunionized jobs. In fact, it is not that long ago when families were able to support themselves on one income from one decent paying job, and now most people feel, out of necessity, that they have to have two jobs because they pay so little that both parents are forced to be in the paid workforce. Of course, that puts single parents at a disadvantage if the only choice in the job market is a low-wage job.

Just to conclude, we think that the way the money is being redirected into programs in the community—in many cases these are good programs. We do not quarrel with the programs that have been set up. Of course they need to be evaluated, and according to the progress report, all of the National Child Benefit reinvestment funds will be evaluated presumably by the federal and provincial governments, and we look forward to those evaluations to see first of all if they have any effect on reducing the depths of poverty as the minister claims and also to see the benefit of those programs on children. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, it was interesting that the member opposite would bring up again the point of this so-called vote, that we voted against moving money from I, T and T in Estimates into programs for children when in fact he knows quite well that all we voted on at that particular vote—[interjection] Exactly, it was upholding the Speaker's ruling. It is interesting to note that he has used that once before in a public forum on CBC radio and in front of a community of disabled people. The members opposite chose to put forward false information to our disabled community, which I find extremely offensive that deliberately that attempt was made. I am glad to see it came up again today so that we do have an opportunity to put some correct information on the record here and to show exactly what they have been trying to do with some of these issues on child poverty.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to speak on this resolution because

Resolution 14 is misguided in recommending that Manitoba consider allowing the National Child Benefit to flow through as intended to families on income assistance. The National Child Benefit was launched in July 1998 by governments across Canada on the basis of three agreed-upon objectives. The first one is to help prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty. The second is to promote attachment to the workforce. The third is to reduce administrative overlap and duplication.

* (1750)

Under the National Child Benefit, Manitoba, along with all other provinces except Quebec, is taking action to help achieve these three objectives. This co-ordinated approach allows each level of government to concentrate its efforts in areas where it can best meet the needs of families and children. It allows both levels to work together to meet common goals without duplicating each other's efforts. This approach will move Canada toward a more secure and uniform level of basic income support for children in lower income families and will improve the standards of living of these children. It will also increase the incentives to move from welfare to work and to remain in the workforce. This approach also provides provinces and territories with the flexibility to develop reinvestment programs which best suit the needs of children in their own jurisdictions.

The National Child Benefit has a strong focus on supporting employment so that families will be better off on a long-term basis. Families on income assistance will not see a change in their overall benefits while working, lower-income families will receive more supports to remain in the workforce. As families on income assistance receive the new tax benefit, dollar for dollar adjustments will be made and reinvested by provinces to support both income assistance and lower-income working families.

In a recent article printed in *The Globe and Mail*, from May 21, 1999, the C.D. Howe Institute said that provincial governments should stop hiking cash benefits to working poor families and concentrate their interventions on things such as early literacy programs and school nutrition for children in disadvantaged neigh-

bourhoods. It goes on to say that in a study released yesterday, public policy consultant Adil Sayeed singles out Manitoba as the province making the best use of its share from the national child tax benefit. I think that this credits very strongly the efforts that are being made in Manitoba. It goes on to say, as well, that this year Manitoba invested \$15.2 million in child care and programs helping low-income parents to raise and feed their children. Rather than pursue immediate poverty reduction, Manitoba opted for a ChildrenFirst strategy aimed at preventing child poverty in the long term, the report says. Mr. Sayeed says provinces such as Ontario and Saskatchewan, which invested in increased cash supplements, have been less successful because their tax systems claw back up to 91 percent of any additional income of some working poor families. The goal of the national child tax benefit, it goes on to say, is to stop governments from penalizing working poor families, which traditionally have received fewer benefits than families on welfare with similar outcomes.

It is an interesting article, Madam Speaker, and interesting to see that the C.D. Howe Institute strongly supports the National Child Benefit as it is currently set up and particularly recognizes the very good work that is being done in Manitoba.

The key to the National Child Benefit is the effort to move child benefits out of the welfare system so that when parents leave welfare for work, benefits go with them to help ensure their children's well being. Under the National Child Benefit the federal government has increased income support for low-income families with children. They now provide a basic level of income support for children whether their parents are in the labour market or receiving welfare. By replacing welfare with benefits available to all low-income families, families keep these benefits when they work. This means it is easier for families to move into and stay in employment without losing benefits for their children.

Many families who rely on welfare do not do so continuously. Under the National Child Benefit, families do not experience an increase in income while receiving welfare but at other

times of the year could be better off because the federal benefit is paid regardless of the family source of income. Provinces across the country are committed in principle to deducting the value of the new federal benefit from welfare benefits. The majority of provinces have implemented the national child care benefit in the same manner. Check in Saskatchewan, where the benefit is counted. Check in British Columbia, where the benefit is counted. Check in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and Alberta, where the benefit is counted.

In only two provinces, where welfare rates are among the lowest in the country, was the benefit allowed to flow through for the first year. Even these provinces now recognize the importance of the National Child Benefit and remain fully committed to its objectives and operating principles. No family has lost overall income as a result of the National Child Benefit. Manitoba committed \$1.7 million last year to help protect families during the transition to the National Child Benefit to ensure that this goal is met. We remain committed to this objective. The National Child Benefit is intended to help people find and keep jobs.

The welfare wall is a serious problem. Once families get on welfare, it is very difficult for them to get off.

We must ensure that parents are better off working compared to staying on welfare. We must make sure employment income is more than welfare. We must ensure low-income working families can get the benefits and services that ensure they can stay in the workforce.

The welfare wall has resulted in families remaining on social assistance longer than they wanted to. Families who depend on welfare have found it difficult to get out of the system and into employment. Financial factors are often compounded by other barriers that families must face before they can leave welfare. A system that was intended to help can have the unintended effect of holding families back from achieving independence and meeting their children's needs.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba wants to reduce the welfare wall and make sure that families can get back into or stay in jobs. The National Child Benefit has helped boost Manitoba's efforts. We need to build supports outside of the welfare system so that when parents get jobs they continue to receive the supports they need for their children. That is what the National Child Benefit is all about.

The National Child Benefit helps all low-income families, not just those who are working or those receiving welfare. Since July 1998, many low-income families working or on welfare have received enhanced support through the National Child Benefit. When parents leave welfare for work, the benefits go with them. The National Child Benefit is about ensuring that families leaving welfare are better off working. The National Child Benefit helps families make ends meet while gaining work experience and skills.

While families are on welfare, they can participate in many programs made possible through the National Child Benefit such as programs which help parents become self sufficient and develop good parenting skills. Manitoba has developed the Women and Infant Nutrition program that provides nutrition information and counselling to income assistance and low-income working families. As an incentive towards participation and nutrition improvements, the program offers a \$65 monthly supplement to expectant mothers and mothers with infants on income assistance.

Madam Speaker, governments across the country of all political stripes, including the governments of British Columbia and Saskatchewan, recognize that simply providing more cash was not the answer. We needed proactive measures combined with income support to help lower-income families improve their situation. The National Child Benefit is just such a proactive measure. It combines action at both levels of government to help ensure that we are working together to address common goals. Therefore, I urge the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to support our government's efforts to continue the situation for children and families and to continue to work

together with other provinces on long-term solutions for families and their children.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable

member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 7, 1999

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