

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 31, 1989.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. William Chornopyski (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch), that the report of the committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise today to give a ministerial statement about the new programs the Manitoba Telephone System is going to table before the Manitoba Public Utilities Board for new services, new rates, which responds in need of telephone subscribers in Manitoba.

This application which is an extension of the "Service for the Future" Program announced a year ago September, is focused on the reduction of long-distance calling costs within Manitoba and from Manitoba to other points in Canada.

Rural residents have been demanding for years that they be allowed to call neighbouring communities without paying long-distance charges. I am glad to announce that MTS has now devised a plan called "Community Calling Plus" which, in addition to reducing the total number of calling areas within the province from 160 to 60, will allow telephone subscribers within the province to call their neighbouring exchanges toll free. No longer will rural residents have to pay long-distance charges to call neighbouring homes, businesses, and schools that are just across the road.

Mr. Speaker, this is a major breakthrough in rural service improvement, which has been developed in response to the needs of subscribers in this province. MTS will be the first telephone company in Canada to offer this adjacent exchange calling service.

MTS will also be introducing a program called Urban Unlimited, which will offer telephone subscribers adjacent to Winnipeg and Brandon the option of subscribing to a premium service which will allow them toll-free calling to the city. Under this program, urban residents will also be able to call adjacent exchanges toll free.

In addition to these changes in the rate structure for long-distance calling within the province, MTS is applying to the Public Utilities Board to cut interprovincial long-distance rates by 20 percent one year from now.

This is the third in a series of reductions in interprovincial long-distance rates which MTS has proposed during my tenure as Minister.

On January 1 of this year, interprovincial toll rates were reduced by 12.8 percent. The PUB has already approved a further 17.9 percent reduction to take effect January 1, 1990, and the reduction proposed today, if approved by the Public Utilities Board, will take another 20.6 percent off in October 1990. Interprovincial long-distance rates will then be reduced by a total of 43 percent in those three announcements.

The further proposal has been tabled with the Public Utilities Board of Manitoba where it is available for public review, and it will be subject to a public hearing process.

Mr. Speaker, these rural phone programs and rate reductions have been made possible by the strong financial recovery which the Manitoba Telephone System has performed in recent months. These new programs are dividends which MTS is offering to its subscribers.

Mr. Speaker, we made this announcement in Brandon this morning, and it was very positively received by people in that area.

* (1335)

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would certainly like to compliment the Minister on some of the aspects that have been announced here today. I would like to point out though, although the Minister says they have tabled the fact that they are reducing the number of calling areas in the province from 160 to 60, it was the Public Utilities Board which ordered the telephone company to reduce the number of calling areas. The original intention of the Government was to have 160, and that proposal was rejected by the Public Utilities Board.

Nevertheless I am happy and pleased to see that the Government did indeed heed the advice of the Public Utilities Board and go on to reduce the number of calling areas. I note also that where the Minister says that telephone business adjacent to Winnipeg and Brandon will have the option of subscribing, he goes on to say, toll free. I take from that the option of subscribing means they will be paying a fee for this so-called toll-free service.

Nevertheless it is a step in the right direction and I am glad that after having finally prodded the Minister several times on this occasion, over the last few committees when they are reading reports, he is finally

taking the advice of the Opposition and listening to the concerns of rural Manitoba.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, obviously a program of this nature, which was in the public consultation process two years ago, is long overdue. Eighteen months since the time the public hearings have taken place, we have had the announcement to go from 160 to 60. The Members opposite will find that in the papers distributed in all rural communities during the public hearings, meetings that the Minister attended, I welcome the announcement today, although I think it is a year and a half late.

Mr. Speaker, I thought the Government quite frankly, which is a Government that is committed to improving rural telephone services—and I know that—would have announced that shortly after their election to office shortly after May 9 of 1988.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are some very confusing parts of this announcement. Some of the exchange areas are so small that having an adjacent calling area will not necessarily mean this recalling to schools and hospitals, and I think the Minister should be very careful about making those kinds of announcements when he possibly cannot deliver on them.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I notice that the Member has not mentioned the consumer rate increase of some 24 percent when he talks about the rate decrease in long-distance Telecom Canada rates. I think to talk about one side of the equation of rate balancing, which basically favours the big corporations, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has indicated a week and a half ago, and not talk about the impact on seniors and low-income consumers in his statement is not being very forthright, and not talking the whole side of the equation in terms of telephones.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think it is wrong to be whistling past the graveyard and making these announcements without costing out what the federal takeover of the western telephone systems is going to mean in terms of revenue and security to telephone systems. It is totally lacking from the statement and quite frankly makes it a very, very elementary statement in terms of where we are going in telephone services in western Canada.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of Honourable Members to the Speaker's gallery where we have with us this afternoon His Excellency Hakan Berggren, who is the Ambassador of Sweden.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

Also with us this afternoon from the Grant Park High School, we have thirty Grade 9 students and they are under the direction of Norman Roseman. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans).

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Centres of Excellence Networks Manitoba Recipients

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): My questions this afternoon are to the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach). On Thursday of last week the federal Government announced the establishment of 14 Network Centres of Excellence for Research at Canadian universities and corporations.

These are to be funded to the tune of some \$240 million by the federal Government. The 14 networks that were chosen came from a total of 158 applications. Can the Minister of Education tell us how many applications were submitted by Manitoba academic institutions and corporations?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, the science and technology program falls under the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, so that I would be pleased to answer. The specific number of applicants, I do not have the exact number. I can find out from the department exactly how many there were although I can say that Manitoba did receive five portions of these networks of excellence.

Mrs. Carstairs: To the Minister of Industry and Trade, can he tell us how many of those five projects have been selected for Manitoba, and if Manitoba has been designated as the primary research institution?

Mr. Ernst: I think we have to address the question of networks of excellence across this country. Nobody, no individual university, province or otherwise, has the sufficient expertise to deal with these broadly-based Centres of Excellence.

Manitoba has received five of those Centres of Excellence Network situations, and I think we can be pleased that we do have those five centres in Manitoba which will produce, we hope in the future, significant gains for the province.

Manitoba Primary Centres

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we all know that in these networks there is going to have to be a core, and the core is going to have to reach out from that specific centre to network with the rest of the centres. Can the Minister tell us today if Manitoba has been made a primary centre for any of the 14 Centres of Excellence?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, again I will explain to my honourable friend, the Leader of the Opposition. While we have a number, 14 as a matter of fact, of Centres of Excellence across the country, we have expertise, we have research capabilities, we have knowledge bases in our universities and elsewhere in industry in this province to contribute to those Centres of Excellence. As a network they work together. As a combination of groups of people they work together to create that

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body of knowledge that will see our science and technology industries grow.

Mrs. Carstairs: The answer is that Manitoba has not been declared to be a primary centre for any of the projects that will be conducted.

University of Manitoba Grant

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): We also quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, have not done well in terms of the overall grants, in that the University of Manitoba appears to be the only recipient, and none of our other institutions have been mentioned. There have been over 60 projects designated alone as going to the Province of Ontario.

Can the Minister of Industry, Trade tell the house how much of that \$240 million will actually be received within the University of Manitoba and therefore to the Province of Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, the Ministers of Science and Technology will meet in about two weeks time to discuss the whole question of these Centres of Excellence.

Manitoba has given a very firm commitment. We put \$4 million on the table for Centres of Excellence funding, complementary funding to the federal Government last fall, before the applications were to be submitted, so that every applicant for Manitoba knew that they had a \$4 million fund upon which to draw from this province for complementary funding. We will meet within two weeks to discuss the whole question of networks of excellence. The question of funding and the question of allocation, et cetera, will be dealt with at that time.

Mrs. Carstairs: Obviously the Minister does not know.

Centres of Excellence Networks Agricultural Projects

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): To the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay): can the Minister of Agriculture tell the House why six universities in Ontario have been designated to take part in an agricultural project, but that the University of Manitoba, which has long been envisaged as one of the primary institutions in agriculture, has not been made part of that networking?

* (1345)

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the Member did not ask the member who is on the staff of the University of Manitoba. I mean it is up to -(interjection)- the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Manitoba has an excellent record, an excellent record provincially, nationally and internationally in terms of the work they have done over the past number of years in a variety of research areas.

Yes, I will inquire as to why they were not included in that, why their application failed, but I think the Member sitting in the second row may have a better idea to answer this question than she has.

Centres of Excellence Network Manitoba Business Applicants

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Can the Minister of Industry, Trade tell the House what corporations in our province made application to be declared a possible centre of research for one of these Centres of Excellence?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to tell the House what corporations. I do not have the list in front of me. I will obtain that information and bring it back for another day.

Mrs. Carstairs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but it is not a question for Estimates. It is a question of major importance if we are going to become a centre for technological innovation in the Province of Manitoba.

Centres of Excellence Network Manitoba Funding Share

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Can the First Minister tell this House how much money will come into the Province of Manitoba from the federal Government out of this \$240 million pot, since very few of our projects and initiatives seem to have been accepted?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry and Trade has already told the Leader of the Opposition that there are five projects that are within the approval -(interjection)- The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) does not want the answer I guess, so I will let him give it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Misericordia Hospital Nurse Shortages

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last May, hundreds of nurses were out in front of the Manitoba Legislature asking the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to form a partnership with nurses working across the province, in terms of the critical issues of pressure, workplace pressure, stress, and nursing shortages in many of the health care facilities.

My question to the Minister is: at the Misericordia Hospital today there are eight nurses short in the intensive care unit of that hospital, and this is symptomatic of other shortages in the system, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Minister is: what action is he taking, given that this has resulted in fluctuating beds at the Misericordia Hospital, for the citizens of this province?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, there are I guess a couple of initiatives which

the Government is taking in terms of addressing the issues that have been brought to us by the MONA, as the agent representing nurses throughout Manitoba. One of those issues, although it was raised I believe in May of last year, was put on the analysis agenda for the Manitoba Health Services Commission Board, that being the issue of determining whether levels of acuity of care have changed in the hospital, and indeed the personal care home system, over the last number of years. The MONA has been asked to participate in that investigation, and that particular issue has been advanced by the board for investigation.

* (1350)

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we are embarking upon a co-operative arrangement with many of the major players in the nursing field to establish a position for the province in terms of the report that has been out for about five or six years: Entry to Practice Year 2000.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the patients in the intensive care unit would be satisfied with that absolute non-answer in terms of the Misericordia Hospital.

Radiation Leaks

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the Minister is, in the spring of 1989 there were 13 leaks in the X-ray unit of the Misericordia Hospital resulting in closure of the ward. Since that time, there have been Workplace Safety and Health inspections and improvements ordered, and the ward again opened in September of this year. Since that time, it has been discovered that there are further X-ray and radiation leaks in that health care ward.

My question to the Minister is: what action has the department taken, and what are the effects of these radiation leaks on patients and nurses in that health care facility?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to my honourable friend that one of the issues he just said was non-action is dealing with the report that was before Government for I believe five years, The Entry to Practice Year 2000, before. I consider the action we are taking to be rather prompt in relative comparison to the length of time it was before previous Governments.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of the radiology leak, and I have to go by memory here because this issue came up about two weeks ago, it is my understanding that in the redevelopment of that facility an undersized drainage pipe was installed, and it was not designed adequately to carry away the products from the X-ray development area. The only thing I will have to check on for my honourable friend is whether a replacement of a larger capacity drainage system has in fact taken place, but certainly as of about two or three weeks ago that replacement was ordered.

Ward Evacuations

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, many of these capital projects and renovations have been held up in the Health Advisory Task Force of the Minister for months and months and months. My question to the Minister is, at the Misericordia Hospital there has again been required another evacuation in a ward for five days because of sewer leaks. What action is the Minister taking on those capital renovations, necessitating the evacuation of wards for patients?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me make my answer very direct and very clear. As of May 1988, on the election of this Government, we removed a freeze on capital budgets that the previous Government, of which the honourable Leader of the NDP was a Member, had placed a freeze on all capital construction in the Province of Manitoba from the fall of 1987 after the Session adjourned, and this House approved capital projects. They were frozen. We unfroze those capital budgets.

Now that is regardless of the Misericordia re-development, because that capital budget was not put in the construction category by the previous administration, hence, was not even frozen by them. It simply was not even proposed.

Health Care Facilities Capital Projects

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Every time the Minister makes this statement, people at Clinic disagree with him, people at the Municipal Hospitals disagree with him, nurses are out in front of this building, Mr. Speaker, people at the Concordia Hospital disagree with him and contradict the Minister. Perhaps all the people in the health care field are not saying the truth, when they disagree with the Minister about what was approved and what was not approved.

My question to the Minister is: when is he going to start taking responsibility for the 18-month freeze in his department of many needed capital renovations such as the ones that are absolutely required at the Misericordia Hospital?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we will deal with the Misericordia Hospital in the capital Estimates, but let me deal with the hospital in my honourable friend's area of the city, namely Concordia. In 1981 the Progressive Conservative Government, of which I was proud to be a member, had approved a major expansion of that hospital that was subsequently cut in half by an NDP Government. Subsequently any capital expansion at Concordia has been frozen and frozen consistently. We intend to deal with the very needed problems of expansion at the Concordia Hospital. We will not cut it in half as the NDP did in 1982, and we will not let it languish.

* (1355)

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LynnGold Resources Inc. Negotiations

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): All Members of this House are concerned about the people of Lynn Lake. My question is to the Minister responsible for Hydro and Energy and Mines. We all want to do everything possible, Mr. Speaker, to ensure ourselves that we have made a sincere effort to see this town saved, and I recognize that these are very delicate negotiations that require level-headed diplomacy.

How does the Minister expect to be able to continue to negotiate with any credibility when he has accused the company of playing games, referred sarcastically to one of their executives as conveniently absent, and charged the management of Dynamic Capital of lying?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, we have been negotiating with Dynamic Capital, the parent company of LynnGold Resources, for some three to four months. In that time, not once did I speak to the person, Mr. Faught I believe his name is, who issued the press release on Friday.

An Honourable Member: Better get his name right.

Mr. Neufeld: Whatever his name is, I have never met the man. The man has never been in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

Mr. Neufeld: Mr. Speaker, we have always dealt with Mr. Buchan. We have not dealt with Mr. Goodwin for some two months. It has been Mr. Buchan who has done the negotiations. Now Mr. Buchan is out of the country. We had an understanding. He knew exactly what we put on the table. In spite of what you may have heard here yesterday, Mr. Buchan's knew exactly, the company knew exactly, and we stand by that.

As far as the company is concerned, as far as the people of Lynn Lake are concerned, we have been up there on numerous occasions. We have dealt with the people of Lynn Lake honestly, directly, and we have tried to do our negotiations in private, but the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) has not allowed us to do that. He has wanted to go public with it and it has caused some difficulties for us.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. Norbert.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, I do not doubt that the Minister has tried to deal with this honestly and in the best fashion he has, but I would like the Minister to give this House an explanation as to his alleged and totally irresponsible remarks, and I quote: so I missed a million, big deal. I wonder how he could say such a stupid thing.

Mr. Neufeld: Mr. Speaker, occasionally you make remarks in the heat of the battle which you read the next morning and you wonder whether you indeed made them.

I was asked of numerous items of things I might have said. Apparently the arithmetic of the reporter was a million dollars different from my own arithmetic and I answered probably a little too quickly, for which I apologize.

I stand by my original remarks. The offer on the table to LynnGold was \$24 million and that should be the figure we should be dealing with and not the details in which you talk in the heat of the battle.

LynnGold Resources Inc. Premier's Intervention

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), because of the obvious breakdown and opportunity for bad feelings to be developed, that seem to be developing, and because of the time sensitive and importance of these negotiations, will you, Sir, invoke yourself into the negotiations, these very important negotiations, and give serious consideration to replacing the Minister who is clearly bungling and screwing up this strategy?

When this is all said and done, I would like the First Minister of this province and all Members of the House to say we have done everything possible to save this. Offending the people on the negotiating team is not reasonable. Will the First Minister involve himself in the negotiations to save it?

* (1400)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is regrettable that the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus), who has not been involved and is not at all informed on the issue, is today choosing to try and make some political hay out of a very serious situation.

I can tell you that several of my Ministers and I have been involved with this issue for months, not since we read about it in yesterday's newspaper like the Member for St. Norbert. We have been dealing—and I have been in consultation and discussion with the individuals who have been identified by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), Mr. Buchan, Mr. Goodwin, goes back a long, long time. The individual who injected himself into the discussion last Friday, Mr. Faught, has never been involved whatsoever in these discussions.

I will tell you this, there were 10 gold mines that closed down within the past year in Ontario. The Ontario Government did not get involved in supporting one of them. No provincial Government in this country right now would get involved in trying to save a gold mine. We have been acting in good faith. We have put money on the table, substantial money on the table, well beyond what any Government would have done, and all we are getting out of this is political involvement from the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) who, as his last act in this Legislature, wants to see that town closed. That is all he cares, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Churchill, on a point of order.

Mr. Cowan: We have seen such total incompetence throughout this entire set of negotiations that we, Members of the New Democratic Party Caucus, and Members of the Liberal Caucus after having kept our silence right until the final hour, and we indicated to the Minister, and if he is honest he will confirm that we indicated to him at the committee meeting that we would not bring this issue up in a public way to allow him time to resolve the negotiations. We did not do so until it was obvious that they had so totally bungled and boomed any opportunity to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Your mike is not on. Order, order. The Honourable Member for Churchill. Order, order. The Honourable Member for Churchill is aware that a dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert, on a new question?

Mr. Angus: On the same point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister—

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson is up on a new point of order? On a new point of order, the Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: The First Minister clearly said that the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) wants to see Lynn Lake shut down. That is totally unparliamentary. It imputes motives on the part of the Member for Churchill. It is totally inaccurate, Mr. Speaker. If anybody wants to see Lynn Lake shut down, it is that First Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader, on that same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Thompson, I hesitate to say it but it is very clear to me that the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has reflected on a ruling that you made respecting the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan). I think he ought to be very careful about reflecting on rulings that have been given by the Speaker.

Your Honour ruled a moment ago that the Honourable Member for Churchill had no point of order. That should have been the end of the matter, but the Honourable Member for Thompson chose to get up and reflect upon that ruling.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae), he does not have a point of order. The Honourable Member for Thompson was on a new point of order.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, further to the point of order—

An Honourable Member: A new point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: —I just want to make it clear, I was not reflecting on your ruling. I was raising a new matter, and I take offence—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have said the Honourable Government House Leader did not have a point of order.

Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order.

Manitoba Hydro French Services

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Monsieur le président, ma question est pour le ministre responsable d'Hydro-Manitoba. Le Groupe de travail sur l'Accord du lac Meech a reconnu comme caractéristique fondamentale de ce pays l'existence de la minorité linguistique francophone hors Québec, ainsi que la minorité linguistique située au Québec. L'année dernière, les membres de cette assemblée ont dénoncé le Gouvernement du Québec lorsqu'il avait déposé un projet de loi violant les droits de la minorité anglophone en matière d'affichage. Nous savons que cette décision avait incité le Premier ministre de cette province à retirer son appui à l'Accord du lac Meech, un geste qui avait élargi de beaucoup le débat sur le plan national. Aujourd'hui, nous avons pris connaissance d'une annonce de rabais d'Hydro-Manitoba

(Translation)

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro. The task force on the Meech Lake accord recognized as a fundamental characteristic of this country the existence of the francophone linguistic minority outside Quebec, as well as the linguistic minority located in Quebec. Last year, the Members of this Assembly denounced the Government of Quebec when it tabled a bill violating the rights of the anglophone minority regarding signage. We know that this decision prompted the Premier of this province to withdraw his support for the Meech Lake Accord, a gesture that greatly increased the debate at the national level. Today we learned that Manitoba Hydro announced a rebate—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. La question est? (The question, please?)

Mr. Gaudry: Ma question est sur ce document qui est sorti et que je suis prêt à déposer en Chambre. Je cite: "the side of the box with the English only description or the side of the box where the English description is printed at the top." Ma question est: peut-il expliquer pourquoi Hydro-Manitoba ne permet pas à ses clients un service en français?

(Translation)

My question regards a document that has come out and which I am prepared to table, and I quote: "the side of the box with the English only description or the side of the box where the English description is printed at the top." My question is: can he explain why Manitoba Hydro does not provide its customers with a French-language service?

(English)

An Honourable Member: They are slow to rise.

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): The bulk of the translation did not come through on my earphone. I will take the question as notice and come back to the Member.

Mr. Gaudry: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat my question in English. It is a document that we have found out today—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Minister has taken your question as notice. I have recognized the Honourable Member for St. Boniface, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Gaudry: Ma question supplémentaire est: va-t-il aujourd'hui obliger Hydro-Manitoba à respecter les intérêts de sa clientèle d'expression française?

(Translation)

My supplementary question is: today will he require Manitoba Hydro to respect the interests of its French-speaking customers?

(English)

Mr. Neufeld: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that Manitoba Hydro need apologize for the way it treats its French-speaking customers. I have already said I will check with Manitoba Hydro to see what its policy is, and I will come back to the Member.

An Honourable Member: So what.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The Honourable Leader of the official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Energy (Mr. Neufeld) to repeat to the House what he just said in reference to our Francophone people in this province: "So what."

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Leader does not have a point of order.

Crown Corporations French Services

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. L'honorable député de Saint-Boniface.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Monsieur le président, ma question supplémentaire est au Premier ministre. Quelles politiques sont en place dans ses ministères, ainsi que dans les sociétés publiques et parapubliques afin d'améliorer les services aux Manitobains d'expression française?

(Translation)

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). What policies are in place in his departments and the Crown corporations and other organizations of the Government in order to improve services to French-speaking Manitobans?

(English)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as the Member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) might know, there has been in place for some time a policy with respect to French-language services that was adopted by the former administration, and it carried with it a recommendation that certain policies be carried out by the Crown corporations.

We have found in our review of Crown corporations and their policies with respect to French-language services that they are not uniform. One of the things that we are currently doing is reviewing with the Crown corporations their application of French language services standards throughout the Crown corporations to bring in place a series of standards for services that are common across all Crown corporations and Government departments.

I will be reporting back to that Member and to the House very shortly when we have a resolution to that issue which we are currently working on in its final stages.

LynnGold Resources Inc. Negotiations

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the Lynn Lake negotiations. For the last few days, we have seen the Government flounder and flail about in trying to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cowan: —cover up and cover over its complete incompetence in handling the negotiations involving LynnGold Mining and Milling Operations in the Lynn Lake area. Mr. Speaker, that incompetence has put an entire community at risk, will affect hundreds of families and ultimately thousands of individuals in the area. Today we have found another example of that incompetence.

My question to the Minister is: can he confirm that the Government has promised to deliver, but cannot sell its share of the Farley Lake properties as it has promised to do if LynnGold accepts its offer of October 30, and it cannot do so because it needs complete concurrence from MinGold, the corporation which now owns a partial share in that property, to sell the Government's part of the property or to bring that property into production?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the Farley Lake gold deposit is not in question in any of the negotiations. We have indicated to the company and they have accepted that will be delivered if all other conditions are met. We have always said that one of the preconditions shall be the ongoing mining operations at Lynn Lake. If the company cannot assure us of that, we will not put up any money at all, and we will not put up the Farley Lake deposit. I think we would be foolish indeed to put up the Farley Lake deposit if it was not going to help the town of Lynn Lake.

Mr. Speaker, we have also indicated from the start that under no condition will we put up one penny to pay old debt of the company. The negotiations, if they indeed broke down—and they have not broken down—were over the payment of old debt and not over the financing of the operation in the future. Had the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) not intervened, we would have settled all those questions by now.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, had I and Members of this Legislature not intervened, LynnGold would not know today that the Government had offered him \$24 million instead of \$19.3 million.

Farley Lake Gold Deposit Government Purchase

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): My question to the Minister is: given that Mingold's approval is needed, it is required, their consent is mandatory before the Farley Lake deposit can be incorporated into any deal to save Lynn Lake, can the Minister indicate what action he or his Government has taken in order to buy that property from MinGold?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I stand by my first answer. The Farley Lake gold deposit is not in question. In question is whether or not -(interjection)- The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) says, why do you not offer it? We have indicated what price we will demand for the Farley Lake deposit. There are several points in question, several issues in question.

The LynnGold people wanted to give us shares instead of loans. That was one of the difficulties we had in our deliberations. The second was the amount. The LynnGold people picked a figure of \$7 million. They threw a dart at a calendar and came up with \$7 million. No evaluation was ever attempted on it. We have said from the start the total cost of that deposit to the venturers was \$12.3 million and we will not take one penny less for it.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, the Government cannot do anything unless they have the concurrence of Mingold.

* (1410)

Earlier in the day, staff from the New Democratic Party Caucus and the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) spoke directly to the president of Mingold. He said that Mingold had made two offers to the Government to sell that property. Can the Minister indicate why it is, at this late stage in the negotiations, they have not even had the decency, the courtesy, or the competence to respond in writing to those offers so that they begin to purchase Mingold in the event that they require it to close this deal?

Mr. Neufeld: Mr. Speaker, it would be imprudent for the Government to buy the Farley Lake deposit unless we are able to conclude an agreement with LynnGold. Until such a time as we can conclude an agreement with LynnGold we will not purchase the property. We have an undertaking from the people at Mingold that the property will be made available. The price is not yet determined, but the property will be made available. I do not know of which the Member speaks. I do not know if he knows of which he speaks.

Manitoba Telephone System Computer Sales

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System (Mr. Findlay).

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Roch: On May 28, 1987, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon), who was Leader of the Opposition at the time, stated in reference to the Manitoba Telephone System getting involved into the sale of computers, "I have always argued the Telephone System had no business being involved in any computer sales."

In light of the First Minister's statement, will the Minister tell this House whether it is Government policy for MTS to be in the business of selling computers?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Telephone Act): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Telephone System is not in the business of selling computers across the desk, across the table. Many customers come forward and request end-to-end telecommunications service and many times they want a computer on the end of the line. Under those requests the Manitoba Telephone System has been selling the computer as part of the total integrated business network.

I can assure the Member that we are going to ask the board to revisit that situation, that particular decision that has been made in the past, and whether it is consistent with the kind of policies that we believe are important for the board and the Telephone System.

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Mandate

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, the facts are small business already has the capability to provide networking systems for companies. This Government is not only duplicating the service already provided by the private sector, but indeed is unfairly competing with private business.

Mr. Speaker, will this Government instruct MTS policy makers that their mandate is to provide efficient and affordable telephone service and not to deviate from that mandate, given the disastrous results which have happened in the past from such deviations?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Telephone Act): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Telephone System is on a very aggressive program of delivering effective, affordable, high quality service to all its constituents. I do not know if the Member was paying attention to the ministerial statement I made today which is a major, major move in that direction, the response to what the citizens of the Province of Manitoba want.

Mr. Roch: Mr. Speaker, the Minister still refuses to answer the question. Let me ask another question. How many independent computer businesses is this Government competing with and how many is this Government willing to put out of business?

Mr. Findlay: Well, Mr. Speaker, how many computer companies have been put out of business? Not one that we are aware of, not one. In answer to his first question, his second question, and his third question, I refer him back to the answer I gave on the first one which is that we are not in the business of selling computers across the counter. We are in the process of responding to consumer needs, customer requests for integrated end-to-end service communication network. Mr. Speaker, if the Member asks this question, I would expect him to give me the courtesy of answering and, as I said, we will ask the board to revisit the policy to see if it indeed is consistent with the concept of the—(interjection)—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Telephone System is doing an excellent job in terms of financial recovery for some disasters of the past and in delivering the best possible service they can to rural Manitobans and for that we take a back seat to nobody.

Farley Lake Gold Deposit Government Purchase

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, following on the questions from my colleague, the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), my question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

Mr. Speaker, I spoke this morning to the President of Mingold. The president of Mingold indicated that there was no firm offer from the province. He had

received nothing in writing. He called the discussions iffy and hypothetical and said in effect no one was really interested in salvaging this operation.

My question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines. How can he pretend to the people of Lynn Lake that he has any real interest in concluding these negotiations when he does not have any commitment from Mingold to sell their shares and has not responded to the two offers they have put on the table?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question has been put. The Honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the two offers that the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) probably speaks of are the two discussions I had with people from Mingold. It should be clear to even the Member for Flin Flon that you do not buy a gold deposit which you do not need until you do need it. We do not want that gold deposit for our own use. We want that gold deposit for the people of Lynn Lake and for LynnGold Operations. Now if we cannot make a deal with LynnGold, if LynnGold decides to close down its operations, why should the people of Manitoba buy that deposit? Why should the taxpayers of Manitoba continually pay money? Even you will understand that you do not take options on gold properties. This is something that we cannot do at this point.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, that is the most confused and disjointed and ridiculous response from a Minister we have ever seen in this House. It is clear that you cannot have—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): The Honourable Members opposite both in the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party ought not to editorialize on the answers that they are given in this House. They do it repeatedly as part of—(interjection)—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. McCrae: The Honourable Members opposite are concerned for getting accountability and getting their questions answered in the House during Question Period, and yet they take part in an effort to editorialize on answers given as part of preambles to succeeding questions. Now Honourable Members know better than this. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) is a veteran around here and he should know a lot better than what he is doing. So I ask Your Honour maybe to give all Honourable Members a reminder about that.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Government House Leader. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon, on the same point of order.

Mr. Storie: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister responsible editorialized on the question. I was simply reciprocating the favour.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Government House Leader and again I would like to remind Honourable Members that answers to questions should be as brief as possible and these multi-part questions and these post ambles -(interjection)- Order, please. Order. The Chair is having some difficulty with the length of the preambles. I would ask the Honourable Members, after their questions, keep their preambles short. Honourable Ministers, keep your questions as brief as possible.

* (1420)

Lynn Lake, Manitoba Minister's Meeting

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Flin Flon, the supplementary question.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this Government cannot conclude a deal with Mingold unless the board has given its agreement to it, unless there is a price. That precedes all finalization.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Energy (Mr. Neufeld) is: he continues to say that not one penny would be added. Is the Minister now prepared to meet with the community, the steelworkers, Mingold, and LynnGold? Is he prepared to meet with them today in the same room to conclude an agreement, to negotiate an agreement that is in the best interests of the community and -(interjection)-

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): We have met with the community on numerous occasions. We have met with the company on numerous occasions. We have met with the union on numerous occasions, and the union, when they are not under the influence of the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), are quite ready to agree that we have been honest with them. Mr Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret the last remark.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Churchill, on a point of order.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the day the Minister of Energy and Mines—I am on a point of order—indicated that sometimes he speaks too quickly and he has to take back that which he said. He is beginning to become habitual about the problem,

but what he did say was that “the union, when it is not under the influence of the Member for Churchill,” which implies that the union is under the influence of the Member of Churchill. Firstly, that union is a democratically elected organization that makes their own decisions and tries to protect their jobs, tries to protect their town or tries to protect their future. It is one thing for the Members of the Government to impugn motives about all sorts of individuals in this House, but when they impugn motives and when they reflect upon individuals who are not in this House to defend themselves, the honourable thing for them to do is to retract that statement.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): You know, Mr. Speaker, it might be good medicine even for the Member for Churchill once in a while, maybe even once in his life, to reflect on something he has said. If he reflects on what he has just said, with his experience as a former Government House Leader, he will know he has not one jot or tittle of information to bring forward what would amount to a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert, on the same point of order.

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): I think we should start negotiations at Conawapa, the sooner the better.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Churchill and as commented on by the Honourable Government House Leader, the Chair will take this matter under advisement and review Hansard. I am taking that point of order under advisement.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): On a new point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I am taking that point of order under advisement.

Mr. Cowan: On a new point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On a new point of order, the Member for Churchill.

Mr. Cowan: When in fact you take that point of order, and I would hope that the Member for Energy and Mines would review this comment and do the honourable thing and apologize now, but I would refer the Members opposite, the Government Members and yourself, to Beauchesne's Citation 493(4) where it says: “The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply.” It is from that citation which we have brought forward this point of order, and we would hope he would do the honourable thing and say -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is quite aware of that citation. He does not have a point of order.

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Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair is going to find out how much time we have left here. We are out of time? The time for oral questions has expired.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I have some committee changes to make in the Municipal Affairs Committee. I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshamer), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs be amended as follows: Cummings for Penner.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure everybody heard that. Is that agreed? Agreed.

The Honourable Member for Thompson, with a committee change.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I have a committee change, Mr. Speaker, and it is for Municipal Affairs: the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed. Any more? Orders of the Day?

The Honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I might announce just prior to Orders of the Day that if necessary—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Wait -(interjection)- Order.

HOUSE BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: I am sure Honourable Members would like to hear what the Honourable Government House Leader has to say. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I would announce, Mr. Speaker, that if necessary the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs would meet on Bill 32 on Wednesday, November 1, at 8 p.m. I stress if necessary.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it has been agreed that the order of the Estimates could be modified so that after the Seniors Directorate, the Department of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs Estimates could be considered, and later on today when we do get into Estimates, we will be in the Seniors Directorate in the Chamber, and Health outside the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to modify the sequence of the Estimates?

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENT

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I would like leave to make a non-political statement.

Mr. Speaker: While the Honourable Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leaders are working

out their arrangements, does the Honourable Member for St. Johns have leave to make a non-political statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to just take a moment, I am sure on behalf of all Members in this House, and put some words on record recognizing that today is the start of the First Annual Writers Festival, a festival entitled, "Words on Stage," a festival sponsored by the Manitoba Arts Council and I believe with the participation of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, as well as the involvement of the Manitoba Writers Guild, the League of Canadian Poets, the Writers Union of Canada, the Canada Council and the Joe Zuken Memorial Trust Fund.

This first annual writers festival, which is being held at the West End Cultural Centre for the most part of this week, will provide a variety of events and readings.

It is a very exciting time in the history of Manitoba and I certainly on behalf of Members in this House want to congratulate all those involved and draw the House's attention particularly to one night during this festival where some of us in this House will be involved. It is the Celebrity Poetry Reading Night, or in other words entitled, "A Loony Night." We certainly commend all Members of the House to attend Loony Night and to hear the readings of all Members from various parts of this Chamber, and finally, again, congratulate all those who have brought to us words on stage.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae), what are your intentions?

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have had further discussion about the order of the Estimates and I suggest that we carry on with Seniors and Health, and House Leaders will have further discussions about the order of the Estimates between now and perhaps later this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: So we are not modifying at this time.

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

MOTION presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the Honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshamer) in the Chair for the Department of Health; and the Honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Chornopyski) in the Chair for the Department of Seniors.

**CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY
SUPPLY-HEALTH**

Mr. Chairman (Harold Gillehammer): I would like to call this committee to order to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health. When last we met, we were dealing with item 2. Community Health Services (b) Communicable Disease Control: (1) Salaries \$715,000—the Member for Kildonan.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, last night the Minister was I think in the middle of his comments. Would he like to complete the rest of the update on the AIDS information and its campaign in Manitoba, or shall I proceed with my questions? - (interjection)-

Mr. Chairperson, certainly we are pleased and I publicly supported the Minister on the campaign, the type of aggressive and very—I think it was a difficult problem to convince a lot of people to have that kind of advertisement on TV and also on the radio. I think it went very well and certainly time was a factor and we were definitely very tired. It took six to eight weeks more than it should have been, but the reasons given by the Minister I think are reasonable. I have no other reason to believe that there was any knowingly reason to delay the ad campaign.

I have a difficulty with the Minister on another issue that I have raised in the House a number of times. The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is very good with his political words in the House. In terms of when I raised the question of the needle exchange program and he has put on the record of saying that I am saying this is the only effective way and I never said that. As I said in the House, there is not much time available during Question Period to correct those things. This is, as I said, one of the ways to combat the spread of disease.

There are already two programs and not by the provincial Government as I understand, but by the city officials in Vancouver and Toronto. There is evidence from the other North American cities and Dr. Fast is very knowledgeable in this field, and other professionals also have agreed that this program must be given a chance to prevent the spread of disease.

I would like the Minister to state the policy of this administration, why they would not start such a program. I know it is a difficult question in terms of people are going to say, well, you are going to have the needle exchange program, how about needles for the diabetic patient, how about the other medical equipment on other stuff required for a lot of patients, they cannot have access.

This is something we have to invest to save money in the future and since the federal Minister of Health, the present one—which is doing very well in terms of AIDS campaign in Canada—and he has put forward \$500,000 I believe. That money could be shared by the 10 provincial Governments and at least 50,000 and not only for the needle exchange program but also a total comprehensive program that will combine the street worker positions and other possible communication to deliver to the public.

Can the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) tell us or justify why he is resisting such a good idea?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, before we even get into the debate, my honourable friend has mentioned a number of interesting considerations. I would like to establish, first of all, is it the policy of the official Opposition, the Liberal Party, that the Province of Manitoba ought to spend resource on a needle exchange program and have it as a provincial-funded program? I would like to establish that right off the top.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, I am asking the Minister of Health that this program, which is supposed to be shared by the federal Government, there is a fund available, why this Minister of Health would not make use of those funds?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I am willing to debate this issue, but I want to know with whom and in what position I am debating because the Liberal Party has traditionally been here, there and everywhere like a flag blowing in the wind. I simply ask my honourable friend, since this is now approximately the seventh occasion upon which he has urged this program to the provincial Government, is this a policy of the official Opposition of the Liberal Party of Manitoba, that needle exchange program is part of your policy undertakings?

Mr. Chairmam: On a point of order, the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Chairman, I believe Estimates are here to allow Opposition Critics the opportunity to ask questions of the Minister. I do not feel it is appropriate for the Minister to be asking repeated questions to Opposition Critics. I, too perhaps, would be interested in knowing the Liberal Party position on this matter, but I do not think it is appropriate for the Minister to be using the time of Estimates to put those type of questions. What I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, is that you ask the Minister to make his comments relevant to questions raised by the individuals, Members of the Legislature, and critics in the Legislature, and specifically not to get into this sort of debate and asking rhetorical questions. If the Liberal Member wants to put his Party's position on the record, that is fine, but I do not want to see Estimates time wasted with the Ministers asking critics questions.

* (1440)

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Honourable Member for that input. I think that in discussing the Estimates, it is occasionally needed to ask questions of clarification but we should be proceeding line by line at this time. The Honourable Minister.

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Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, that is exactly the kind of clarification that I would like to have from my honourable friend because, and I realize the reluctance of possibly—and I will let my honourable friend, the critic for the Second Opposition Party, maybe he wishes to state the policy of his confreres in the House too or maybe he does not want to.

I do not recall the New Democratic Party ever asking the question. After seven questions or thereabouts by the Liberal Party, I simply would like my honourable friend to do the courteous gesture to Manitobans and clarify what is the policy of the Liberal Party of Manitoba. Does my honourable friend believe that that is inappropriate because we are discussing resources under Communicable Disease Control? Is my honourable friend saying that the Liberal Party believes we should be spending resource, scarce resource, on a needle exchange program in the Province of Manitoba using taxpayers' money? Is that what he is advocating?

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairman, how many times do I have to repeat? I may sometime have a problem with my language, but I think I have tried to convey the very simple message that this program, when it is available by the federal Government and when you can have access to that fund, why you are denying that?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I find this interesting indeed. My honourable friend, I have explained to him, on several occasions, the criterion. Every time he has questioned me on needle exchange, he has made it out to be the only program for which the federal Government will joint venture and fund. That is not the case, I have explained that to him. I have explained to him that there are more effective uses of scarce resource and that has not seemed to satisfy my honourable friend, and so that peaks my curiosity.

Is my honourable friend saying that the Liberal Party's policy is to spend scarce resource of the taxpayers of Manitoba on a needle exchange program for illegal drug users in the Province of Manitoba? I cannot come to any other conclusion when my honourable friend consistently asks for our position and consistently we have told him our position on it.

Mr. Cheema: The Minister is saying their position is no? Is that a correct statement?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, the position of the provincial Government is that the money is not exclusively narrowed to a needle exchange program, as my honourable friend has urged.

Mr. Cheema: I know that, this is not something—

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend now says he knows that, but yet his questions have never revealed it. My honourable friend would want to know that there is no provincial Government that has funded it, and now today he has finally put that on the record when at other times in Question Period, he has said that other provinces are funding it. He has now said that today

that is not the case. As I have been telling him consistently, the reason other provincial jurisdictions have not funded it, the needle exchange program, is because they have found that there are other methods of outreach, direct outreach by individuals that more effectively use scarce resource in terms of the war on AIDS. That is where we will focus our resources and we will access federal funding for Outreach Programs, for education, for counselling programs.

Mr. Chairman, that is the position today because there is no clinical demonstrated analysis that says needle exchange, free needle exchange, is an effective method of preventing the spread of AIDS. Until that is proven, I cannot dedicate the resource, the scarce resource of Manitobans, even if it is 50 cent dollars from the federal Government to such a program when I know that those scarce dollars will be better utilized in Outreach and Street Worker programs where we intend to go. That is what I have consistently told my honourable friend, that is why I believe it is incumbent on him, since he continually urges needle exchange, needle exchange only, to simply come clean with Manitobans and tell them, is that the policy of the Liberal Party?

Now, I have given him straight answers to where we are going to put scarce resources. My honourable friend ought not to leave the public of Manitoba in the dark and waffle around the issue of what the Liberal Party would do. Would they use scarce resources for needle exchange? Right now we say it is not the most effective use. It may well be a year from now, two years from now, after we monitor some of the experiments that are going on across Canada, and internationally. We may come to the conclusion that it is an effective way. Right now, we believe we can get our most effective use of dollars in other ways.

Let me tell my honourable friend that there are very opposed opinions, not from only the Diabetic Association on the free needle exchange, but from professionals involved in the treatment of drug abusers who say it is not an effective program, it will not work. It is not of a single mind that this program works, among experts; and secondly, there are no epidemiological studies to demonstrate that it is effective. So my honourable friend, in urging that, is urging Government to undertake an unproven program.

Well, that means we take resource from a proven program, like Outreach, like Street Workers, like education, the very underpinnings of our war on AIDS. We know they work, we know they are effective and we know we do not have unlimited resources. Yesterday my honourable friend said last evening tax money does not grow on trees and I concur with my honourable friend. That is why we are being very, very prudent in the type of program we select with limited resource to fund them.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, I still disagree with the Minister of Health because there are a number of individuals, a number of organizations who have come forward and said that this is one of the ways, because AIDS has to be attacked from all the angles. You have to reach to the bottom of the problem, even though there are only two to three persons of the drug addicts

who are a possible cause for the spread of the disease. In a recent study—I will maybe bring that study for the Minister of Health—indicates that maybe in a few years time that number may change. If you are going to attack AIDS from all the angles, and if you have to spend some extra money right now to save the dollars, in the long run I think it is a good investment.

There are going to be a lot of people opposing this issue. I think any Government, who is going to make a decision, they have to face that problem. The Minister is saying that there are no proven studies and all other programs have failed and we do not have any conclusive evidence. I think he should check with Toronto, Vancouver, and with other North American cities on why they are using it. I mean they do not have money either, so why are they using that program?

Since we are not asking for a big amount, it is a question of not going after it just at one angle, that the Minister is saying we are just asking for the one thing. That is not true. We have attacked AIDS from all angles. It may be a small problem now, but it is going to get bigger if we do not attack it.

That is why we were so persistent with the AIDS campaign of last year, with the brochures, with Phase 2 and Phase 3, and with a television campaign. We have raised persistently that street worker position, and last year the Minister of Health said, no; and now he is saying he is going to do it and that is very good.

It took him a long time to understand that was an important thing, and I think that rather he should be open minded and even look at the possible needle exchange program in the future, if not now. I think it is going to be an effective way, one of the effective ways, but we will leave it up to him to decide that.

My question is now going to be, when will we have the street worker positions, how many positions will be there, and who will be implementing those positions? Will it be by the Department of Health or in correlation with the Village Clinic?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate my honourable friend's remarks, although they are not entirely accurate. At no time did I ever indicate that outreach workers were not a valued component of the war against AIDS, as my honourable friend has indicated, and that because they insist, as the Liberal Party, that we have changed our mind on it, that is simply not the case.

The issue was that at mid-year and budget time, after budgets have been struck, mid-year a proposal comes forward, and we did not fund that program because we did not have the resources budgeted. Because we had budgeted substantial monies on pamphlet production, advertising programs, both programs which my honourable friend even today has said were good. As I indicated to him late last evening, I have received some substantial compliments.

So let not my honourable friend try to leave the impression that we are going to outreach workers because the Liberal Party suggests it, and let not my honourable friend indicate—like I am very confused as to what the policy is of the Liberal Party. I suppose at

some point in time maybe the electorate will ask the Liberal Party and they will have to tell them, not urge it today and then consider it tomorrow, like I have just heard my honourable friend say. I have indicated to him that we intend to monitor the results of some of those city-sponsored projects in terms of needle and syringe exchange to find out whether indeed they work.

In the meantime, Mr. Chairman, we intend to fund the positions of outreach workers, two of them, and we hope early in the New Year to have those people working in the AIDS outreach to a very focused and targeted group of people. Now, let me share with my honourable friend, because my honourable friend on needle exchange may not—he promised me last week that he would come up with some studies that would show their effectiveness and I have not seen those yet, but I am waiting in patience for my honourable friend to give those to me.

The St. Norbert Foundation is quite substantively involved in drug abuse problems, and the executive director wrote me a letter when this issue had come up earlier this year. He indicates, we believe that the availability of needles definitely does not influence the willingness to share the needles. If needles are easy to come by, they are shared more often. When the supply is scarce, there is a reduced willingness to share.

His whole argument is predicated upon the fact that the most common needle is the insulin syringe which wears out, and that if you have a very, very finite and limited supply of needles, you tend as a drug addict not to share them because there are two or three or four uses of that syringe, so you save them for yourself. He makes the argument that the other side of the coin is readily available needles; in fact, you know you can exchange it when it is worn out so you could share it more often, just the exact opposite of the proponents of a needle exchange program.

He says it is my opinion, I am not speaking on behalf of the Foundation Board of Directors, although I am sure they would agree that supplying needles to IV drug users, the few who would take advantage of such a program, would only increase the potential to spread the AIDS virus and in the long term add to the ever-increasing health costs in Manitoba. To the contrary, the spread of the AIDS virus can be positively influenced by very strict control on the availability of syringes. He uses some examples from the city of Miami, Florida, where needles are very, very strictly controlled, and there is virtually no sharing of needles in that community, according to studies.

So I simply want to tell my honourable friend that is the kind of information from professionals that does come in, and that is telling me to be cautious when there is no evidence that shows it prevents the spread of AIDS, and there is none that I am aware of. There are well-meaning people who have sponsored the programs in Vancouver and Toronto and other communities that say, oh, yes, it has worked and it is a good program. But they are the proponents of the program that sold it to the civic officials in the first place, and I dare say that I have never run into any proponents of any program anywhere in the health care field in Government that have said, well, my program

really does not work but we wanted money anyway. All of them say their program works, all of them say their program is good, all of them say everybody else should do it. That is the way you prove you were right in the first place, whether you are right or you are wrong.

* (1450)

There are other opinions out there and there is no epidemiological evidence of effectiveness, and I, with scarce resources, am forced to use them in what we know is the most effective way. That is education. That is outreach workers to a target group of drug users, drug abusers, Native youth on the street, prostitutes, and others who are high risk categories that our conventional advertising programs have not been reaching that we believe outreach workers will get the message to and assist us in deterring the spread of AIDS, No. 1; but No. 2, the Outreach Program can be effective in getting people off of drugs, off of the curse of drug addiction. That is a bigger goal than simply providing needles to them so they can avoid sharing in the theory that is disputed by Mr. Weir at St. Norbert Foundation. I would prefer to have the outreach workers work with those people to get them away from the curse and the addiction of drugs.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister is saying that they are going to fund only two positions for the Outreach Worker Program. Can he tell us where those positions will be in the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Orchard: The positions that we are funding are going to be for service in the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, last year on September 16, when I was asking a question of the Minister of Health about the issue of community-based hospices for these patients who are terminally ill, and the Minister gave an answer which was, he said that we do not want to segregate the patients. I simply tell him that hospices and community-based terminally ill care facilities do not segregate patients. This is one way of dealing with them at the end of their lives and most people prefer to be in that facility. At that time he said that this Government did not have any policy to establish such programs, and I understand the numbers are very small. He said that he hopes that he does not have to do that because of the small numbers, but still that will save us tax dollars. Now can he tell us today, are they planning to establish such programs in Manitoba?

(Mr. Darren Praznik, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, my honourable friend hit the nail on the head, if you will, in that we are dealing with fortunately and very, very gratefully few numbers in the Province of Manitoba. Currently the St. Boniface Hospital has been able to provide an excellent level of service for those AIDS sufferers in their final days within the hospice care environment of the hospital.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, can the Minister of Health tell us, have they done any cost factors for

these beds, how much money is it costing by the year to keep those patients in those terminal care beds?

Mr. Orchard: I can get my honourable friend a guesstimate of the per diem cost, and I can also get—attempt to get—I think we can get the number of days involved. I think it may well reach a point in time because there is no argument that generally the hospital setting is a more expensive environment on a per diem basis. My honourable friend would recognize, and I believe, for instance, Jocelyn House, where there are four beds, is a hospice environment for terminally ill cancer patients, primarily, has four, client numbers that they can help at any given time. I do not believe that our need right now in the AIDS environment is four at a time, and I hope we never get there. If we had that many patients at once in our institutions, then certainly the program would be more economically delivered in a community-based service. When it is one or two, the setting up of a special environment would be as costly as the current system. You reach a point in time when the costs cross over, and that is when Government moves to establish a different environment.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, there was the argument last year and, no, I do not disagree with the Minister on that because the numbers are very low. Still I think we should look at how many days these patients spend in the last days of their lives in the hospital system. How much money can we save putting them, even a four-bed or five-bed terminal care facility, outside the hospital system? I think that should be looked at now so that we do not have to do a cost analysis next year or the year after that. Because many jurisdictions are doing that, and even Toronto is leading in that area, but at the same time the numbers are more than us. They have more resources than the provincial Government of Manitoba. Certainly I think that should be looked at.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, it is being looked at. My honourable friend identifies exactly what is a factor in decision-making, and that is need. In Toronto, yes, they do have a program. In Toronto they have significantly greater numbers and the need is significantly greater. It is not an issue that we care less in Manitoba, that is not the case at all. We exactly make those kinds of analyses in attempting to find out what is the most effective and efficient program for delivery. We have no particular hang-up one way or another, so that the analysis my honourable friend urges is in fact taking place. But my honourable friend cannot make the comparison that because they do something in Toronto, we ought to do it in Winnipeg. That is not a fair analogy.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, last year there was a report from the Manitoba Educational Council on AIDS. That report is called the Mecca Report. To the best of my knowledge right now the recommendation of that report has not been implemented. Can the Minister of Health tell us so far where we are on that report and why the recommendations had not been followed to the line?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, what recommendations have not been followed?

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Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, there were several recommendations coming through that report and certainly the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) was supposed to get involved in that, but as we understand the hospital boards, each board has its own policy and we do not have a set policy to be followed by all the school boards to have compulsory education on AIDS. Can the Minister of Health tell us if they have changed their policy or in other words, why do they not implement those recommendations and make AIDS education compulsory in our schools?

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend ought to pose that question to my colleague the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach). With his persistent and inquisitive attacks on me all the time, my hands are full in Health.

* (1500)

Mr. Cheema: I am not attacking you personally. Mr. Acting Chairperson, I will ask the Minister of Education.

Last year there were changes to The Human Rights Act ending discrimination against AIDS infected individuals. Can the Minister of Health tell us what his department has done to comply with the regulation under The Human Rights Act especially? He has a formal communication to his health care system employees.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, per chance my honourable friend might indicate to the committee if he is aware of any purported violations of that human rights ruling, and my honourable friend indicates no. The policy is being very equitably pursued.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Shall the item pass—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I have a number of questions in this particular area. First of all I would like to preface my questions by indicating I think my concern, and I am sure anyone who has looked at any of the current statistics in terms of sexually transmitted diseases, whether it be AIDS or chlamydia or gonorrhoea, the statistics are to say the least depressing when one looks at the trends in society at the current point in time.

What is particularly concerning to myself is the increasing problems with STD's, sexually transmitted diseases, amongst young people. In fact, recent statistics have shown for example with chlamydia, in terms of the number of people who are affected, by and large the most significant group are people under the age of 25.

In fact the statistics were quite staggering if one looks at the number of cases. For example the Manitoba Health Communicable Disease Control Report that was issued this year indicated there were 6106 cases reported; 129 under the age of 14; 2089 between the age of 15 and 19; 2269 between the age of 20 and 24. That is a total under the age of 25 of 4487—73 percent of the total of reported cases. This is for a disease that is not always symptomatic. It does not

always end up being reported because many people are not aware that they have it are nonetheless potential carriers and spreaders of the disease.

The same situation applies in terms of gonorrhoea for example. A total of 2021 reported cases; 39 under the age of 14; 577 between the age of 15 and 19; 664 between the age of 20 and 24. The total under the age of 25 years was 63.3 percent of the total. The even more depressing thing in both of those instances is that if one looks at the trend, it is particularly a problem amongst youth. There was an increase of 7 percent in terms of the number of people under the age of 25 in terms of the overall total in just two years from 1986; and in terms of gonorrhoea an increase of 4 percent in one year, 1987 to 1988. So there is a growing problem and it is something that I think we all have to be looking at in terms of our role in this committee and as Members of the Legislature.

The Minister has outlined some of the initiatives that have been taken in some great length in terms of outlining initiatives in the way of public education through the media, through pamphlets, et cetera. While that is certainly something that needs to be done, I think increasingly people are looking in the area of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly in terms of AIDS because AIDS is the killer.

In terms of getting out and reaching the target populations, the people who are most at risk, and they are easily identifiable, and particularly reaching out and dealing with the situation affecting our young people under the age of 25 who are in particular at risk if they have other socioeconomic characteristics. What I would like to ask the Minister is not strictly about the advertising campaign. I think he went into some length about how he was pleased with that campaign and we certainly had indicated, I know our concern about delays in terms of some of the leaflets that took place, but regardless of that a current leaflet is out and advertising has been undertaken.

I would like to ask the Minister directly what initiatives over and above the two positions he referenced earlier, what initiatives is the Government taking in terms of attempting to reach the target populations or populations that should be the target populations, people most at risk, whether it be young people or intravenous drug users with whatever other social characteristics that make them particularly at risk. What initiatives is the Government taking in the current year either directly or through funded agencies to reach these people?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, you know my honourable friend is citing a difficulty in terms of STDs. My honourable friend ought to as well as sharing with us the youth statistics give the overall figures. I just want to share with my honourable friend some of the '86 through '88 figures that I have before me.

Gonococcus infection, gonorrhoea, 1986 actual cases 3,029; '87—2,891; 1988, and these are actual figures, down to 2,035. So the trend line is down generally in Manitoba. The difficulty is that we have some increases apparent amongst youth. Syphilis, 1986—92 actual

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cases; 1987—30; 1988—25. Chlamydia—'87 is the first year.

Let me deal with my honourable friend in terms of my position in terms of STDs. My honourable friend might go back to the Hansard of 1986 because as Opposition Health Critic I urged the then Minister to make Chlamydia a reportable disease. Subsequently the Minister did just that, and the Government of the Day did just that. I am not saying it was solely at my request and behest, but certainly it was an apolitical issue and the then Minister of the Day and the Government of the Day agreed as did the official Opposition that it ought to be reportable. Since that we have been intervening with the Chlamydia cases; 6,600 in 1987; 6,235 in 1988. Were it not a reportable disease, something that had been urged for a number of years prior to that, we would not have those statistics to deal with. Having those statistics is good for public policy formulation.

Cankeroid infections 16, those were made reportable again in '87; 16 in '87; one in 1988.

AIDS, 1986, number testing positive, 70; 1987—54; 1988, and these are actual numbers, 45; and AIDS cases, those displaying all symptoms, in 1986—14; 1987—9; 1988—5; and this is in part the answer that I was attempting to give to my honourable friend the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema).

* (15 10)

So, Mr. Acting Chairman, on the positive side of the provincial effort, we appear, I am not going to say we are winning the war on STDs, but certainly the trend lines indicate that we are effectively intervening.

On the issue of youth, the statistics appear to be growing faster than in the general population amongst youth. Yes, that requires some concerted focus and policy effort by Government. Let me deal with that for a few minutes. First of all, and this is particularly with AIDS, Dr. Beazley's research "Canada, AIDS, and Youth" indicated two very, very I think dramatic pieces of information in the survey from the youth of this country. The youth were surveyed I believe from ages 12 or 14 to 21, so that we had not only junior high, but senior high and university students, youth surveyed in this.

Two things appeared. They did not believe two groups of people in society when it came to a discussion of AIDS. They did not believe politicians and they did not believe the news media. Now that is a pretty devastating piece of information to confront Governments with, because this was a national survey. This was not unique to Manitoba. Our perception did not change dramatically from the rest of the nation in terms of their believability factor for politicians and for media, but it tells us two things that we have to approach the issue of STDs and AIDS using very, very precisely presented information, not get on the bandwagons of popular causes. The message was very, very direct to the media, in that they use care and caution in terms of how they present information on AIDS in particular and I would suggest to you STDs as well.

As a result, my colleague the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), I will let him deal with the issue, is

investigating the AIDS and Youth Program and how the information presented there, surveyed there amongst the youth of Manitoba, can guide policy development in the Department of Education. In the Department of Health, we have done three things.

First of all, the pamphlet is very, very understandable. I believe the comprehension of the information in the Know The Facts AIDS pamphlet is quite within the grasp of Grade 6, Grade 7 students. So that is our contribution, to make sure the message is clear and understandable to a target group.

Second, our advertising campaign, the television advertising campaign chose deliberately the environment, the casual dress, the basically street people image of the two actors deliberately so that there would be an attachment by the age group 15 to 25, they would feel comfortable with the message because they felt comfortable with the messengers. They could relate to them as peer group associates. Not that I denigrate the previous television campaign, but we used a senior official of the Department of Health and a couple of news reporters. I am not certain that that was sort of a youth-type image to deliver the message, maybe it was. I think ours was maybe more openly received because of the choice of the environment, the scene, and the characters.

Third, the outreach workers will reach a group of youth who are not in the school system, who may not be on a mailing list for the AIDS pamphlet, and who certainly are engaged in higher risk activities. So we are trying very diligently to focus in on those individuals. The AIDS campaign certainly is the *raison d'être* of the outreach program, but certainly we expect benefits in terms of other STDs and drug abuse in the Province of Manitoba so that very much we have taken seriously the indicating trends and have tried in our initiatives in the last 18 months to focus in on that age group whom we believe are most vulnerable particularly to AIDS but coincidentally as well to other STDs.

Mr. Ashton: Well I appreciate once again the Minister reciting the idea behind the advertising, et cetera. One of the problems though with a program that emphasizes strictly the advertising is, the Minister talked about two types of people young people do not listen to and that is in terms of politicians and the news media. That does not surprise me. There is a general level of cynicism. There always has been.

I think all of us remember our days in health classes when we were pulled down for the rather primitive at the time lectures about sexuality and the risks of various different forms of activity. I remember that. Most people at the time I think considered it a laughing matter. I think we all probably went through that sort of stage and it is symptomatic of the difficulty that is out there in terms of reaching people.

I would suggest incidentally that the same arguments to a certain extent can be applied to virtually any advertising campaign, any leaflet. One of the problems is, and statistics have shown it, that the greatest source of information about sexuality for adolescents is not from health classes in school, it is not from a leaflet,

it is not from an advertising campaign, but it is from their peers. What we also find is when one runs through the second and third stages of any educational campaign this is where it breaks down.

I looked for example through some of the existing studies that have taken place in terms of what makes an AIDS program work and what it does not. In running through an Australian campaign for example some of the problems—and this was their list of problems and it has been cited I know by a Canadian study on the issue. They list a number of barriers: a) prejudice which results in stereotyping; b) moral view; c) blind trust of partner; d) a belief that AIDS is relevant only to other people; e) a message that is too reassuring; f) paranoia which results in too little reassurance; g) an image of condoms; and h) the perception that condom use might be seen as acknowledgment of guilt.

So the problem, and that is general, that affects obviously some target populations, some people's society more than it does others. I guess the problem with an approach that strictly involves advertising, et cetera, is that there is a built-in cynicism, a built-in barrier even to that. It does not matter how you dress the kids up, it does not matter what they say, although the ads talk about various different alternative methods of avoiding sexually transmitted diseases. There is a built-in barrier and even if the message is received to some extent it is not followed through at the next level.

For example studies have shown in the use of condoms that 43 percent of young people are embarrassed in terms of the purchase of condoms, including 19 percent of street kids. That is 43 percent of people who are embarrassed by the potential purchase. That is not even getting into the whole question of societal attitudes about whether the use of condoms is appropriate. This is just talking about the purchase.

We are in a situation where generally we are not getting the message through. Statistics also for example on the use of condoms, that condoms have been shown to be a major way of preventing sexually transmitted diseases, probably the best short of abstinence, and when you are dealing with the reality that 85 percent of young people have had sexual relations by the time they reach their early 20's, I really feel that you have to be realistically looking at those sorts of alternatives. The problem is that the usage is still very low in terms of the overall population. It is particularly low amongst people whom I would describe as being at risk to a greater extent than the general population, although quite frankly we are at the point where everybody is at risk.

* (1520)

That is why I am asking the Minister, quite apart from the advertising campaign, what initiatives are being taken to get changes in behaviour, to get out and reach in particular our young people, in particular those who are at risk to an even greater extent amongst young people. What initiatives has his department taken? Is it supporting initiatives? I know for example the Village Clinic has put forward various proposals in terms of

getting out to the street clinic. What types of resources is the Minister putting forward into this very important area of prevention and change of attitudes in regard to STDs?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, let me just quote as directly as I can from "Know The Facts." How do I avoid getting AIDS?, is the question. The answer is, be responsible for your own health and the health and well-being of your sex partner. You can avoid AIDS if you abstain from sex and do not inject drugs or chose one uninfected partner for life. You cannot be any more direct, you cannot be any more simple. This has received wide distribution to every school child, I think, of grade 6 and above in the Province of Manitoba, to every household. It is in every public health office in the Province of Manitoba.

Second, as I said earlier on, the entire focus of the outreach staffing that we will hopefully have operable early in the new year is exactly that, to talk to people about their risk activity and to encourage change in that modification of that risk activity from intravenous drug use to unprotected and multiple sexual encounters. That is the kind of attitude change that is fundamentally important if we are going to contain the spread of communicable diseases, STD's, and indeed AIDS. That I believe is part of the counselling that the contact tracing program in communicable diseases provides.

Mr. Ashton: The Minister, in response to previous questions mentioned the two outreach workers that would be working with the city. What other outreach positions are being envisioned? I also understand there have in the past been a number of public health nurses, I believe as many as six public health nurses, who have been involved in terms of information and getting communication out to members of the general public. I would like to ask, what is the bottom line this year? What initiatives are being taken in terms of outreach, either by the city, the funding for the Village Clinic, any other areas that the Minister could advise us on?

Mr. Orchard: I cannot answer for the City of Winnipeg because I do not know what areas they might be embarking upon themselves. To my knowledge I do not think the City of Winnipeg is embarking upon any new initiatives, not that we are aware of at any rate. Our new initiative is in terms of the outreach program in the City of Winnipeg. It follows upon last year within the Regional Services staffing, the addition of a number of SYs dedicated to AIDS education throughout the regions, throughout Manitoba, so that our dedication of resource to the AIDS issue has been increasing year by year.

Mr. Ashton: So the Minister is not contemplating new initiatives through outside organizations? I think for example the Village Clinic, where they have been in essence carrying out many of these functions but find they have a workload that is virtually double and triple their ability to carry through in terms of for example public education and outreach. I know they have been in contact with the Minister and his department and have publicly stated that there is an important need to get outreach, to get out there and deal with the

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problem directly. Is the Minister contemplating any funding to the Village Clinic which would allow them to fulfill this role?

Mr. Orchard: The AIDS outreach worker program may well address that with the Village Clinic, but bear in mind, and my honourable friend will know that Village Clinic is not the only organization involved in outreach to the target population in the City of Winnipeg. We have been working over the past number of months, I guess you could say, with Village Clinic. The funding to Village Clinic for this particular fiscal year will be, inclusive of the phone line, in excess of \$300,000.00. In addition to that I think my honourable friend knows that the Village Clinic also resources funding from the federal Government. So I believe their budget will be somewhere in excess of a half million dollars.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

Now they have an outreach worker proposal before us. This outreach proposal initiative has been subject to discussion with a number of groups including Village Clinic. They are not alone in their desire to establish outreach as a function of the next stage in the war on AIDS and may well find themselves part of the program, but as I said today, I cannot tell you whether their initiative is the one that will be acceded to in part or in whole. Certainly their initiative is being considered by Government.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I would certainly hope that their initiative would be considered in addition to other groups, because there are other delivering agencies that are concerned about this particular area, but I must say that I really hope the Minister will deal with the various applications and deal with them in an expeditious manner, because even though the Minister, and he is quite correct, and I have read the previous reports, I have looked at the statistics in terms of the trend in terms of some STDs, the real concern has to be the growing incidence of STDs amongst young people. In fact, studies have shown that the existence of other STDs, other than AIDS, is a contributing factor towards susceptibility to AIDS.

Statistics show in Manitoba there are some concerning trends in terms of the level of sexual activity and the lack of prevention that is taken by young people, particularly in terms of our high school population, and the experience in other jurisdictions, particularly in the area of AIDs which, obviously, has to be of the greatest concern since it is a killer.

It has been that the spread of AIDS can become very rapid, particularly amongst target populations, normally in terms of, for example, intravenous drug users and other groups that are at risk. We do have in Manitoba a significant number of people who are at risk, that much more than even the general population. As I said, no one is immune from this, but we have a significant number of people who through social conditions and other factors are at risk.

My concern, and I know the concern of the people I have talked to as Health Critic in terms of this particular area, is the fact that if we do not move quickly in terms

of outreach, if we do not move quickly to get out there and deal with people in general, young people in general, and in terms of street kids in particular, we could end up with a very rapid escalation in terms of the number of people who are infected by the AIDS virus and that has been the experience in other jurisdictions.

* (1530)

In fact, I would like to ask the Minister when he anticipates decisions will be finalized in terms of either the Village Clinic's application or any other applications that he is dealing with at the current time, and when he would anticipate that there would be the type of outreach in place that is absolutely needed. The Minister referenced, for example, the Village Clinic, in terms of the funding they have, and he is quite correct, they receive funding from both the federal and provincial Governments.

They are in a position where they just do not have the support level, the staffing available to fulfill their mandate. They do not have the staff to be out there doing the outreach to the extent it needs to be done even though they have been trying to do it at whatever level they can. They do not have the number of staff there even to provide the support services for the programs they offer at the current time.

So when will a decision be made on this, hopefully a positive decision, and when will the groups that are anxiously awaiting the Minister's decision be able to, hopefully, put programs into place?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, as I have said to my honourable friend, early in the new year we hope to have the programs running. I do not know whether my honourable friend thought I was talking about some other program but the Outreach Worker Program was the one I was talking about with that target in mind. I indicated that to my honourable friend for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) and to him now for the third time.

Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend points out the statistics. Lest—and I know he does not want to leave the impression that Manitoba is unique in this—the value of the Canadian AIDS and Youth Study, in addition to pointing out some interesting attitudinal perceptions that we were not aware of before, it indicated that we are facing a problem in every province amongst the youth of Canada. I think that in part is why the federal Government has stepped up some of its activities and its focus on the AIDS Program and will be participating, hopefully, in a co-operative fashion with provincial jurisdictions in joining the war on AIDs as we discussed earlier with my honourable friend for Kildonan.

I do not want my honourable friend to leave the impression that this is a problem that is somehow unique to Manitoba youth, that they are somehow different from the national average. There is a high degree of sexual activity amongst Canadian youth in general and with the circumstance of AIDS and its fatal, incurable dimension, it has required Governments to focus on such issues as directive messages that we have tried to put out in our advertising and indeed the implementation of outreach programs to reach those

youths that will not be reached through the normal educational channels or family channels.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I am certainly not suggesting that it is a unique situation in Manitoba. However, some of the findings of that, the report that the Minister referenced, the Canada Youth and AIDS Study, which showed that in certain areas we do have a situation that is putting people in a situation they are more susceptible to STDs, the level of Grade 11 students, for example, with multiple partners is considerably higher in Manitoba than it is other areas. That is the thing. It is not just the general statistics that are important. It is the combination of statistics that really give you a guide as to the level of risk that is involved in. I think that that is important that we recognize.

Why I wanted to ask, and the Minister got into the debate earlier with the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) in terms of exchange of needles and said that there were no studies that showed that exchange of needles were effective, I am wondering if the Minister is not aware of the studies in terms of Tacoma, Washington. There was a study in that area in terms of needle use, in terms of the Amsterdam project, also in terms of the Cleveland Street project in London, England, all of which involved the exchange of needles and from the evidence that resulted from those areas did indicate a drop in the exchange of needles and therefore a lowering of the risk to AIDS.

I want to make sure in this case that we have a proper exchange of information. I know the Minister was suggesting there were no studies to that effect. He suggested that there are people who question the effectiveness, but I am wondering if the Minister or his department has reviewed those studies and whether he either rejects the situation that was outlined as being the case in those communities with those three communities I outlined or whether he feels that the studies were legitimate.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I simply say to my honourable friend that none of those studies to my knowledge, and my honourable friend if he has such knowledge will confirm or deny this, that none of those studies have indicated in the scientifically fashion that the needle exchange program has lowered the incidence of the spread of AIDS because that is the alleged reason for doing it. I have not been informed of any study which can draw that conclusion. So that is the point I made. Now if my honourable friend indicates that he has studies that indicated has lowered the spread of AIDS, which is the issue we are dealing with the needle exchange, I would welcome that information.

Mr. Chairman, the issue again, and I will bring it right up to my honourable friend as I did to my honourable friend from Kildonan, we know that education and outreach and direct contact with individuals does work. That is the reason, I believe, that you see what appears to be a lowering of the incidence of the spread of AIDS in certain high risk groups. Generally speaking, I think it is fair to say that the homosexual community as a high risk community have very effectively educated themselves, disciplined themselves, and I think you find that there is not the rampant spread of AIDS in that

risk group community that there was in the early '80s when people did not want to admit that there was a problem, did not want to come to grips with the problem and, in fact, from epidemiological study did not know what the problem was or how it was affecting them through some of their activities. With knowledge, and the passing of that knowledge, the whole effort of education I think has brought about a slowing in the progress of AIDS as an epidemic. That is very positive, that is achieved through education, through outreach, through direct contact and information sharing.

* (1540)

When we know that works, I simply say to my honourable friend that when I have virtually unlimited demands in the health care system, I certainly want to be able to stand up and say that I am spending money to the best of my knowledge on what works, and we know education, we know outreach workers are effective and that is where we are putting the resources.

My honourable friend might have some epidemiological studies on needle exchange and their efficacy in preventing the spread of HIV. I do not have that knowledge at my disposal. If my honourable friend has it, I would be pleased to review it.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I referenced those three projects because in talking to people who are knowledgeable in the AIDS field those are the three that are cited, and I wanted to bring it to the attention of the Minister, because he said earlier, in response to the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), that there was no evidence. What they have essentially documented is a change in attitudes and a decrease in the level of usage of shared needles, which is obviously the first step, the main step, toward preventing the stamp out of AIDS. I mean, obviously I do not think you would want to run a three- or four- or five-year study to document whether that actually led to a lower level of AIDS. It is logical to assume that if you have fewer exchanges of needles you will have a lesser incidence of AIDS from that particular factor. There may be other factors that lead to that situation.

I did outline it, because I think it is important that the record not be strictly left as being black and white by the Minister in terms of this, in terms of the Tacoma experience, the Amsterdam experience, and the Cleveland Street project in London. He may wish to have his Research and Planning Department look at that. Perhaps the reports from those various projects are not objective; perhaps they are really just expressing observations or assumptions about the impact of those projects. I agree with the Minister that is something that has to be taken into account. One cannot just assume something. That is certainly something that should be looked at.

I want to also focus in on another area, and it is not one that people like to talk about all the time, but the most effective mechanism in terms of dealing with the major source of STDs and AIDS, which is sexual intercourse, of whatever type, because studies have shown clearly it is not restricted to one group in society anymore. STDs can be passed, and AIDS, in particular,

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can be passed from anyone to anyone under any circumstances involving sexual intercourse—and that is whether the Minister or his department has looked at the whole question of the availability of condoms.

I mentioned earlier statistics show that 43 percent of young people are too embarrassed to purchase condoms in terms of a pharmacy or a grocery store situation. That is 43 percent of people who perhaps might realize that condoms are the most effective way of preventing the transmission of STDs where any form of sexual activity is involved. It is the most effective way. It is not 100 percent effective, but it is the best method that exists.

What I would like to ask the Minister is whether the department has even looked at this question in terms of the availability of this potentially lifesaving mechanism of preventing the spread of STDs and AIDS.

Mr. Orchard: Well, Mr. Chairman, for the last two years, through regional staff, free condoms have been available to high risk individuals as an effort to educate and to overcome that stigma.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass? The Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: My apologies to the Minister. I was just making arrangements with the Liberal Critic since I do have to leave a little bit early today to get back to my constituency.

I am wondering though if the Minister has looked at the general availability, because I know the Village Clinic has documented its role in terms of distribution to higher risk communities, but when we are dealing with STDs in general and AIDS, we are dealing with a situation where young people are the group that is probably most at risk right now from the statistics. We are also looking at a situation where through societal attitudes, through just the sheer embarrassment factor, et cetera, that the best mechanism for preventing the spread of STDs is not being used by a vast majority of young people who are becoming increasingly sexually active. I am wondering if there has been any consideration in terms of the availability of condoms for not just target populations but in terms of general distribution.

Mr. Orchard: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ashton: Is there any reason why the Minister has not considered this factor or has he rejected it, and if so for what reasons?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, let me ask my honourable friend if he wants the New Democratic Party to be going out saying we have free condoms for every high school student in Manitoba, go use them. Our message is very clear and very direct. We believe that you should abstain from sex. That is the first line of defence against STDs.

When we deal with high risk populations, we have had a program for providing those individuals with condoms in an attempt to prevent: (a) unwanted pregnancies; and (b) the spread of STDs. I do not know

of any advocacy group, except my honourable friend the NDP Health Critic, that wants to give free condoms to every youth in Manitoba.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister does this as a regular basis. We see about once an hour in terms of Estimates. Just as soon as we start asking the Minister in terms of policy questions, he in the case of the Member earlier started asking the Liberal Critic in terms of positions and now attempts to sort of create a position from a question.

I asked the Minister a question. I asked for his views. I asked for him to indicate what the policies of the Government were, and instead he attempts to twist off into his usual debating technique of setting up a straw man—or I suppose nowadays we should call it a straw person—and then trying to flail away at the straw person with his rhetoric and ignore the question entirely. We have seen this regularly throughout the Health Estimates. Perhaps that was acceptable when the Minister was the Opposition Critic, but I just asked the Minister a straightforward question, I expected a straightforward answer.

* (1550)

I do not know why the Minister is trying to suggest anything more or why he is trying to avoid answering the question and giving reasons for it. I really feel when we are dealing with a situation, a serious situation here, that it is appropriate for the Minister to outline each and every potential way of dealing with STDs, and if he is dealing with in the case of intravenous drug users or other matters, distribution of condoms, if he has rejected certain ways of dealing with it, to give reasons for doing that. I do not think that is unreasonable as an Opposition Critic to expect the Minister to do that. In fact, I am wondering why he has a great deal of difficulty. No one is suggesting that anyone go out and promote sexual activity amongst young people in Manitoba.

I think what is clear to anyone who looks at the situation is it is happening. We are dealing with a situation that is out there. What I am asking is, in the same way that I did just previously in terms of needle exchange, in the same manner I believe the Liberal Critic was raising this matter, was not for the Minister to get into the current type of rhetoric that he is into, but just to ask what his rationale, what he is accepting, what his policy is and what it is not, without getting into the ridiculous rhetoric that the Minister sometimes seems to want to spin off to defend himself from having to answer a straight question.

So I will ask the Minister again, without the rhetoric and the spurious use of these straw people, let us put it that way, just basically, if there have been any policies in regard to that—and no one is suggesting giving up free condoms promoting sex. Let us make that clear. I find it very insulting that the Minister would suggest that I or anybody is suggesting promoting sex. That is a ridiculous comment on his part. It is unbecoming the Minister of Health dealing with a very serious issue and dealing with a question that was phrased, not in any political way, shape or form, not in any rhetorical way,

shape or form, was a very straightforward question and that is what the Minister's policy is, what he has rejected and just asking the Minister to give some analysis of why his Government has adopted a certain policy? Is that unreasonable to ask the Minister those basic questions without expecting spurious rhetoric in return? It probably is from this Minister.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I gave my honourable friend of Thompson very straightforward answers to every single question he asked. Those straightforward answers were simply not good enough for my honourable friend, for whatever reason I do not know. I will tell him in a very straightforward way that if he does not accept what I say, I cannot make him accept it, but I will not stand by and let my honourable friend put on the record a suggestion, which I have to perceive is the NDP policy, that they want free condoms distributed across the province. That is not a policy we adhere to.

I answered my honourable friend as to what the policy was, as expressed in our pamphlets and what the policy was to high-risk groups as expressed in the last two years of free condom distribution to target groups. That answer obviously did not satisfy my friend. He came back insisting on why are you not distributing condoms to everybody in Manitoba, and I simply said it is not a policy of this Government to do so.

If he objects to that as an answer, I am sorry. I cannot be any more direct to my honourable friend than that, and when he comes back insisting that it be done, I can assume nothing else than it be a policy of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, the arrogance of this Minister knows no bounds. The ability of this Minister to distort—and I can tell you that I am getting sick and tired of the attitude of this Minister in terms—his attitude on very serious matters. I do not think he does any service to his position as Minister of Health when he tries to get into this rhetorical—and I just went through it and I can run through it again with the Minister.

The interesting thing is this Minister likes to ask questions of the Opposition Critics. It would be interesting if he started answering some of the questions that were put to him by the Opposition Critics. How he expects to start getting into these long rhetorical questions that he puts on—and his previous statement about distributing free condoms and promoting sex are so ridiculous and anybody who reads this Hansard will see how desperate the Minister is to avoid answering the questions that they will recognize how ridiculous this Minister is being.

Now, if the Minister wants to play political games with the subject as serious as STDs and AIDS, if the Minister cannot answer a straight question without getting into this type of ridiculous rhetoric we are seeing on his part, then I think the Minister is in the wrong place. I do not even think his attitudes right now are responsible in terms of being a critic in this particular.

I was wondering if maybe he was reverting to his days as an Opposition Critic, but I have not seen the

Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) or myself get into the type of distortion that this Minister is a master at. We tried asking straightforward questions. In fact, I think the Minister has a greater deal of difficulty dealing with the most straightforward, factual informational questions than anything else and I really—the Minister laughs now. He chuckles, he finds it a matter of merriment. Here we are discussing the STDs and AIDS and the Minister finds it funny that we, in the Opposition, take offence to his refusal to give straightforward answers to straightforward questions.

If the Minister wants to debate—and I have said this before with myself as Health Critic for the NDP, and I am sure the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) would take the same attitude—health issues in their generality, we will do that when we reach the Minister's Salary; and, believe you me, we are going to debate health issues in their generalities and the policies of this Minister. He will hear from us in terms of where we feel the Department of Health is going or not going under this Minister.

If the Minister wants to deal with those general debates, that is the time. We did it in terms of the opening statements and I said I will debate the Minister anytime, anywhere, anyplace, in terms of health care issues in this province, whether it be in the Manitoba Legislature or whether it be in any community. I want to make that absolutely clear. But when I ask straightforward questions, I think it is incumbent upon the Minister of Health to answer in a straightforward manner without grinning and finding great merriment in this word game that the Minister—that is probably the one thing he is the master at, is the word game, this spurious rhetoric, the technospeak we hear from the Minister on a continuous basis. I am asking serious questions about serious issues and I would appreciate it if the Minister would deal with the matters raised without getting off into those, as I said, rather ridiculous rhetorical exchanges that he seems to find great merriment in.

* (1600)

What I would like to ask the Minister is: what co-ordination is there on issues involving, particularly AIDS, with other departments, in view of the fact that obviously a number of the issues we are dealing with are educational issues, what liaison, for example, is there with the Department of Education and any other Government department that may have a role in terms of AIDS, whether it be in terms of education or any other matter?

Mr. Orchard: There is communication at the official's level as well, as at the ministerial level.

Mr. Ashton: I would like to ask what liaison there is on a regular basis with the community. I believe there is an advisory group and the Minister has referred to that. I wonder if the Minister could outline if there is any advisory group on this matter and perhaps whether he could outline who the members of any advisory group he would have on this matter are.

Mr. Orchard: There is a recently constituted Advisory Committee on AIDS. It was chaired and subsequently

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the chairman resigned for personal reasons and we are in the process of selecting a new chairman for the committee. It is approximately ten people. I can get my honourable friend a list of names.

Mr. Ashton: I have a question similar to one that was asked earlier by the Member for Kildonan but with a slightly different focus. In looking at the impact on the system, if we do have an increase, particularly in terms of AIDS, we are looking at a significant burden on various levels of the system. People I have talked to have estimated that it could cost in excess of \$100,000 per patient in terms of the basic costs, essentially dealing with a hospice situation with someone who does become infected with AIDS.

I would like to ask the Minister—and I wanted to raise it now, rather than under Research and Planning—whether there has been any analysis of the impact—and I will run through the areas that could be affected—in terms of our hospitals, in terms of home care, for example, as well, in terms of the Pharmacare program; in fact, our whole health system could be impacted on in a very major way. I would like to ask if there has been any analysis of the impact it could have on the system?

Mr. Orchard: Well, we have some global numbers in terms of the ministry in what some of our direct funding ones. Those are the easier ones, isolating within home care some of the home care costs, isolating within the hospital systems some of their costs, guesses as to what the costs are. The preliminary Estimates that we have, and these are for Cadham Lab, Manitoba Health Services Commission, Manitoba Health, Manitoba Red Cross in terms of the donor blood testing, and Village Clinic as a direct-funded agency approach \$1.9 million, are the best estimates that we can come up with.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairman, has there been any analysis of possible future impacts as well, because as I said where AIDS has hit as an epidemic there has been a rapid escalation, in many cases within a very short period of time, of the number of people who are infected with the AIDS virus and who are in a very negative health situation because of it? I am wondering if there has been any long-term planning based on the experience of other jurisdictions.

Mr. Orchard: Well yes, but as I said to my honourable friend, the Liberal Health Critic, that the monitoring of those costs indicate that the current support systems are adequately, and appear to be economically, addressing the need.

Let me reiterate for my honourable friend the number of AIDS cases, and of course those are the individuals who, well I would not say exclusively but certainly, predominantly access the system and are cause for probably a major portion of the financial commitment.

The actual number of AIDS cases was 14 in 1986, nine in 1987, and five in 1988. Fortunately, and I say this very sincerely, some of the projections that were debated in these Estimates, just three short years ago, have not materialized, and certainly that is an extremely

good development. At one point in time if we went back to the mid-'80s the projections were indeed very, very serious.

Mr. Chairman, we find that our support systems through home care, primarily St. Boniface in the hospice care but not exclusively, because other hospitals have AIDS patients in terms of not only the terminal stay but periodic hospitalization as from time to time happens as AIDS progresses.

It appears as if we are meeting the medical needs in a very compassionate way and a very adequate way in the province right now. Projections, we see this as an ongoing commitment. If the trend line continues or if we have seen in fact a levelling off of the number of AIDS cases in the province than right now, as I sit here now, bearing in mind that as I sat here four years ago in Opposition we were looking at much different numbers, but it appears as if we are adequately able to resource the needs of those suffering from AIDS within our currently funded system. That may well change, and should that change Government is prepared to make the necessary adjustments and reactive programming to assure that care is provided.

Mr. Ashton: The reason I am asking is because I think the very situation the Minister outlines has occurred in large part because of change of attitudes particularly amongst some Manitobans who are particularly at risk. I think a large part of that is due to the programming that has been put in place not just directly by the Government, but by other funded agencies.

When you look at the cost that is involved, and the fact that we are dealing with a disease that is fatal in the case of AIDS, I would make the case that when considering applications for outreach, for getting out directly talking to people about the very real risks of AIDS, some of the programs that have been developed, some of the program funding that the Minister is currently reviewing, that one of the key factors that should be taken into mind is the fact that we really have a choice. That is either to support these various program applications, funding applications, now or to end up in the situation where most importantly a greater number of human lives will be at risk down the line.

Mr. Chairman, in fact even in terms of straight budgetary considerations, we will be paying a lot more at a later point in time through the impact on our home care system, the impact on our hospitals, on Pharmacare, and I am not making that argument. I am not arguing that we should be putting programming out there to save money. I am saying we should be cognizant of the fact that you can make both arguments. First and most important, probably the only real criteria, that you can save lives through the Outreach Programs, and second that it will have a very negative impact down the line. With those comments, as I said, I do have to leave the committee.

* (1610)

I know the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) has a number of questions, but I would strongly urge the Minister, and he can quote me on this, in terms of he

likes to know where the Parties are coming from, and I can tell you, in terms of the New Democratic Party, we think there has to be a greatly increased role in terms of outreach based on the experience of outreach in other areas and experience in our own province.

Mr. Chairman, we feel that some of the proposals the Minister is looking at currently should be received positively, and yes there are scarce health care dollars. I mean that is why we raised some of the concerns last year, in terms of the fact that there was underspending at the end of the year, and I do not want to get into that debate right now. We will get into it particularly later in terms of MHSC.

Yes there are scarce dollars, but they sure had a surplus, or we would have had, unless the money was transferred to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I would argue that the resources are there. Let us put them into place now and let us hope that in a few years from now, as we discuss this in committee, under whatever roles we may be under at that point in time, that we will see the trend that we have seen in the last couple of years further magnified to the point that where we can not only stop AIDS, but also stop the spread and greatly restrict the numbers of people affected by other STDs. Particularly young people, because the Minister says there has been a lot of progress in terms of STDs in general, although not necessarily in the case of young people, so that is our position as a Party.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister is dealing right now with some very important applications that could impact directly on that. I would urge him to give favourable consideration to that so that when we deal with this item under Estimates next year, and when we deal with Estimates generally, that we can be congratulating the Minister, at least in this one area, for having listened to the Opposition Critics, to having listened to people in the community, for acting on the clear evidence for the need for outreach.

With those few comments, I do thank the Minister to the extent that he answered the questions, not necessarily the rhetorical asides. I do thank him for the information, because I think it is a serious matter and I do not think it is something that we can dismiss lightly or that we should get into flippant debates on. I think it is a very serious matter and something that we all share a very real concern about in this Legislature.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I thank my honourable friend for his kind words. What he said has exactly reinforced what I indicated earlier on that the message, through education and awareness, has been key in containment of the epidemic, because this Government has reacted exactly as my honourable friend is encouraging us to do. To undertake not less but more funding for AIDS awareness and prevention initiatives.

I simply point out to my honourable friend that we are doing this, not when the projections are doubling annually or biannually, the number of reported cases of infection in AIDS, but rather at a time when we are in fact in a levelling off position.

That has not deterred us from moving into further education and Outreach Programs, just the very things

my honourable friend is advocating from Opposition. When we were discussing the issue some four years ago when there was a great deal of alarm about the issue of AIDS, we did not instantly move into outreach workers or advertising programs, et cetera. We have taken the issue very, very seriously as Government.

I think as I have indicated yesterday, and I will indicate again today, that our initiatives have been on balance good initiatives and well received not simply by Government but by people outside of this province, the Canadian Public Health Association and others. That is why we are moving today on the issue of outreach workers as a further initiative of this Government to win the war on AIDS. I thank my honourable friend for his comments.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, recently the federal Government has enhanced the program for the use of AZT, and it is a very expensive drug. Can the Minister of Health tell us: what is the policy of this administration, because it may cost about \$10,000 per year extra for such a drug to be available to the victims of AIDS? Can he tell us: have they made any arrangements with the federal Government, in terms of sharing the cost into it or what percentage? How many patients in Manitoba will qualify under the new guidelines for the use of AZT?

Mr. Orchard: Let me give my honourable friend the answer to his first question. There are approximately 25 patients today on AZT. What my honourable friend is referring to, the current threshold, is a count of 300 T-helper cells I believe per millilitre of blood in which the AZT pharmaceutical would be made available. The federal Minister of Health announced new threshold guidelines, those being 500 T-helper cells per millilitre of blood, at which time a lowered rate of AZT would be made available.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister made that announcement and we have not, as of to date, had any indications on how he intends to fund the program. We are willing to use the existing, I believe it is Misericordia Hospital that AZT is made available through, oh, sorry, Health Sciences and St. Boniface, AZT is made available through their pharmacies.

Any new patients who fit the new guidelines, we are willing to use that existing—why reinvent the wheel, we already have it. We are willing to use, as part of the provincial contribution, that dispensing capacity, but we have not heard how the federal Minister intends to directly fund the program that he announced, what, about six, well, eight weeks ago now.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister of Health tell us: is the cost of AZT totally covered by the provincial Pharmacare program right now?

Mr. Orchard: The 300 T-helper cell patient is covered. It is our expectation that the new threshold—again clinical trials, I guess there is some evidence that would indicate it may well help; that we are expecting the federal Government to fund, but we will provide the dispensing capacity network to assist the federal Government in delivering that program.

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Mr. Cheema: The reason I raised that question is that I was going through the announcements, and some of the articles came in a few journals, and it was clear that this is going to cost a lot of money to the federal Government if they have to fund the whole program under the new guidelines. It is going to be probably \$10,000 I guess per month or maybe per year, but there will be a large number of patients who will be qualifying.

I do know that the provincial Government in British Columbia is going to make use of that program, but I think Ontario is refusing to pay for any use of AZT and I think it is going to be a burden on the provincial health care system.

Maybe the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) should get in touch with his counterpart, and also the federal Minister, to make sure that this program is at least, if not fully, partially shared by the federal Government because it will drain our health care system further.

* (1620)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, now these are guesstimates, but I think roughly \$8,000 per year is the cost—

Mr. Cheema: Ten thousand dollars is given by the—

Mr. Orchard: Yes, it ranges from \$8,000 to 10,000, but a conservative estimate would be \$8,000. For the new threshold of use, 500 T-helpers or below, there is a reduced dose rate of AZT and a reduced cost. We are advised it may well be in the neighbourhood of \$5,000 to \$6,000 per year per individual.

You are right. That does have probably—we are not certain of what numbers of potential recipients there would be in the Province of Manitoba. I simply say to my honourable friend it is because of the issue of cost, that he has identified, that we are anxiously awaiting the details on how the federal Government intends to make that funding available. I think that is one of the reasons why Ontario is saying we want to hear the details of the program first. All Ministers across Canada have indicated that.

Mr. Cheema: What is being done in the meantime to inform those patients who would qualify under the new guidelines? What sort of communication has your department conveyed to those patients?

Mr. Orchard: We are awaiting the details of the program from the federal Minister so we can undertake those kinds of communications. My honourable friend I think has to appreciate that we do not know who the patients are. That is the nature of the reporting system under HIV positive individuals. The department has no knowledge of who those individuals are. When they become sufferers from AIDS, yes, we do, because of course they formally access the health care system.

We are awaiting the guidelines so we can make our effective communication, but we have not received those to date. It is two months now and I would suspect we are meeting with the federal Minister in the early part of December I believe. If we do not have details

by then we will certainly be pursuing the federal Minister, with vigour, for those details.

Mr. Cheema: It is going to be very crucial for those people who could benefit under this program, and it will benefit the provincial Government in the long run to increase their lifespan.

I think it is already about six to eight weeks, and maybe we should be pursuing it in a more aggressive way rather than waiting for the federal Minister of Health. We should communicate with them and ask them the guidelines. If every other journal or all the major organizations have the information, why can they not send it to the provincial Government. They are ultimately going to be responsible to deliver the drugs to these patients. I think it is very crucial, and maybe we should pursue it in a more aggressive way.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, let me just tell my honourable friend that is exactly what the provincial Ministers are doing with the federal Minister, and to date we have only received a fax from the federal Minister indicating that these are the new guidelines.

The other thing I want to indicate to my honourable friend is that not everyone benefits from AZT; because it is in clinical trials, in other words not a licensed pharmaceutical for the treatment of AIDS, there are some very, very severe and difficult reactions that some people have to AZT, and they are unable to use it. It is not something that is the universal Messiah by any way. It is one tool, and apparently one of the more effective ones, but still is not a licensed pharmaceutical.

As I say, all the provinces are awaiting details of how the federal Government wishes to pursue the program they announced.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, I am just trying to assist the Minister in this issue. I think if we are delaying to get the guidelines and if one of those patients could qualify that could cause a problem for the provincial Government. There are a number of individuals who have done the same in British Columbia, and other places, and gone to the Human Rights Commission asking that they have fallen under this new guideline, so why can they not get the medication? I think, so that we do not end up going through all this court system again. I think it will be very helpful to pursue that.

Before I go to the question I want to discuss what is happening with the Village Clinic. Can the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) tell me that this Village Clinic is still operating on a month-to-month budget?

Mr. Orchard: The clinic has their phone-line funding, which is part of this budget. They are one of the funded agencies that the commission funds and I cannot answer my honourable friend's question at this stage of the game.- (interjection)- I got the answer. We are funding on monthly cheques which is not unusual for funded agencies.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, the reason I am raising this question is because I think it was in the third week

of June that there was a report out of the media that the Village Clinic was experiencing some difficulties, in terms of continuing, with operations. They receive about \$150,000 from the federal Government, and the rest of the money is coming from the provincial Government. Now they have only paid staff of five people, and approximately 50 full-time and part-time volunteers. They have reached their full capacity of delivering services. They have done a tremendous job, I think. For the last two years they have visited at least 30 school divisions throughout Manitoba, and at least talked to about 100,000 students, that is their statistics.

They are feeling they cannot deliver some of the services to the street kids, which they think is very crucial, some of the high risk, like prostitutes, drug users, the homosexual community and some of the Native youth groups, especially in light of the recent reports in the media for the multiple drug problem in the City of Winnipeg.

It is very clear that there is a need for -(interjection)-yes, okay, there was a number of articles, but this article does clearly indicate that we do have a problem with our drug abuse in the city, and any sexual transmitted diseases whether it is AIDS, gonorrhoea, or any of the diseases at the adult age. They are all interrelated with one or the other. We have to deal with the problem as a whole.

I think, as the Minister has pointed out, that they are going to have the street worker positions. I think this rather than probably the two positions are not going to solve the whole problem. It may be just a starting point, but I would ask the Minister, since the reports came out about the drug abuse in the City of Winnipeg, what have they done to teach the public, in terms of drug abuse and the sexually transmitted diseases?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, maybe my honourable friend could help me by indicating what reports on drug use in the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, there was an article on the 23rd of August '89. It was regarding the use of drugs co-linked to sex problems. It was an article, the use of R and Ts, so-called poor man's heroin, and they were using blood drawn from one person to another mixing in syringes and then using them to get high on drugs. All these problems are very much inter-related. I think we have a serious problem right in the City of Winnipeg.

Why I raised this question is because as I said earlier that you cannot just tackle the one issue and leave the other aspect as such. Now these street worker positions, two positions, will not solve the whole purpose. There is probably a need for more positions. Is the Minister going to fund specific separate positions through Village Clinic just to deal only with AIDS and find separate positions to deal with the problem of drug abuse and other related sexually transmitted diseases?

* (1630)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, the article my honourable friend refers to, and I simply caution him, as I mentioned

in the Canada AIDS and Youth Studies one of the most non-believed entities was the media. Stories like the one my honourable friend referred to are exactly the reason why, because I think if my honourable friend did a little more research into the newspapers he would find that that very, very nauseating article about someone drawing up blood and mixing the syringe and then shooting it into somebody else was refuted. It was not an accurate statement.

That is exactly the kind of extremely inaccurate journalism that causes undue alarm and sort of the herd mentality that we have to do something because the newspaper said, well, this is a problem. Unfortunately those kinds of articles make the front page. The retractions are buried in a little wee box maybe on the second page, maybe elsewhere in the paper. That does not help with the issue.

One of the things that we cannot tell here is the number of intravenous drug abusers, so-called street people, in the City of Winnipeg. We do not know how many there are. No agency that we have been collaborating with can give us that estimate. So when my honourable friend says the two outreach workers may not be enough, I cannot in a reasoned fashion say that he is right or wrong, because I do not know how many people we are dealing with. The one thing I do know is that recent changes in terms of legislation federally have allowed a very, very successful crackdown to take place in terms of illegal drugs.

If my honourable friend wanted the good news articles from the newspapers he ought not to use that August 23 article which was subsequently refuted as being very, very inaccurate. He ought to bring out the news reporting where it shows that some of the shooting houses were busted and the police made substantial confiscation raids in the City of Winnipeg because I want to tell you that the City of Winnipeg Police in my estimation have done an exemplary job in trying to route out illegal drug sales and use in the City of Winnipeg. The RCMP have been doing an admirable job in that regard.

Now I cannot say to my honourable friend when we reach that magic stage where enough resource, enough staff, enough funding, enough focus of Government is there because regardless of what level we fund whether it be to Village Clinic or to any other institution, they can consistently, legitimately say, what we are doing is very valuable, and we need more money.

Government always has to make the balanced judgmental decisions as to where we get the most effective use of new dollars and new resources. We have chosen in terms of our next phase on the war on AIDS to use the outreach worker education program to combat AIDS and coincidentally to assist us with the other areas we discussed this afternoon, the STDs, the illegal drug use. We think that is very positive.

I just simply reiterate that we are doing this at a time when our statistics are indicating a levelling off of HIV positives and AIDS cases, indeed a dropping off of them, because the persons testing positive have dropped from 70 in '86; to 54 in '87; to 45 in '88. I want to caution my honourable friend that I do not

automatically translate that into a decreasing prevalence of the epidemic. That is a very much hoped for conclusion, but we also want to try to get a handle as to whether that is because fewer people are actually requesting the blood test. We simply do not know because that could be the other side of the coin, but the AIDS cases, because there is one thing that you always know positively, and that is an AIDS case, because that is where they access the formal medical system. The HIV positive, you do not know. Anyone in this room could be HIV positive, and you simply do not know. That is the very difficult issue with AIDS, in that someone can be infected and live a perfectly normal, outwardly appearing life, but not only are the people testing positively decreasing over that three-year period, but indeed the number of AIDS cases are likewise decreasing.

It seems as if the two trends are in tandem, and we are very encouraged by that, but let me tell my honourable friend that it has not lessened our commitment to put outreach people on the street as the next phase, even though we are not facing the circumstance of very alarming projections of growth as we were four years ago. We are committing provincial taxpayer resources to combat the program even given encouraging statistical results that may well be pointing to a very positive message for us.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, I want to discuss the issue with the notifiable diseases. As of last year, there were 34 seniors in two resident personal care homes that had a problem with, it was influenza or parainfluenza, and certain complications which led to the possible causes of death, which was revealed through the news media and from the other reports. We happened to talk to also the personal care homes and some of the families involved in this.

I think it is very crucial that I think we have learned two lessons out of that. Number one is that even though we forgot that there are a large number of seniors who live in personal care homes, and any deaths occurring in personal care homes were not reportable in the past. They should be because there can be a lot of things learned in the future from that. We have reason for concern, and I was told by the Minister, I think yesterday, that they are going to look into that and amend The Public Health Act to report all the deaths to Chief Medical Examiner. My question to the Minister is: when can we expect that kind of policy statement coming from his department?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, let me deal with a number of issues here because I want my honourable friend to know that maybe he was exuberant in his language, and I offer no other criticism of my honourable friend.

First of all, the issue of the reporting of deaths in personal care homes has been one that has been suggested by the Chief Provincial Coroner to the provincial Government for, I do not know, seven or eight years. We are bringing in an amendment, and I cannot tell my honourable friend what statute. It is not The Public Health Act, but it is a statute in which that will be an amendment that is coming in this Session. That will not stop deaths in the personal care homes.

That is just a reporting mechanism that we see in the long run as being helpful, and it has been something that the Chief Provincial Coroner has been asking.

(Mr. Darren Praznik, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

My honourable friend, either overtly or covertly, left the impression that there was no policy in place, and I indicated to him yesterday that indeed that would be an erroneous conclusion to make in incidences of management of outbreaks of communicable diseases in our nursing homes and our personal care homes in the province. I would like to share with my honourable friend a seven-step procedure which has been in place, was in place, was followed and I believe successfully contained the parainfluenza epidemic. Bear in mind—well I will not get into it. We will wait.

* (1640)

First of all, the regional medical officer of health, as required in the regulations of The Public Health Act. If there is no regional medical officer of health, the communicable disease control director will be notified.

Second, the nursing home will notify the nurse epidemiologist, Manitoba Health Services Commission, or will request that the medical officer of health do so, so that that communication occurs.

Number three, the outbreak will be immediately investigated by the medical officer of health, who will assist the nursing home inspection control practitioner and the medical staff of the home. Steps to control the outbreak will be taken as soon as possible. The nurse epidemiologist will provide consultation regarding infection control in the institution.

Fourth, publication of information about the outbreak will be at the discretion of the administrator of the nursing home, providing that no risk to the health of the public is involved. It is strongly recommended that the administrator take a pro-active stance in informing the staff, residents, and relatives of residents of the problem, and the measures being taken to control the outbreak.

Fifth, where the communicable disease may be expected to occur in other nursing homes, they will be notified by Manitoba Health Services Commission and/or the communicable disease control directorate as soon as possible of the outbreak and the measures to control it. Communicable Disease Control Directorate will co-ordinate the investigation and control of multiple outbreaks in the province.

Number six, it is recommended that all deaths in nursing homes during an outbreak be discussed with the office of the Chief Medical Examiner to determine whether or not an autopsy is indicated. It is the responsibility of the nursing home and the medical staff to report such deaths. However, this may be done by the medical officer of health if necessary.

Number seven, where the communicable disease poses a hazard to the general public, they will be immediately informed by the medical officer of health in consultation with the Communicable Disease Control Directorate and the Communications Directorate.

Those steps were followed. This is a policy that has been in place at least for several years.

Mr. Cheema: I think this is the first opportunity we will have to discuss in detail. I still have a lot of doubts about the whole incident, and how it was handled, and how it came to the knowledge of the public, and to the knowledge of the professionals as well as the politicians. I want to ask the Minister that in these two particular homes, if all the procedures were followed, No. 1, and when did the personal care home administrator notify the Director of Communicable Disease? After the communication was done, what precautions were taken?

You are saying that it was not a public health hazard, but if 34 people are dying in two nursing homes, either due to the later causes because these individuals were definitely not going to die either of influenza or parainfluenza. There are complications and further, when these people are already compromised, there are more chances for them to have a simple cause of death. We will never know that, because first of all what we discuss when you do not have a mechanism of reporting those deaths to the medical examiner, how are you going to determine the causes of death? Even the possible complication of death so we have not learned that.

I think this whole issue is still in the air. It is never very clear that what happened in the immediate period and how this thing was followed up. I think any Government has to learn a lesson, and also the personal care homes, they have to also learn a lesson.

You see, all the personal care homes, I do not think any personal care home has all the staff which is full time. There are part-time staff people who come and go from one personal care home to another. There are families who come there, and some of the people who are physically strong that they may not get influenza or parainfluenza, but some of the loved ones maybe in their elderly groups are coming and seeing their families, and they are still being exposed to this virus. You still have a public health hazard.

I think that 34 people dying of direct causes or indirect causes, as far as I am concerned any person in the Health Department would consider it a public health hazard. It was unfortunate that we have to learn through another source rather than coming from a report from your department, and I was rather shocked to see that and then later on defending that the action was right. I do not think it was right. The mistake was made. It should have been made public, and we should have gone faster to improve the reportable mechanism. As there is, yes there is all those questions because people still have feelings that all the precautions were not taken. It is not possible 100 percent to do that. Can the Minister justify not letting the public know in time when these specific incidents happened last spring?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I guess my honourable friend's persistence in this issue is almost annoying me as much as his Leader did yesterday where she pulls, without identification, quotes not from anything but a novel written on the issue, and paints

every personal care home in the Province of Manitoba with a very negative image.

Mr. Cheema: My question is different, I am asking—

Mr. Orchard: No, my honourable friend referred to that incident yesterday and I want to refer to that incident yesterday, because in my honourable friend's questioning, and this is about the fifth time my honourable friend has brought this up, today I laid out for him step by step the procedure. Those procedures were followed.

Now, I want to deal just for a moment with No. 7, where the communicable disease poses a hazard to the general public. My honourable friend knows that parainfluenza is in layman's language, I am not a doctor, the common cold. Now goodness gracious surely my honourable friend is not saying that the Liberal Party believes that every time someone has a common cold in a personal care home that we send up a communication, a public health warning that there is a common cold in a personal care home. Now I know my honourable friend is not saying that, because that simply is not a reasonable approach.

Now I reiterate to my honourable friend that the procedures were followed according to the guidelines. In the instance that my honourable friend mentions of staff who work part time at a couple of homes, when the parainfluenza broke out there was a curtailment of that staff sharing. Known visitors who would be going to other homes were informed not to because of the outbreak, that is to prevent the spread of the common cold, parainfluenza.

My honourable friend says we should have forewarned the public that in two personal care homes in the Province of Manitoba there were a number of unfortunate deaths because of parainfluenza.

Well, Mr. Acting Chairman, there is a difficulty when you are talking with frail elderly residents of those homes. I am sure my honourable friend would understand this, something as simple to you and me as the common cold can have very serious and devastating effects to the health status. Yet I think one cannot expect that the staff automatically reacts as an emergency situation every time a resident gets a cold in this climate, so that the identification that you in fact have an epidemic or more than one death does not instantly become evident and apparent to those staff working most closely with the individuals. Unfortunately you have from time to time deaths in personal care homes. I think on average there is—one should never deal with statistics—but there are a number of deaths each month in personal care homes throughout the province and of course it varies with size and the number of residents.

* (1650)

So the identification that you have got a parainfluenza outbreak is not always immediately evident until after you have got several cases and those cases may well have taken a couple of weeks to materialize amongst the elderly resident. I am simply saying to my honourable

friend that there was no intention to keep any information away from anybody. The procedures of reporting and communication were followed. The procedures required to prevent an outbreak amongst other homes were followed, and I think my honourable friend would have to admit successfully. There was no necessity to report the parainfluenza outbreak because it was not a hazard. You simply cannot issue a Public Health Warning on the common cold. So I do not know what my honourable friend is hoping to achieve here, but basically all the procedures were followed as have been in place for a number of years.

This is not the first time, unfortunately, that some residents in personal care homes have succumbed to parainfluenza, and unfortunately it will likely not be the last. Mr. Acting Chairman, when it is identified, these procedures are followed to protect the residents within that home and within other homes. I think by and large they have been successful in the past.

Now on the issue of reporting of deaths in personal care homes. Yes, we are going to have that as a requirement of the personal care homes, but I simply say to my honourable friend that that will have absolutely no impact on an outbreak of parainfluenza in any home this January. It simply will not prevent it, cause it, or have anything to do with it. It is simply a reporting procedure that we think is an appropriate one to bring into law. It has been requested for seven or eight years.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, can the Minister of Health tell us now or as I discussed with Dr. Fast earlier that the influenza if it is occurring in the general public as such it is not a major health risk, but if it is occurring in a personal care home where the people are already compromised in their general condition and they may have some other complications, it does pose a risk. We do not have a list of influenza as a communicable disease to be reported. I think we should look at making influenza to be a reportable communicable disease if it is occurring within personal care home situations. I think that would be helpful so at least the vaccination to the other people who are in the personal care homes can be given. There are precautions like you have said that it is difficult, but still I think it is good to alert the public so that no Government and no health official has to defend their own policy then later on.

It is a simple procedure. All of these diseases are in the communicable diseases notifiable selection. I do not think anyone is going to argue in the areas of personal care home except the common cold or influenza or parainfluenza, and I think we should include influenza as a notifiable communicable disease so that we can at least have the other people immunized in time and save some dollars.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, my honourable friend now has done what he did in the House. He has now made parainfluenza, the common cold, and linked it and placed it in the same category as influenza which is a different circumstance. - (interjection)-

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Order. Order, please. The Minister has the floor.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, influenza is a notifiable disease. The list my honourable friend has he will note the first word on it is, selected. That is not a comprehensive and complete list. Influenza is a reportable disease by an appropriate methodology. It is a reportable disease. Parainfluenza is not. It was parainfluenza that contributed to the deaths of those individuals. It is not a reportable disease. Influenza is, and I hope my honourable friend is not trying to say that they are one in the same because they are not, and they are handled differently. That is what I have consistently tried to indicate to my honourable friend, that the procedures were followed in the personal care homes and unfortunately there were deaths. I believe that the appropriate action was taken and what could have been a very serious situation was contained. Unfortunately there were deaths. It was not, and I repeat, not an influenza outbreak. Had it been an influenza outbreak, there would have been the public notification sent.

Mr. Cheema: As the Minister has said these are the selected notifiable diseases. Now what is the procedure then to know which personal care home is getting an outbreak of influenza? How does the Director of Communicable Diseases have contact with them so that all the precautions can be done? This is a paper which goes to most of the physicians, most of the clinics, most of the hospitals. These are the care givers. If we can have that, the influenza report, and there I do not think it is going to be very useful. We should add that selected list, increase the list to also include the influenza in here.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, in terms of influenza, that is isolated and identified at the Cadham Lab for instance and when so identified the attending physician in the home is notified as well as Communicable Diseases. Then an investigation immediately takes place, and appropriate public information is developed, depending on whether it is isolated or appearing to be a widespread circumstance.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, why cannot we add influenza with the list of the selected notifiable diseases in Manitoba? We know that we have a large number of senior population, we know that there is a large number of personal care homes, and this is going to be a problem. Why cannot we just expand it in a simple term? It will not cost millions of dollars.

Mr. Orchard: My Honourable friend makes an interesting point. There are approximately, I am told, 50 diseases on it. Does my Honourable friend want all 50 diseases there? - (interjection)-

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Order, order.

Mr. Orchard: Well, then why would you want to pick and choose? Influenza today because you believe there was an issue in it. What if it is something else tomorrow? Then you would ask for it replaced. This is a selected list of the most predominant diseases for that time period, and my Honourable friend will notice that the time period is ending July 29, 1989. Could it be that

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we include influenza in the January one when it is influenza season? We could even go one better, we put an extra note in there saying that if there is an influenza outbreak, and we deal with it specifically, separately and right up front for my Honourable friend.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Does the Honourable Member for Kildonan wish the floor? Shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Kildonan.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, there is the incidence of tuberculosis. In 1987 there were 77 cases; in 1988—72; in 1989—69. Can the Minister of Health give us a breakdown where are these cases occurring? Which area of Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I will have to beg my Honourable friend's indulgence to provide him the specifics with where those cases have originated. It is fair to say that our Native communities are over-represented in the caseload, but we will provide that information for my Honourable friend.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the reason I have asked those questions is because I think it is important to know where those cases are occurring and what is being done to prevent it, because I do not think the trend is changing, it is only—

An Honourable Member: It is going down.

* (1700)

Mr. Cheema: Yes, but presently still, I mean in 1989 in the western world you are going to have 69 cases in one million population is not, I mean, the record could be improved a lot. I think still there is a lot of room for improvement. That is why I will be in touch with you to see how many cases are occurring in northern Manitoba and Native communities and also in Winnipeg. Also I think we should look at how many new Canadians have tuberculosis. That is an important factor. As we all know that a large number are coming from Third World countries even though the rate of tuberculosis is still very high there. Some of the people come here and may pass the test of the clinical examination, the x-rays may be normal, but after they come here they may have trouble.

In fact I have a few patients who end up having tuberculosis after six months arrival in Canada. There were three of them. It was not known. It was clear on the x-rays. I think that is why it is important to have that information and send the information not only to the local immigration office but to the federal Minister too and make them aware that they should look for these things in the future so that we do not have this problem. Every time you have one patient with tuberculosis coming to this country, after a few months if this patient gets sick, you have to pay for all those tax dollars. I think we have to make sure that first of all the public health is not at risk and second, our tax dollars are spent wisely. I will wait for the information from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Mr. Orchard: We will attempt to provide that on Thursday.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): The hour being 5 p.m., it is now time for Private Members' Hour. Committee rise.

SUPPLY—SENIORS DIRECTORATE

Mr. Chairman (William Chornopyski): As the committee last met, dealing with the Seniors Directorate, we were on Clause 1.(a) page 149. Shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Ellice.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Chairperson, continuing on in the Estimates for Seniors, in regard to the activities that have been identified for the Seniors Directorate, I am wondering if the Minister could clarify for us what the differences and/or similarities are to this Activity Identification and to the Activity Identification as is indicated in the Supplementary Estimates for the Department of Health under the section of Gerontology?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): That is fairly self-explanatory in the explanations.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, well, given it is very self-explanatory, I am sure the Minister will indulge me and have no difficulty in elaborating on the answer.

Mr. Downey: Really to maximize the use of the committee I would think the Member could understand the difference between the Department of Gerontology within the Health Department and the Seniors Directorate. It is explained in both the departments.

Ms. Gray: I believe the Minister does not understand the difference between what the Gerontology section does in the Department of Health and the Seniors Directorate. Perhaps he would like to tell this committee, and for the benefit of Manitobans, exactly what the differences and/or similarities are between the Gerontology section in the Department of Health, which is a key area that deals with seniors and aging, and the Seniors Directorate.

Mr. Downey: With the greatest of respect it is clearly spelled out. If the Member has a question dealing with Gerontology the Department of Health Estimates are going on in the next room. As well, it is clearly stated in the Supplementary Information, the objectives and the activities of the Seniors Directorate.

* (1440)

Ms. Gray: I still submit that the Minister does not know the difference. He can fluster and bluster all afternoon, but I am getting the impression from this particular Minister that in fact he knows no more than his predecessor did, and that is definitely not a compliment.

With a further question to the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Downey). I would submit, Mr. Chairman, that in fact the activity identification under the Seniors Directorate is the same as those activities which are outlined in the Department of Gerontology. Can the Minister for Seniors indicate why he has a Seniors

Directorate, which has the same responsibilities as does another division which is under the jurisdiction of a completely different department?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I cannot help whether the Member has difficulty with whether I know anything or whether I am any different than my predecessor. One thing I do know and that is that the seniors do not have the unfortunate situation of having the Liberals looking after their affairs in this province.

Ms. Gray: Could the Minister please indicate what the differences are between what the section of Gerontology does, because as you read the activities they are very similar or identical to those under the Seniors Directorate, can he please indicate to all Manitobans so we can be assured that in fact the Government is not duplicating and overlapping in the services, what the specific differences are in terms of the mandate?

Mr. Downey: We are not duplicating within the Department of Health and the Department of Gerontology within the Department of Health and the Seniors Directorate. The Member may have that interpretation that there is some duplication. That is her interpretation, and I have no difficulty with how she interprets it, and I respect her as an Honourable Member in here for what she thinks and how she thinks. That is her right and her responsibility.

I will again point out to the Member what it points out as to what the responsibilities of the Seniors Directorate is. We have carried out a major activity on seniors abuse. We have carried out a major information line.

There are other initiatives within the department of services to seniors that will be looked at by the Seniors Directorate, supportive of the seniors in the Province of Manitoba. I do not know where the Honourable Member is trying to lead, but I can tell you at the rate we are going I think it would take me a long time to educate her in this whole area. I am prepared to take that time if she is prepared to endure the teaching that I will have to give her.

Ms. Gray: Certainly the record will show, as we read through the Estimates, that in fact we have not heard one single piece of fact from this Minister since we started the Estimates process yesterday.

In fact, in listening to the opening comments particularly from the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) he clearly indicated that we were looking forward to some honest back and forth discussion, but all we are getting from this particular Minister is in fact fluster/buster, and we are getting no answers at all.

I would ask the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Downey), given that the Seniors Directorate is to be involved in factors in policy and program development, can the Minister indicate how that activity fits in with the specific activity of the Gerontology section, which, and I quote, is involved in program planning to develop and implement services to senior citizens?

Mr. Downey: The Department of Gerontology is more of a direct program deliverer. This Department of

Seniors works in the area of policy development and areas that some departments who do not specifically meet as regular as we do with some of the seniors organizations and seniors in fact it is a policy-based, policy-active organization within Government. The Gerontology is more of a direct program deliverer.

I would have thought the Member for Ellice would have known that, Mr. Chairman, with her experience in Government.

Ms. Gray: Well, in fact directorates and section heads never get involved very seldom in program delivery directly. That is always carried out by the regions. Be that as it may, perhaps the Minister could indicate to us—he is now saying that in fact maybe we are getting closer to some truth here or in fact something we can work with. He is suggesting that the Seniors Directorate is responsible for overall policy in regard to seniors. Can the Minister indicate then, does the Department of Health have any involvement in regard to policy making for seniors and/or the aging population?

Mr. Downey: The Member may have misunderstood me. I did not mean to say—or if in fact I said it—that the Department of Seniors Directorate is not responsible for all policy. It is to co-ordinate and work with the different departments as it relates to policy, and surely the Member would have known we are aware that the Director of Gerontology is not involved at field level delivery of programs. That position is responsible for it, but not actually the delivery. I think that is somewhat elementary, and I am surprised again at the Member for Ellice and her question.

Ms. Gray: I am only repeating what the Minister had said when he talked about service delivery at a directorate level, I am wondering if the Minister could indicate, given that his Seniors Directorate does look at some policy areas, has this directorate had the opportunity to look at the non-profit senior citizens organizations which deal with housekeeping and yard cleaning services? We know of course there has been much discussion about this in the Legislature and without the Legislature.

I am wondering, given the nature of sensitivity of this area and unclarity of facts, if the Minister could indicate, because this directorate deals with policy, has the directorate actually looked into the issue as to the feasibility or the need for more or less of these non-profit cleaning services, which are often times established with assistance from the Government.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, again for the Member, that is a city-based program. It is not really the mandate of the provincial Seniors Directorate to get directly involved in city delivered policies or programs, and would find that we would be prepared to discuss it with any seniors groups who come forward, but to stick our nose into city policies and programs other than at a request of an individual from the seniors groups, we have not done so.

Ms. Gray: Perhaps I could clarify the question. I think I know what the Minister—what he has just said actually

is incorrect in response to my answer, but I see where he is coming from. He is thinking that I am referring only to the City of Winnipeg home improvement project, and that is not the case. What I specifically said was the non-profit cleaning services which in fact have been established and set up with assistance from the Government.

Again, for the Minister and his staff's edification we are referring to the support services to seniors section in the Department of Health who has actually assisted in establishing these non-profit services in rural Manitoba. Actually they are further ahead than in the city, but we do have a few in the city as well.

What I am asking the Minister is, has his directorate had the opportunity to look into this issue in collaboration with the Department of Health in regard to the feasibility of expanding this particular type of service?

Mr. Downey: We have had no complaints. It has not been brought forward as an issue, and we have not had any dealings with it.

Ms. Gray: Will the Minister indicate to us, does he listen in Question Period and does he in fact read Hansard?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I do listen in Question Period although I am extremely disappointed in the Opposition and what they have had to say, and I do read Hansard, and again I am as equally disappointed in what I read coming from the Opposition in this House.

Ms. Gray: If the Minister listens in Question Period and if he in fact reads Hansard surely he must realize that this very issue of the non-profit cleaning services has been an issue under discussion in this Legislature for the past number of months at various points in time.

For the Minister to stand here today and say that in fact he is not aware of any complaints, I do question what the Minister does in Question Period and how much he gleans from his reading of Hansard.

* (1450)

It has been a very major issue where people in certain parts of the city are suggesting they are being discriminated against, because they are being told to go to non-profit cleaning services whereas members or the elderly in other parts of the community are in fact given a home care service of a similar nature, i.e., some maintenance or some housekeeping services.

My question to the Minister was, as the Seniors Minister was this something that he felt was a significant enough issue to in fact avail himself of what information was available and possibly give some recommendations to his colleague, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), in regard to these kinds of services?

Mr. Downey: Well, Mr. Chairman, let not the Member get so important in the Legislature to think that because either the Liberal or NDP Members bring it to the floor of the Legislature that the rest of the society out there

are extremely upset or concerned about it. One has to appreciate that there may be some specific problems, and I appreciate the fact that they are brought to the Legislature by Members, but as a major issue it has not been brought to the Seniors Directorate either through the process of consultation with leadership of any organization.

I can tell you there is one particular issue which has brought some concerns to my attention, a Member of her caucus, that is of significant concern to me and we plan to do some work on it. That is the whole area of seniors transportation. That I do think is of major importance. We will be dealing with it not only in the City of Winnipeg but other centres and other areas throughout Manitoba.

I think mobility is one of the key things that the people in the latter years want to maintain, the ability to be mobilized, to make sure they get to the personal services and whatever activity that they can carry on to enhance their life. I say very sincerely, Mr. Chairman, to the Member for Ellice, that there are issues which are brought to this Legislature, they are not always brought forward in Question Period, because I can tell you a lot of times a lot of political posturing goes on to try and get the issue raised to some level that is probably not quite as significant as the Member thinks in the heat of the moment.

I take very seriously concerns that are brought forward. The issue that she has raised is dealt with in another department and/or within the city programs and policies. I can assure her, as I can assure all Members of this House that when the issue is raised, when it is brought directly to our attention and/or through discussions with my colleagues who are responsible for other areas that reflect, or have some impact on the seniors, then there is very close consultation and work done on their behalf.

I would wonder if the Member could be more specific as to what she is referring to either individuals and/or programs that are not working as well as she would like. If she has some specific cases, I would invite her to write those specific cases out for us and we can have them investigated with the department. I am not going to override another Minister's responsibility because, Mr. Chairman, again the Member should know that there are certain areas of responsibility under Health, under Housing, that are legislative responsibilities. There is a substantial difference between a legislated responsibility and a directorate-type process which is done by Order-in-Council.

Of course, the legislative responsibility is clearly spelled out in legislation that is in fact passed by all this House. An Order-in-Council setting up a directorate is somewhat, not quite as powerful I guess as the legislation would be.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Chairperson, just continuing on the same theme, which department would have legislative responsibility for drafting elder abuse legislation, if that should be the direction that the Government chooses to take?

Mr. Downey: I guess that would be determined, there may be a combination of things. I know there has been

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some suggestions that as it comes dealing with some of the financial affairs within the province that it may, and I say "may," fall within the Attorney General or the Minister of Justice, as it relates to the Public Trustee. That is an option I know that has been looked at and considered, and that is one specific area.

If it comes to activities within the Ministry of Health, then there may need to be some amendments there. There may need to be a free-standing Act of which, as a Member of the Treasury and as a Member of the Legislature, I would have the capability of bringing forward, as well. You may have a combination of changes to certain Acts and/or one free-standing Act which could well be introduced by myself.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to ask several more questions of the Minister about the elder abuse paper, which he considers to be the most important accomplishment of the Directorate over the past year or so. How much did the paper cost to produce?

Mr. Downey: Let me first of all make a little bit more of a comment on the seniors abuse paper, the elder abuse paper. As I said last night and I will say again today, we in Manitoba are actually taking somewhat the lead in this country in this whole area. P.E.I., I understand, have legislation—

An Honourable Member: Very good legislation.

Mr. Downey: The Member says very good legislation, but that is one province out of 10. We have been looking at other areas and truly this is the leading edge to some degree as to where we are going. That is why I say, very sincerely, that I think we have to take our time and we have to do the job properly.

There are some questions that I think the people in our society want to know answers to. I think that we have to know answers in this House, I think we have to have a good feel for it. Having been in the Legislature for quite a few years, when one introduces legislation in this Chamber, you have to feel very comfortable and know precisely what you plan to do with it. Now the cost of the printing, distribution and preparation I believe is in the neighbourhood of \$5,500.00.

Mr. Carr: Were there not costs involved to pay consultants who wrote the report?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, let me further add some information which I have just had provided to me. That has been the cost since I have taken over. The total costs of preparing the paper and a lot of other work activity that has gone along with it is in the neighbourhood of \$10,000, but that includes the \$5,500 that I have referred to. That has been the preparation of the paper, some of the printing, some of the distribution, and other activities. So the approximate cost of the printing of the paper, the preparing of it by Mr. Scott, I believe it was, is in the neighbourhood of \$10,000.00. Some of those costs were incurred prior to it. These were costs I have given since I have been responsible.

Mr. Carr: It says in the Adjusted Vote, March '88-89, that there were \$90,000 in professional services. So,

if the total cost of consultants for the elder abuse paper was only—I cannot remember the exact figure that the Minister used and there is a substantial sum of money—\$10,000 I am told, for consulting services, that leaves \$80,000 for professional services in the previous fiscal year. Can the Minister just double check his figures to make sure they are correct?

Mr. Downey: As I understand it, the previous operation of the Seniors Directorate, the Member referred to \$90,000 approximately? That included office supplies, printing, maintenance and repair—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Downey: Basically, it is the cost of the \$90,000 that is the cost of operating the Seniors Directorate, basically supplies and services that supported the Seniors Directorate.

Mr. Carr: Can the Minister tell us who the consultant was that helped draft the elder abuse paper and what city he resides in?

Mr. Downey: Doug Scott from Toronto.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, Winnipeg has a reputation nationally and internationally as a centre of expertise on the question of aging. The Seniors Directorate when looking for advice on a background paper on elder abuse goes outside of the city and outside of the province. May I add and more than parenthetically that we have some of the most highly respected specialists in the field of gerontology in this province, all across North America, and the Minister and his predecessor go to Toronto to look for expertise to write a Manitoba paper on elder abuse.

* (1500)

Would the Minister justify this piece of insanity to the House?

Mr. Downey: Well, this outburst from the Liberal Critic, I am really quite amused, Mr. Chairman, because first of all we get a lot of pressure and heat from the Liberals and the Opposition to get on with the elder abuse paper and the work activity. Then I give him the direct answer as to who is doing it and from where, and he goes into a tirade about what a terrible person this person is and that he is lobbying for one of his friends in Winnipeg. I would take that as his approach—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge, on a point of order.

Mr. Carr: Let the record show that I am not lobbying for anyone, nor am I casting any aspersions upon individuals or their characters. The question I asked was why could the Minister not find, in this galaxy of expertise in Manitoba, what he needed to write a

background paper on elder abuse rather than going outside of the province to hire a person who no doubt has qualifications of his own?

Mr. Chairman: A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Downey: I would have to agree with you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for that ruling. I would hope that the Member realizes that his outburst and his uncontrollable temper as it bursts out cannot be tolerated by you or the committee.

Let me further add, as the Member knows and I speak in defence of Mr. Scott and the work that he has done because the work had to be done. I unfortunately or fortunately was not the Minister at the particular time the individual was hired; however, I still support the hiring of Mr. Scott and the work he did. I will tell you why, Mr. Chairman, we had to get on with it, and the people who are seeing the work, the seniors organizations, are extremely pleased with it. You see, you cannot beat success. The people who are reading this and are responding are quite pleased, and that makes me happy.

So if the Member is a little upset because a former Winnipeg person, a person who lived in Winnipeg for many years, who now happens to be in Toronto and has professional services to provide for Winnipeg, I have no difficulty with that. The Member may have, but I do not and I am particularly pleased that the seniors have not had a lot of problem with that. It is just the Member for Fort Rouge who seems to be a little upset over that issue.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, I am very disappointed that the Minister responsible for Seniors does not have a deeper commitment to the expertise in Manitoba, of which we on this side of the House are so very proud. Can the Minister tell us if there were any other consultants involved in the preparation of the elder abuse report?

Mr. Downey: Again, as it was prior to me taking over the ministry, I do not believe there were, but if there were I will find that information out and bring it back, but to my knowledge there were not.

Mr. Carr: Is it the Minister's intention to engage any other consultants after the final report is produced, or indeed in the preparation of the final report? We now know that the Minister is involved in a consultative process that there will be public hearings throughout the province and we applaud that. Does the Minister, however, intend to hire others, or is he going to rely on the staff of the Seniors Directorate to produce his final report, and when should we expect it?

Mr. Downey: Well, we want to make sure the job is done properly and that we will do if we have the support of the Members of the Opposition. I cannot say today whether I am or whether I am not going to hire individuals who may have to add some other

professional services to the development of the work that is to be done, the finalization of the report. I can clearly say that it is not my intention today to do so, however, I am an individual who responds to need on behalf of the seniors. That is what the objective is and that is how I will leave it, Mr. Chairman. I have full confidence in my staff, but I again say, if there is a recommendation coming forward from the seniors, from staff, and the collective executive of my department which I have a lot of respect for and ask me to consider that, I would have to do so to be responsible as the Minister responsible for Seniors.

Mr. Carr: If the Minister is so responsive to the needs of seniors maybe we will hear something enlightening from him when it comes time to discuss petitions on drug patent laws, but that is for a little further down. What is the schedule of implementation that the Minister has in mind? What happens after the process of consultation is complete? When should we expect a final report, and what are the steps that will lead towards its implementation?

Mr. Downey: Again, I think it would be a little bit unfair for me to try to nail time frames down which in fact I could not meet or the department could not meet, but let me say I think that my colleague who had the responsibility previous to me carried out some very important basic groundwork which is important to the seniors of Manitoba and important to the Government, and a major part of the process. The Member says is that what the seniors think? I have not had one letter from any senior or seniors group who were upset with my colleague the previous Minister so I have to say they must have been satisfied, Mr. Chairman, and I again say that the work that was done -(interjection)-

An Honourable Member: Is that how you evaluate it?

Mr. Downey: The Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) said, is that how I evaluate it? It is a pretty good step, it is a pretty good indication, it is a pretty good indication, Mr. Chairman.- (interjection)- Well, I am not going to accept those kinds of shots. I thought the Member for Ellice was a little bit above that, but I guess maybe she is not.

Let me just say as far as a time frame is concerned we are, and I have tabled the schedule of consultation processes, meetings—and of course as I indicate clearly on here—that it is subject to some additions and there may be some additions because remember, we are dealing with seniors who may or may not be able to get to certain areas at a certain time, and we are flexible on that. I would say as well that we are going to do the rural and the northern hearings, and then it is our intention to do the Winnipeg hearings. Now time frame, I would expect that we would be through the rural ones sometime middle to the latter part of January and then as 60 percent of the population lives in Winnipeg I would not expect it to take the full length of time that the rural ones did because of the closeness and the ability to contact those people, but probably towards the end of February we would probably have the majority of the consultation over with.

That would be my objective and my target at this particular time, but remember what I said earlier, one

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does not want to get too pushy on this and move in the wrong direction because of the implications that legislation and actions in this regard can in fact have on the lives of our seniors and our people. That has to be a concern. When I discussed with the leadership of the different seniors organizations, I discussed time frame. In fact I had set a shorter time frame and they specifically requested that I extend that. That is clearly the position coming from the leadership of the seniors organizations. So that is roughly the time frame in which I am working on at this particular time.

Mr. Carr: Yesterday when we were having this conversation during the Estimates I went through a number of individual recommendations which already appear in the elder abuse paper. These are recommendations which presumably have the approval of the Minister, otherwise he never would have put them out. My question is really one of context and one of commitment. Obviously the Minister wants the seniors of Manitoba to have the opportunity to respond to these recommendations, but do these recommendations represent today the position of the Government of Manitoba on these issues which are raised?

* (1510)

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I would be less than responsible if I said yes, and I would be less than responsible if I said no.—(interjection)—That is right. What it is, is a discussion paper and it is not engraved in stone, it is truly a position paper that has been distributed for clearly that—discussion. I think that the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr)—maybe not the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), but I am sure the Member for Fort Rouge, and I know the other Members that are in the committee clearly understand.—(interjection)—No, I do not think they do either; I overestimated. Again, the development of legislation is a time process. These are points that have been raised and clearly as discussion with the community. If there are changes, I am quite prepared to listen to those changes. One does not want to—and I say there are some sensitivities when we talk of how legislation is put in place to get directly involved with the lives of people.

Young, old, or golden years, or whatever term, you are dealing with the lives of people so it is extremely important. For example, you may find in certain family situations where there is an identified elder abuse problem—very, very delicate situation. It is a matter of interpretation, Mr. Chairman. So the time process, the clearly understanding where we are going has to be worked through very cautiously. That is the caution that I am proceeding with.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, in the paper under First Step, the Minister makes reference to the pilot project at the Seven Oaks Hospital. Can he indicate to us what the success of that pilot project has been, and therefore why he chose to include it as a discussion point in the paper?

Mr. Downey: I do not believe, Mr. Chairman, and I stand to be corrected, that there has been a formal assessment to this particular point. I would think that

would be part of the discussion that is going to come forward. After all, it is a pilot project, and I do not believe there is a formal assessment available. If there is, I will provide it for the Member, but I do not have one.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, in spite the fact that the Minister cannot discuss the virtues of that program, or whether or not an evaluation has been done, he suggests in the paper that that program be extended to all hospitals in Manitoba. Then he goes on to detail what that will involve, culminating with the establishment of a central provincial registry of abused persons. Can the Minister tell us what would be involved in the establishment of a central provincial registry and who would administer it and who would have responsibility over it?

Mr. Downey: Let me deal with the pilot project, Mr. Chairman, and the Member's comments. The discussion paper suggests that it may be extended to the other hospitals within the province. "Suggest" is quite a different than "directed to be," and they are part of the discussion paper. "Suggest" that it will be, not "direct" that it will be. Okay. If the Member wants to get hung up on these little things, we can get hung up on them, but the Member, I think, would be well advised to wait until the work is done, and they are part of the exercise on consultation.

Now I have gone and answered that question, and the other question is—(interjection)—Again, that is part of the discussion, and the consultation, and again within the registry, there are some extreme sensitivities. I think that we are getting some indication as to some possible—what is the proper terminology—not nervousness, but I guess concern about the implications of having such a registry. I think we want to clearly understand how it will impact on people when in fact there is a registry developed, and who is in control of it. Again, an extremely serious area.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, I want to go back to comments the Minister made a few minutes ago. Perhaps he could clarify the formula. I did not quite understand. He talked about the issue of elder abuse in the particular family situation that would—as an example, being a very sensitive issue, and that it could be a matter of interpretation. Could he clarify what he meant by that?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I knew it. I knew it just as soon as I started giving some specific answers, I would give the Opposition a question to respond with. I think, Mr. Chairman, in fairness to all the Members in the House and the moving of the committee, I will just bank the questions, and when she has asked them all, then I will respond to them all. I think that would be fair.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairman, my question is the same one I just asked a few minutes ago.

I have no problems with the Minister getting into specific answers. We are pleased with that, but surely the Minister would not want me to leave this Chamber

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and have a totally different interpretation of his specific answers and what he actually meant. So, therefore, I am simply asking the Minister to clarify, because I did not quite understand what he meant when he talked about the issue of elder abuse and the family situation being a very sensitive issue and that it could be a matter of interpretation. Could clarify what he means by matter of interpretation?

Mr. Downey: Again, Mr. Chairman, with the Member opposite's lack of ability to understand what I am referring to and venturing out into an area which will probably promote another question from the Honourable Member, I will try to explain to that individual.

I said that it is a delicate area where you may have elder abuse taking place within a family where in fact the person, either relative, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, or whatever, in fact, in some way may be, as it relates to legislation that is drawn, is abusing the elder in the family. The elder may not feel that they are being abused, and may not want to in any way have a reflection of any kind on son, daughter, granddaughter, or whatever. That is the way in which I am making reference to the delicate situation of which we are talking about. I hope that is helpful to the Member.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, if we can use that example that the Minister provided we could also look at the example of the child abuse laws in this province and certainly we have situations of children who may be 14, 15, 16 who, as well may be being abused by a family member and may tell a case worker vehemently that they do not want any charges pressed against that family member. Is the Minister suggesting today that because you have a person who is being abused and who does not want, for whatever the variety of reasons, and there are many, to have a relative or person charged, that we should not have laws? That is what you are saying.

Mr. Downey: I am not saying that, Mr. Chairman, and I think we would be well advised to wait until we hear from the seniors organizations and the consultation paper that is out there to make our judgments.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, can the Minister indicate to us, again, we now have legislation in this province where, in fact, a wife does not have to charge her husband. Charges can be laid by another party. Again we may have that wife who vehemently may say to the police, I do not want my husband charged, I do not want him to go to jail. Is the Minister against suggesting, with his analogy about elder abuse, that we need to be very, very careful. In fact, I think he is hedging on the whole issue of legislation because we are dealing with this sensitive issue and we are going to get into matters of interpretation. Is he suggesting that we should not be looking at protecting some of our vulnerable citizens because in some cases it is some of those elderly people who may be vulnerable? My interpretation of what the Minister is saying is that he is hedging on the whole issue of legislation and he does not want to deal with this because it happens to be a

very sensitive issue. But so is child abuse, and so is wife abuse and we need to have legislation and we have legislation on those issues. I am very much afraid that this Minister, and I would then assume his whole Government, are hedging on this whole issue because they do not want to get involved in it.

* (1520)

The Minister has outlined in the House the schedule for these consultations to take place in the province. Can the Minister indicate, he has talked about meeting with a lot of the seniors groups which of course he feels very important, is he also going to be meeting or giving the opportunity to non-profit community groups who serve seniors, professionals who serve seniors, and any other groups to also attend and make presentations at these particular consultations and will that be advertised to all the groups?

Mr. Downey: Yes.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, I want to go back to again another comment the Minister made and he talked about one of the issues that was a concern to his Government, and that was transportation for the seniors. I listened with interest to that because I certainly recall the federal Minister responsible for Seniors who in a meeting a number of months ago with the Age and Opportunity Centre again spoke of the three main issues affecting seniors that her federal Government would be working on, and one of the issues that was clearly mentioned within that three was the area of transportation to seniors.

I am wondering if the Minister could indicate what negotiations, if any, or any initiations that this Minister or his Government has had with the federal Minister to in fact determine or see what exactly that priority given to transportation may translate to in regard to support coming back to Manitoba for transportation for the elderly?

Mr. Downey: There have not been any yet, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate, is there a plan in the near future to have such meetings and/or negotiations, and if so when might we expect that to occur?

Mr. Downey: Yes, and soon, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister tell us exactly what "soon" means since we all may have different interpretations?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, the Member has the freedom as a Member to put whatever length of time she likes to, but I would think it is an issue that we would like to have discussed as quickly as possible.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate, will there be discussion that would be held with the federal Government, the Minister or her department responsible for seniors, that would occur within this fiscal year?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, remember we have a very limited staff of which the Member was critical last night,

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and let me further say that we have a major initiative on elder abuse. We are going throughout the province to ask the seniors to bring forward not only matters on senior abuse, but other issues. I would think that following that exercise we would be able to more aggressively deal with the question of transportation.

Ms. Gray: I am sure the Minister is aware that although he has limited staff certainly other departments who deal with seniors as well have Research and Planning sections, and part of their function is to specifically negotiate with the federal Government. Can the Minister indicate to us if the Department of Health, as an example with their large research and planning component, is planning to have any discussions with the federal Minister responsible for Seniors in regard to transportation, and if they are planning to or have, will some of these negotiations be related to monies that might be available or other support within this fiscal year?

Mr. Downey: I will be discussing that with my colleague, the Minister of Health.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, in the expected results indicated in the Supplementary Estimates, the Minister has indicated that he has already installed the Seniors Information Line. Can the Minister indicate how many staff are used to staff this particular line, and is this an 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. line or what are the details of that particular service?

Mr. Downey: Operated on business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The secretary answers the phone and passes the call onto the policy analyst.

Ms. Gray: Would the Minister indicate, I am not exactly sure of the date that this particular line was in service. I know it has been fairly recently. Does the Minister have any information or statistics as to how many calls that you are receiving on a daily basis, and is there any categorization of the types of questions or concerns that you are receiving?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, it was introduced on the 18th of September. There have been over 100 calls, and I at this point cannot give a particular range of activities what they are called on. We would like to make sure, we want to build confidence within the seniors organizations and the individuals seniors as it relates to the information line, and could talk in generalities but not specifics, and I will get that information for the Member as to the areas of concerns that are being brought forward to the information line.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, we appreciate the Minister will be able to give us that information. Can the Minister tell us, is his department or is his staff actually logging calls in terms of categorizing? Do you have a system set up whereby you are going to be, on an ongoing basis, keeping track of the calls, the nature of the calls, et cetera?

Mr. Downey: Yes.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister indicated Sept. 18 and over 100 calls, what does that break down per day, what is the average per day at this point?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, it is as many business days as there have between now and the 18th. I can figure that out for the Member, it will take me a couple of minutes.

Ms. Gray: I can figure it out as well. I am quite surprised though the Minister does not know on an average per day how many calls are being received.

Can the Minister indicate, he talks about dissemination of information to the seniors and I am sure he is familiar with one of our brochures—and I do not have a copy with me, but he would have received it as well at the Manitoba Society of Seniors Annual Meeting a few weeks ago—and it is a brochure that talks about elder abuse, and also in the back of the brochure it talks about places that seniors can call for help. Can the Minister indicate, did his directorate have anything to do, or any consultation with the Manitoba Society of Seniors in regard to the type of information that was put into that brochure, specifically because it refers to Government departments to approach in the back of the pamphlet?

Mr. Downey: No.

Ms. Gray: Could the Minister indicate then, and he may not be able to answer this question and that is fine, but I will ask the question anyway. I have some concerns because at the back of that brochure, I believe in good faith, it was indicated that if you have a concern, i.e., you have a concern that you are being abused as an elderly person, or you are a friend of someone you feel is abused you can call the following numbers, and it indicates specific health and social services office within the City of Winnipeg, through Winnipeg Region, can the Minister indicate at all if in fact there are any kind of services in regard to assistance for people who feel they are being abused, that one could receive out of those particular community health offices?

Mr. Downey: I can find out for the Member, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Gray: Is the Minister then indicating, given that he will find out, that in fact in the preparation of this discussion paper, the Government themselves does not even have an idea of the types of services that may or may not be available or are existing already in regard to assistance for the elderly in regard to abuse?

Mr. Downey: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the Department of Health and all the different Government organizations are very sensitive within their line responsibilities as it relates to seniors. I would think the Member, having been a former civil servant herself, would have some realization of the sensitivity to people within the different Government departments, as it relates to seniors. I am sure there would be instances which they would feel responsible to either work toward corrective measures and what we are doing now is a more co-ordinated effort, Mr. Chairman.

* (1530)

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, to use an example, if someone phones the Seniors Information Line, an

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elderly person, and says it feels that they are being abused, what services, or what would the information line do, where would you refer that individual or that person?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, again that is a hypothetical question. I would think that the individual would, if it was in a matter of legal concern, then it would go to the Ministry of Justice for a response and/or direction. That is the chief law officer of the province and there would be capability within there to direct it either to someone within the Attorney General's Department and/or the police department.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, so the Minister is indicating that if an elderly person calls the information line, and obviously it would take a great deal of courage for someone who felt they were being abused to even phone the information line, and the Minister's answer is that they are going to refer them to the Department of Justice. We all know what bureaucracy is and we all know that we each have to deal with bureaucracy, and oftentimes we are more prepared to that because we work in the system. So the Minister is suggesting that for a person who calls, and has had the courage to call because they feel that they are being abused and they need some help because of this well publicized seniors information line, the answer they are going to get from his department is to talk to the Department of Justice. Am I correct in that is what the Minister said?

Mr. Downey: No, she is not correct, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister then indicate what would happen if someone phoned as I suggested who felt they were being abused, who has had the courage to call the information line? What would be the process or what would the people at the end of that line be able to do for that individual?

Mr. Downey: Again, Mr. Chairman, I am sure that there are many different situations, and it would be the responsibility of the individual who took the call to make a judgment, and again the Member refers to courage. It is a hypothetical question, and I know one should not get into those hypothetical situations because they are never ending—and accomplish for the purposes of Estimates very little—but to help the seniors, the line is there. It has been working quite well, and as I said, it relates to the nature of the call.

Now if it was an abuse situation where the individual was very concerned, shy, and timid then probably the Seniors Information Line would ask the individual—and again I am hypothetical as the question—ask the individual if they want the police contacted on their behalf, if it is that kind of a nature of a call. That is the best I can do to help the Member at this particular time.

Again, if it was a health related abuse problem within a senior's home then I am sure the proper place to direct it would be to the ministry and/or the Department of Health. That is how I would interpret and see the operation working. It is working very well at this point.

Ms. Gray: Again I ask the Minister that if this person who is there to take information and process information on behalf of the seniors, is there an inventory of services that in fact are available so that this person has some idea of where in fact they can refer people to, and are the Health and Community Services Offices within the various regions in Winnipeg and in rural areas, are they part of that network where elders or seniors can be referred to for any specific problems?

Mr. Downey: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bill Uruski (Interlake): Mr. Chairman, just so the Minister is aware that although I am not the critic for seniors, my colleague the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) is, and he is presently detained on another matter dealing with LynnGold. I did participate in the debate last Session and I raised a number of questions of your colleague, and that deals with the whole process of registering complaints and the pro-active nature as we saw the Seniors Directorate being on behalf of seniors, and the nature of the questions last year—and we really did not get a response—and some commentary from the Minister on behalf of seniors, dealing with the whole question of home care and home care services.

Mr. Chairman, we know that the Government has undertaken a reduction in home care services and have instituted charges via either: (a) private individuals doing house cleaning, or (b) the setting up of community non-profit corporations which would in turn perform those services. In fact, I think you were at that committee when we were having that discussion, and I indicated at that time that the whole process would become somewhat of a nightmare for seniors and a dilemma for the Government because what I was alleging last year certainly has come out and come to fruition in that some seniors, depending on their recent coming out of medical institutions or in their doctor's care, will receive home care or household or cleaning services while others, who may not require doctor's care, or are not under immediate doctor's care in fact have their services reduced. In all those calls that the Minister talked about, setting up the line for seniors, does his branch receive calls and has it received calls from seniors who have been cut off home care services, and how many?

Mr. Downey: Not accepting any of the premise from the Member for Interlake, Mr. Chairman, and I am somewhat surprised that he is here to fill in and kill time for his colleague, the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan). At least that is how I took what his opening comments were, and if that is not the case, then let it be.—(interjection)— Yes, that is right, he is a Member of the Legislature. That is a good observation, the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak), he is a Member of the Legislature. I appreciate that help. Let me further say that specifically dealing with the Home Care Program, that there was not a cutback. In fact, this question would be better asked in the Department of Health.

But if I go from recollection—well, the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) has a bit of a problem. For some

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reason she cannot seem to get her questions across, but can talk from her seat, but cannot seem to effectively get her questions put across. I really can understand why she is having difficulty because of the leadership of what she is under in the House, so I do not accept the premise. It is my understanding, if I remember correctly, that there was a \$10 million increase in the Home Care budget under this Government as opposed to the last budget that was introduced by the NDP. I stand to be corrected. Again, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) could help us out if he were here, but I will get the information specifically for the Member.

* (1540)

Mr. Chairman: I must apologize to the Honourable Member for Interlake. I did say Lakeside. My sincere apologies. The Honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski).

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, I have been called worse, but the Minister of Seniors (Mr. Downey) ought not to get so incensed about my presence or any Member's presence in this House asking questions about seniors. Whether he believes the time is being wasted, the seniors will deal with him on that question.

When it comes to home care, the budget may have been increased, but the criteria, and that is what we talked about last Session, the criteria for the receipt of home care services has changed. I want to tell you, I, in the last six months had about, I would say, half-a-dozen seniors contact me directly, where home care services were in fact cut back. They gave me the circumstances. What I did is I put them in writing to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). They were reviewed. I want to tell you in all circumstances the services were re-instituted.

When the Minister tries to defend his colleague, the Minister of Health, he ought not to worry about the Minister of Health. He is here in the capacity of being a spokesperson and an advocate for seniors, and when one arm of the Government decides to change regulations which impact on seniors, and in this case, negatively, he has to be their spokesman. I have to tell you, when you set up a directorate of this nature, you will be in conflict with some of your colleagues whose departments provide services for your particular clientele and, in this case, seniors.

I want to know from the Minister, and I ask him again specifically, how many calls were there complaining about cutbacks in seniors, and how were they resolved by his branch?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, the Member for the Interlake does not listen. I did not make any reference to wasting of time. All I was doing in my initial comment was responding to his reasoning for asking questions. It was not me; I did not say anything about wasting time. He maybe thinks that this is a waste of time on behalf of seniors; I do not.

He said he was here because the Member who is the critic was unable to be here because of other

activities. That left me to come to the conclusion that he was asking questions in his own right as an MLA, but the fact that he was doing it was that the critic was not able to be here. Now one can take whatever they want from that. I take that he has some legitimate questions. I would hope he does. If he then finishes those questions, I would hope we could either get back to other Members' questions and/or pass the Estimates of the Seniors Directorate.

Now specifically dealing with the question, I cannot give him a specific number of calls as it relates to home care. I can get that information, but I do not have it specifically with me.

I do want to thank the Member for his compliment to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) when he said he brought six cases before the Minister of Health on home care, that there was corrective measures taken, and again that is the proper thing for him as the Member to do.

It is not any one individual's responsibility here when a constituent calls with a concern. It is the right and responsibility of that individual to take that concern forward to the bureaucracy, to staff and/or to a Minister. I am pleased that he has done that and I am thankful for the compliment for my colleague, the Minister of Health.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, the Minister in discussion with the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) indicated that there were categories put in as to what type of calls were being made to the branch. I am assuming that a record is kept as to the type of complaints because, if we are dealing with complaints within the Government bureaucracy, the Seniors Directorate becomes very much an ombudsman of sorts for seniors.

They have a link into Government, not directly going through the Ombudsman's office, but a special branch that becomes an advocate on their behalf and quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, when the Minister presented the information to the Member for Ellice in the way the calls were received and they were categorized—but is there a record and are there statistics available for Members of this Chamber to know and see whether or not the kind of complaints that we are raising are in fact coming through the Seniors Directorate?

If they are not coming through the Seniors Directorate, either (a) seniors are not using the directorate to their fullness, and that means that there may have to be a change in the way we advertise it or put it forward to seniors as they understand the workings of the directorate, or some other issues have to be addressed. That is the nature of the questions and the reason I am posing the question that I have. What kind of statistics are available in terms of the nature of the complaints to the directorate about Government programs and the like?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, again let me say that they are not all concerns dealing with Government. There are I am sure a broad range of activities as it relates to seniors. To help the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) out, I believe that it has operated approximately 30

days, in excess of 100 calls, so there have been three to four calls a day. To help her out with her calculations, that is roughly what it is.

Back to the question of the Member for Interlake. The calls as it relates to Home Care, I do not have the specific number. There have been some, and they have been dealt with the same way in which he as a Member would deal with them. It is referred to the Department of Health to be looked into and dealt with. Now I cannot give you the success ratio, Mr. Chairman, as to that, but I would assure there would be a repeat call if the individual were not satisfied with the result. That is how the issue is dealt with.

Numbers, I do not have them. There were some.

Mr. Uruski: I appreciate the advice of the Minister. I would hope by the time the Estimates come forward again that the Minister will have some breakdown of the categories and statistical information that we raised, and that he can in fact judge and have some feeling as to the types of governmental programs or complaints coming to Government via the Directorate which may cause him to raise issues with his colleagues in terms of the policy nature of their various departments.

(Mr. Parker Burrell, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Chairman, I listened but I did not quite catch the full debate of the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), her questions about abuse, seniors abuse. Am I correct in that the Minister of Seniors (Mr. Downey) is not as yet prepared to bring in legislation into the House dealing with seniors abuse? Is that correct?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Chairman, I could refer the Member to read Hansard to help him out, but because he was not paying attention and I thought he would be on this important issue, what we are doing so he clearly understands, we have provided for the community a Paper on Elder Abuse, a Discussion Paper. We are now going through a consultation process with the people of rural and northern Manitoba and we will follow that by a session of consultation process meetings within Winnipeg. Then we will make an assessment as to what will be needed in the best interests of the seniors in Manitoba to deal with the problem. Then we will develop the necessary legislation that is necessary to help solve the problem. I hope that is clear.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Acting Chairman, it is clear and I see a process being set up by the Minister to kill time and I say that in all fairness. What would have been appropriate is the discussion paper that he has put out, but as well with a draft proposed copy of specific legislation. Because what I see happening is we have the document of consultation there, being put out and that is fine, but along with it one could have drafted proposed legislation and said, here is something what a Bill might look like in the form of a White Paper, not bringing forward specific legislation, but in terms of time frame, I see the Government basically saying, well, this is a process that we are into. We want to consult a great deal with seniors, but yet I see another I would say year and longer before the Government will in fact

be prepared to have some discussion on some formal legislation dealing with seniors abuse.

* (1550)

The issue, quite frankly, Mr. Acting Chairman, was touted by the Government that they were going to address that over a year ago. It was one of their main issues and yet we kind of see—while the portfolios have shifted, the dragging of the feet being there between one Minister and this Minister. If I am wrong the Minister will get up right away and correct me and set me straight on their process.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Chairman, being the reasonable, rational person that I am, I am reluctant to give this speech that I am about to give, but I think it has to be given, just to bring the whole question into proper context.

I think it is time for the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) to have another good old-time rural thrashing. How many years were he and his Government responsible for the affairs of the Province of Manitoba? Fifteen out of the last 20 he sat in this Legislature as a Minister. Elder abuse did not start 18 months ago in this province. Where was he and his Government and his sharing, caring Howard Pawley and he as Minister?

In fact, if he had been bringing in elder abuse it would have been to protect the people from the irresponsible high taxation policies of the New Democratic Party. He was the Minister of Autopac, and yes, Sir, there are a lot of seniors who drive automobiles? Who put the Autopac rate up by probably in excess of a hundred dollars per individual? It was he the Minister who was supposed to be responsible for Autopac. Who spent \$27 million in Saudi Arabia of taxpayers' money of which a lot of that was the seniors' money? What did they do for Hydro rates for the seniors of the Province of Manitoba? -(interjection)-

Yes, I thank my colleague the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) for reminding me of that bridge to nowhere which would have given seniors, senior citizens housing, senior citizens beds, lower Autopac rates. Absolutely a total \$30 million bridge, and we can go to \$35 million if the Member wants to bid it, but most seriously the biggest abuse on the seniors of Manitoba was the abuse of the taxpayers' money over the last many years that we have had an NDP Government in this province.

So do not let the Member for Interlake stand there and be so righteous as to say that we are dragging our feet. We, the Conservative Party, dragging our feet? It was us who committed to an elder abuse paper. It was the Conservative Government. One would never expect anything to come from the Liberal Party. One would never expect anything productive—

An Honourable Member: Lucky for us who created that paper.

Mr. Downey: Well, now they are critical of it. Now, they are attempting to take credit for pressing me to deliver the paper which they are critical for. They cannot

have it both ways, but I really take exception to the Minister of—and another issue the former Minister of Agriculture, what did he do on the education tax relief for the elderly farmers of this province who wanted to lease their land out to an individual? He did not give it to the seniors or the elders who owned the land, he gave it to the people who were renting the land, totally an abuse on the rural people of this province when he was the Minister of Agriculture, lack of sensitivity to the people who pioneered this country. That is right, Mr. Acting Chairman. He was involved in elder abuse because of his policies as Agriculture Minister.

So I take strong exception to that individual for the Interlake who is so righteous when it comes to now saying, we are not doing anything when it comes to elder abuse. He had his opportunity.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge, on a point of order.

Mr. Carr: I hate to interrupt the gush, the flow coming from the Minister, but he went just a little bit too far when he implied that the Member for the Interlake was in fact a part of elder abuse. I would ask the Minister to apologize or retract that comment, and making light of the issue.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Chairman, let it be very clear, I am not making fun of the seniors of the Province of Manitoba. I find it strange that the Liberal for Fort Rouge has to defend the Member for Interlake. However, the try is very admirable on his behalf. Let me say, I do interpret what he did to the seniors of Manitoba as abusive on the seniors of Manitoba.

Tell me that the Autopac rates that he imposed on the people of Manitoba were not abusive. Does the Member for Fort Rouge agree that the Autopac—did the Liberal Party agree the way that Autopac rates went up for seniors was right? Is that what he is telling me? He is no better than the Member for Interlake, and to include himself in that camp is despicable. I am ashamed of the Member for Fort Rouge for including himself with the same policies as the Member for Interlake -(interjection)-.

Yes, Mr. Acting Chairman, we brought them under control. We brought the hemorrhage of the provincial taxpayers' money under control. I found the policy on education tax on retired farmers who wanted to maintain the ownership of their land and rent it to either a family and/or someone else abusive to the seniors that wanted to maintain that investment in farmland. I truly do find that abusive to the rights and privileges of the seniors of this province. Yes, abusive, financially abusive to those individuals -(interjection)- you ask the seniors who wanted to maintain their farm ownership and a lot of them did and rent it to their families or someone else.

They were deprived of getting a tax break from that Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) and that Minister of Agriculture. Ask the union of municipalities who spoke

out many times in opposition to that policy and to every leader throughout Manitoba. I find that abusive to the seniors of this province who wanted to maintain - (interjection)- pardon me? So I do not think the Member for Interlake has any licence to stand here and criticize me or this Government for dragging our feet on elder abuse.- (interjection)-

Well, Mr. Acting Chairman, let me talk a little bit about the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak), seeing as he wants to get into this. Do you know that the former New Democratic Party prided themselves in going out and developing the Nelson River project, Limestone, to sell power to the United States at less than it cost to produce, based on the coal-fired power in North Dakota and neglected seven or so communities in northeast Manitoba, Native communities who depend on electricity generated from diesel fuel, that they cannot run anything more than a 15 amp bulb, and he prided himself in looking after seniors—despicable, Mr. Acting Chairman, despicable, the way in which he treated the people in northern Manitoba.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): What is before the committee at this time is the Estimates for the current fiscal year. I would encourage the Minister to keep his comments relevant.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Chairman, let me assure you that every time I speak, I am speaking on behalf of the seniors of this province that were neglected by the irresponsible action of the Howard Pawley Government of which the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) was a Minister, and the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) was a Minister. The senior is in my thought and every word that I say that they were disrespectful of the seniors and the pioneers of this province.

Let it be clear that if the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), I will give him an opportunity to stand and defend himself, to say that he did not put the Autopac rates up in a manner which was very difficult for seniors to cope with. I will let him stand and say that he did not put Hydro rates up, that the seniors of Manitoba had a very difficult time with. I will say that there were seniors that had to pay sales tax that he put on them because of the mismanagement of him and his Government. The seniors were impacted, were abused by the former administration when it came to the cost of living in Manitoba.

It was the former New Democratic Government that added \$500 million annually to the cost of the debt that the taxpayers have to pay. A large percentage of those people were seniors. Yes, Mr. Acting Chairman, they were seniors. That is who I am speaking out on behalf of today, that is who I will continue to speak out on behalf of. I would think the Member for Interlake should think twice when he comes at me and this Government for dragging our feet when it comes to legislation dealing with elder abuse.

* (1600)

I would have hoped I did not have to give that speech. If the Member wants to continue on in that path, I have many more that I am prepared to deliver if the Member

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wants to continue on. Again I would hope we could pass this with an objective view in mind. Thank you, Mr. Acting Chairman.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): The Honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski), and I would like to inform him at this time that we are considering the Estimates for the current fiscal year, and I would encourage the Member to keep his comments as relevant as the Minister of Seniors.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Acting Chairman, because some of the issues that have been raised by the Minister responsible for Seniors in fact show that I guess one could put it quite bluntly that for him hot air is more important than facts.

Mr. Acting Chairman, I asked him a simple question on process in terms of future legislation. He did not address that. Instead he went on a tirade on a number of issues that he indicated impact on seniors. In fact they do impact on seniors. I want to deal with some of those questions that he pointed out.

Mr. Acting Chairman, the question of Autopac increases, let the record show that when their chairman came to and in fact the Deputy Premier is there, and who is responsible for MPIC, came to committee last year their new chairperson indicated to committee that those increases were required and they were the right ones at the time. So did they reduce the premiums? No, they did not reduce the premiums for seniors or for anyone else. In fact they have increased them this year after having a \$20 million surplus in less than nine months.

Mr. Acting Chairman, the Minister for Seniors (Mr. Downey), he can continue on and he even has the gall to lay the question of MTX onto the NDP when it was his colleague the now Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who signed the agreement two months before we became Government. That is on the record, the OC is there. He even admitted it at a public meeting in Arborg during the campaign.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): The Honourable Minister, on a point of order.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Chairman, I would like the Member to withdraw that statement because it is not true. The truth is, and there is an Order-in-Council to prove it, that Howard Pawley was the father of MTX and Muriel Smith was the mother. There is an Order-in-Council with their signature on it doing precisely that. I can get it for the Member if he wants me to provide it.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): A dispute over the facts is not a point of order. The Honourable Member for Interlake.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Minister can provide whatever OCs he wants. He should be aware since he was in the Lyon Government that originally brought in the deal to get MTX going. So let him not try to confuse the issue.

Mr. Acting Chairman, I am surprised that the Minister of Seniors (Mr. Downey) in his defence of the seniors on education tax on farm land is so vociferous in that we did not provide benefits directly to seniors who owned farm land. Any owner and operator of farm land, be it a senior or otherwise, was eligible for the school tax rebate. - (interjection)- I said anyone who was an owner-operator, that is the words that I used. Pardon me? I did not forget the second part. I used both those words to the Deputy Premier. In fact the seniors would have been better off had we stayed in office, because the benefit would have doubled from \$500 to \$1,000 per farm family. So right now the farm community is benefitting to the tune of 35 percent, which for the average farmer in this province is no more than about between \$500 and \$600 in benefits. For many it is even less than that.

So, Mr. Acting Chairman, for the Minister of Seniors to somehow now say seniors are benefitting greater by the Conservatives than they would have under the NDP is stretching it a mite. Not only that, the Minister had they closed some of the loopholes that they opened last year, they are sending out over \$2 million to absentee landowners who in fact have no interest in Manitoba, who own the land and live outside the province. He could have, if they closed the loopholes, over \$2 million in funding for seniors programs. So, Mr. Acting Chairman, I really think that this Minister is more of a puff of wind rather than an advocate for seniors.

Did he stand up for seniors when his own Government increased the fees paid by seniors to attend our parks. I mean there has been a park increase for seniors put in by his own Government. Did he stand up and shout? No, no we cannot - (interjection)- well if he did nobody heard him. Did he stand up and condemn the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) for the cutbacks in home care services to thousands of seniors in this province?

The Minister of Seniors berated the wrong Member when it came to seniors services. When I was elected in 1969 there was not one unit of elderly persons' housing in that portion of the Interlake that I represent. Not one. Not one unit of elder persons' housing. - (interjection)- I will give him all the community names that now have seniors' housing. I will go from Gypsumville or St. Martin in those communities to Ashern, to Eriksdale, to Fisher Branch, to Hodgson, to Moosehorn, to Arborg, to Riverton.

An Honourable Member: You opened up a can of worms.

Mr. Uruski: No, there was not one elderly persons' housing in that portion of the Interlake and I say that without equivocation to the record of the Members and of the Conservative Party. I know the Member for

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Lakeside (Mr. Enns) in the debate over personal care homes between Lundar, Eriksdale, and Ashern - (interjection)- Mr. Acting Chairman, eventually we did and in fact no difficulty.

The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) raises his hands as if he is right. Let him not forget the record that the deal was that if Ashern got theirs, Eriksdale was out. It took an awful lot of cajoling and not only cajoling, we had to embarrass his colleague, Mr. Sherman, in this Chamber on a number of occasions in order to give in, to make sure that both communities got their homes, because Eriksdale was not scheduled to have the home. The Member for Lakeside should remember that. Now he will be representing that area. So he will have two nursing homes, an additional nursing home in his area. I am pleased that both of them are there.

For the Minister responsible for Seniors to in fact get up and go on a tirade on a simple question of legislation and process, I find reprehensible. The Minister for Seniors should have enough caring for the seniors to be able to explain why they went with the report first and not with a draft package of legislation dealing with seniors' abuse and have both out there for discussion and dissemination rather than going through the process now. Then likely I would think that if you are going to consult you would go out and consult with a White Paper draft piece of legislation to deal with seniors abuse, and he never answered that question.

Mr. Downey: I will try and be brief and give the Member a response. The decision has been made to circulate the consultation paper as it relates to elder abuse and follow the process of developing the legislation after we hear from the people who are going to be affected by it.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Acting Chairman, just a question to the Minister. Has there been any work done by his directorate on the impact of the proposed GST on seniors?

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, the basic work that is being done as it relates to the GST is being carried out by the Department of Finance.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister aware of any analysis done by the Department of Finance as it relates to seniors? If he is, can he share it with Members?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, there may be but at this point I do not have specifically that information. If the seniors have been singled out and specific work done in that area then I will provide it for him. I will be discussing it with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) as it relates to seniors on an ongoing basis. If there is and has been a specific area that has been singled out, I will get that information to the Member.

I would not anticipate at this point, other than the problems that seniors have with their limited income and restricted income, that the impact would be more

severe because of their limited ability to increase their incomes and pay additional tax. As far as the application of the tax, I would not expect it to be, I have not heard that it is any different than application to anyone else in our society. The effects of it because of the limited income and the restricted incomes of many seniors, that is the impact that one would have to be conscious of.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, we just heard a 10-minute tirade by the Minister of Seniors regarding the impact of taxation on seniors by the former administration provincially here. I ask the Minister, is he prepared to ask his colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), for that analysis?

Mr. Downey: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Uruski: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, that is all the questions I have.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Chairman, I just had one brief question to ask the Minister and he got up and gave us a long speech on what we did not do in northern Manitoba. He talked about hydro development but I would hope that the Minister would also talk about the communities that we did bring on stream to align hydro project.

The question that I wanted to ask is what I raised in this House previously, the fact that the senior citizens were now being charged to go into parks. I raised that question with the Minister and he said that he would look into it and see if they could reduce it to where it had been previously under our administration where there was no charge to go into parks, as it is right across western Canada. What progress did the Minister make in speaking up on behalf of seniors on this subject?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I do thank the Member for that question. I do have to say with all sincerity that I did not have a lot of reaction from seniors, but there were some. The Member for The Pas was one who was sensitive to the needs of his constituents in this regard and did bring it to my attention.

* (1610)

I, as my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) clearly indicated to me, have made representation to -(interjection)- that is correct, Mr. Chairman, my friend and colleague the Minister of Natural Resources, who is as well a friend of the seniors of this province, and I say that very seriously, I do hope that the Minister of Natural Resources, and I know that he is reviewing the current policy and hope that in a very timely way we can have the matter dealt with prior to the opening of the parks in the coming year.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that there is somebody investigating that because the Minister says he did not have many people raise the question with him. I want to assure him that in my capacity as a critic for the Department of Natural Resources, there were many people that did call me. When meeting with

the people in The Pas, with the seniors group, they raised that question, so there is a lot of concern. I think that when you talk about the goods and services tax, and there are many other taxes that the seniors are being hit with, and with this one more, I think it is more than most seniors can afford. I hope that the Minister is successful in meeting with his friend and colleague, the Minister for Natural Resources, and they are able to bring that rate back to where it was under our administration.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I had a question, just one question to the Minister for Seniors. In listening to his response to the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski), he had made a couple of challenges. One was to challenge the NDP to say that the hike of Autopac did not hurt our seniors. Another challenge was that the hike to personal taxes did not hurt our seniors. Mr. Chairperson, I would like to challenge the Minister representing Seniors if the cutback to the SAFER program and other programs of that nature are not hurting our seniors.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I am always open to a challenge from the Member for Inkster. As I said yesterday, and I will say again today, I have discussed that particular issue with my colleague the Minister responsible for Housing (Mr. Ducharme). I am sure he is very much aware of it and is, in fact, reviewing that policy.

Mr. Chairman:: Shall the item pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairman: No. The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. Carr: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I note in the Estimates that there is no salary for the Minister responsible for Seniors, but it begs a question. I will resist any of the cheap shots that the Minister might be vulnerable to in that regard, but let me ask him what percentage of his time is devoted towards seniors issues.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Member to repeat that question, as I want to make absolutely sure I heard it clear. I was not quite clear.

Mr. Carr: The Minister can buy a little time. The question very simply, Mr. Chairperson, was: what percentage of the Minister's time does he devote to seniors issues?

Mr. Downey: It is extremely difficult to give a specific answer. The job of a Cabinet Minister is something that one cannot split up in its particular sections of time in a day. One starts some mornings at 7, other mornings at 7:30. It goes on till later on in the day. I have a good staff and I depend heavily on them to look after the matters of Seniors as it relates to policy. I am thinking

about them all the time, Mr. Chairman. The concerns go on and on, on an ongoing basis.- (interjection)- That is right, Mr. Chairman.

* (1620)

Actual work activity, I try to have at least one meeting a week with the Seniors Executive Director to discuss issues and matters of policy. If there is a matter that comes up of particular concern, then I am prepared to deal with it, like right now. That is how we deal with it.

As you are aware, there are very few dollars in the Seniors Directorate. There is not a salary component that is attached to the Seniors Directorate. It just goes along with the job. I would like to give the Member a specific answer, but I just cannot calculate it as easy as I could calculate the numbers of phone calls per day on the Seniors line, as I did for the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray).

On an ongoing basis with meetings with seniors groups, with the preparation of the Elder Abuse Paper and all the discussions on it, I would say a fair percentage of my time is spent with the Seniors Directorate, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister talks about consultation with seniors groups and we think that is good. He should be consulting with them. What have the seniors groups told the Minister about the impact and effect of the goods and services tax on them? It is obviously one of the major issues that is being debated in the province now. We know, because we have had conversations with seniors organizations and they are very concerned about the potential effects of the GST. Can the Minister report to us the nature of the discussions and consultations he has had with those groups and what they have told him?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to break the confidence of other people that I meet with, but I would say in general terms the major project that we were working on was the introduction of the Elder Abuse Paper. There were several meetings and discussions taking place in that regard. I have had several opportunities to speak to different groups and organizations as it relates to general policy. I have not had any long-time or long-term meeting in the last few days with the seniors as it relates to the general sales tax, but I certainly feel the concern that comes through, whether it is by discussion or whatever, but to say we have had a specific one- or two- or three-hour meeting, we have not had, but I am available. There are many ongoing issues that I am very available on.

If the Member would read the discussion paper that was circulated, we had asked during our elder abuse paper meetings that other issues of concern dealing with seniors be brought forward, and I would expect during that exercise that that general sales tax will be one of the issues and items that are brought forward at that particular time.

Let us face it, there is probably no one more concerned about the country of Canada and the

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Province of Manitoba than the seniors and the fact that they want to see this country maintained as a country for their families and their children to grow up in as they had the opportunity.

It may have been advantageous to the Trudeau Government who put us in the situation we are financially, and as well the Schreyer and the Pawley Governments to have had some senior counsel when it came to the spending of taxpayers' money, because I was raised and I know many people within this House were raised and appreciate that you do not spend money until you know where it is coming from and have in fact made it. I think that would have been some good counsel that Members of the New Democrats and probably the Trudeau Liberals would have been good advice for them to have had. I say that respectfully of politicians.

That kind of advice, if it had of been taken by former politicians, then we may not have seen today the kind of imposition of taxation policies on the nation that we are seeing. It is some advice that I think all of us should have taken and listened to when it came to spending, not our own money, but the monies we were given in trust to operate the affairs of the country and the province. That I think the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) can appreciate and, as well, other Members of this House. It is a concern.

Taxation and cost of living is an extreme concern to the seniors because most of them are on a fixed income and do not have the capability of paying additional costs of living. We all have to be conscious of that. We are conscious of it and we are prepared to listen and take whatever action we have to take on behalf of the seniors to make sure that they do not suffer because of the imposition of additional taxation.

Mr. Carr: The question was about a Tory tax and the answer is Trudeau, Schreyer and Pawley. We are just getting a little weary of the bluster and the fluster and the obfuscation from this Minister. He has now told us that he has not had any consultations with the Minister of Finance on the effect of the GST on seniors. He has now told us that he has had no discussions with seniors themselves on the impact of the GST on seniors.

What is he doing in that office of his anyway? Why will the Minister not initiate a discussion with seniors' organizations across this province so he can begin to prepare his Government for the onslaught after this unfair and insidious GST? Why is he not talking to the Minister of Finance if it is his role to advocate on behalf of seniors, who to a man and woman are outraged by the effects of the GST, and he does not have to believe me. We are circulating a petition and already 2,600 names from seniors for every corner of this province are expressing their outrage.

The Minister sits there and flusters and blusters without talking to the Minister of Finance, without talking to those seniors' organizations and he talks about Trudeau, and he talks about Schreyer, and he talks about Pawley. Does the Minister believe that it is his role as the advocates of seniors in this province to be more proactive than he is being right now?

Mr. Downey: I do talk to the Minister of Finance. I am concerned about taxation on seniors and their families. I just wanted to remind the Member for Fort Rouge as to who put this country in the disastrous financial condition we are in that the Government of the Day, whether it is Liberal, NDP or whoever it is has to tax to provide the services. That is what I am talking about.

He wants to talk about fluster and bluster, who was it that put the country into such a spiral of taxation and deficits? Who was it? Who was it? It was Pierre Elliott Trudeau and company and their irresponsibility in running this nation. Who was it in 15 out of the last 20 years that gave \$500 million annually over the last few years in cost of carrying our debt? It was not Gary Filmon, the Premier of Manitoba, it was the man who built the \$30 million bridge to nowhere north of Selkirk who is lipping off.

* (1630)

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Chairman, a point of order. The Minister for Seniors (Mr. Downey) is falling into the same trap that his colleague, the Minister of Energy (Mr. Neufeld) and he says, what is a million? The fact is that bridge, and I have information from the Highways Minister (Mr. Driedger) that I can table in this House, cost \$12 million and the adjoining roads another eight, so the total is \$20 million.

This Minister now says over 30 million. That is over a \$10 million error and he says, what is a million. That is how this Government operates. They could not manage a peanut stand.

Mr. Chairman: Order. Order, please. A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Chairman: The Honourable Minister has the floor.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I did not say what is a million. The Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) just said, what is a million, and I would appreciate if he would not try to put things on the record that I did not say. One thing he just did do though was admit that he did build a bridge without any roads to it that cost \$12 million for the bridge, or 10 for the bridge, and then he had to build the roads to it so he just confirmed of all the criticism. He has accepted it, but he built a bridge without any roads to it and a bridge to nowhere.

Mr. Chairman, let us deal particularly with the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr). He can go through the tirade that he wants to go through. We have done some positive things on behalf of the seniors. We introduced the Seniors Directorate, recognizing that there had to be more co-ordination and the need for more activities as it relates to seniors.

The Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) shakes his head. I would suggest that he read the speech that I just gave to the Member for the Interlake (Mr. Uruski)

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so that he knows what his record is. He was a Member of the Cabinet who imposed all of those things on Manitoba seniors. He does not need to criticize me for feet dragging.

Mr. Chairman, I am sorry if the Member for Fort Rouge is so upset with my job in the Ministry of Seniors. He will have to speak to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to have me removed if he is so upset about it and we will see if he has the influence that he thinks he has. He is a smart person and if he wants to recommend that I be replaced, I can accept that kind of thing.

One thing I can assure him, that if I would be replaced with one of my colleagues, and our policy would be to continue to maintain and support the seniors, thank goodness I do not think it would be replaced by the Member for Fort Rouge which I am not sure what we would end up if they govern or would govern as to how they have operated in Opposition. My goodnesssakes, no one would know where we are going in this province.

I am prepared to answer any more specific questions, Mr. Chairman. I am disappointed that he does get so upset.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister has proven over the last number of hours that he is not able to answer specific questions. So if we every once in awhile get frustrated and make political speeches, it is only because we are not getting the kind of forthcoming answers that we expect from the Minister.

I would like to ask the Minister some questions about drug patent legislation, Bill C-22. The Minister knows that seniors in this province spoke with one voice, and they just did not speak to politicians. As a matter of fact, they launched a court challenge to the constitutionality of Bill C-22, the federal drug patent law.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) was asked by the Manitoba Society of Seniors to intervene in that case and the Minister turned them down. Subsequent to that, Mr. Chairperson, we circulated a petition around the province that was signed by more than 4,000 seniors representing something over 90 communities in Manitoba, east, west, north and south. Why did the Minister of Seniors (Mr. Downey) not advocate on behalf of the MSOS when it came time for this Government to show real leadership and to support the MSOS in a court challenge which is very important to the seniors of Manitoba because the possibility of radically increased pharmaceuticals as a result of that legislation is already being felt and will continue to be felt for years to come.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, again, the Member is critical and he says he is going to ask some specific detailed questions. He has to learn that he should at least ask within the responsibility of the provincial ministry of seniors, the Seniors Directorate. That question has nothing to do with the Estimates that are before us, the current Estimates.

All he is doing is provoking wide ranging political debate. He cannot ask a specific question. Let me deal specifically with the matter which he has brought forward.

Mr. Chairman, I have had many discussions with the seniors who are concerned about the constitutionality of it. I do not believe, and I will check my records, if I have been requested to give support in an official way, that communication and discussions had in fact took place through the Ministry of Justice, the rightful place for them to take place.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, it is odd that two Members of the Government sitting on the front bench do not talk to each other about an item which is so obviously important to those people whom the Minister is supposing to serve. Does the Minister believe that the Government of Manitoba ought to support the court challenge, and if so, why are they not?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, unlike the Opposition benches we do talk and we do talk the same policies, unlike how the front bench of the Liberal Party operate when you see the questions that come forward from the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) as it relates to budget matters when they gather their information up in Newfoundland or wherever, it is absolutely and totally on a different tune.

Let me say, Mr. Chairman, that question would be more and more specifically asked and should be responded to by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae). That is who I would suggest that he ask that question to.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister wants a specific question. He is going to get one right now. Why is fully 50 percent of the budget of the Seniors Directorate dedicated towards advertising and printing?

Mr. Downey: To assist the seniors of Manitoba to clearly understand what is in fact going on, Mr. Chairman, as it relates to programs, other departments and general areas of concern.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, what does that say about last year's commitment to those lofty goals just announced by the Minister? Last year, and doing a quick calculation, 10 percent of the budget was devoted to those items and this year 50 percent of the budget is devoted to those items. What accounts for the change and what does the Minister have to say about the effectiveness of promoting on behalf of seniors given the incredible increase last year to this?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, as the Member realizes, last year was the first year of the operation of the Seniors Directorate and that is the way it is. I guess if he is criticizing me for doing a good job of getting information out to the seniors, then I will have to accept that criticism.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister will recall the debate in the House on a Pharmacare card, an idea that was originally unveiled by the Liberal Party in the election of 1988 and subsequently embraced by the New Democratic Party and it took the form of a resolution that has been debated in this House. This is a good idea.

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Will the Minister give us his views of the concept of the Pharmacare carte and any discussions that he may have had with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in that regard?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I understand that the Minister of Health is looking at it, the cost implications and the program. When he has something further to report he can either do it directly or I will get that information and report it to the Member.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to ask the Minister a question of philosophy and approach. We have an issue here which is important to seniors in Manitoba. The objective and the role of the directorate and of the Minister responsible for Seniors is to advocate on their behalf within Government. We now have a number of examples and let me list just a few where the Minister has either not had conversations with other Ministers in the Government responsible or has passed the questions off to—let me refer specifically to the question of the drug patent law to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), the issue of SAFER grants to the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme), the question of a Pharmacare card to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

What is the role of this Minister when issues important to the seniors of Manitoba are being debated and under discussion in his Government? I would appreciate a candid and forthcoming answer from the Minister to what I think is a pretty basic and fundamental question as to his role.

* (1640)

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I feel that the elder abuse work that we are doing, the information line, other areas of discussing policy issues with other ministries, with the leadership of the seniors community through the process of staff consultation, direct consultation to enhance the livelihood, to make everyone who is a senior and/or affected or considered to be in their golden years to have their life made just a little bit better. The role of the Seniors Department Directorate is to enhance policies or to support policies that will in fact do that. We know 18 months ago there was not a Seniors Directorate.

We know that those specific questions that the Member is referring to would have to go directly to those ministries. My responsibility has not changed that other than to say to the Minister of Finance, to the Minister of Justice, to the Minister of Health there are areas which have to be enhanced and worked on and supported dealing with policy matters. The delivery of the program if there is criticism that comes forward we have put a mechanism in place that we hope we can help respond to change.

I am sorry if the Member for Fort Rouge cannot understand clearly what the job is. It is still developing its role and will continue to do so over time so I can appreciate the frustration of the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), but I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful to him. I really would think over many years of me being

in the ministry and he being in Opposition that we will get this thing sorted out and I will work to help him.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): At the beginning of the Estimates we outlined a number of issues which we had asked for some response from the Minister responsible for Seniors with respect to how those issues and how new events affected seniors, and I listed a number, included housing, including the clawback of seniors' pensions, including the goods and service tax, including Handi-Transit, including Pharmacare, including home care cutbacks, and including elder abuse. There has been some discussion on a number of those issues but we still have not gained any great insight into what the Minister is doing in a lot of those areas to fulfill his responsibility as Minister responsible for Seniors.

I am sorry I had to be out of the Chamber. I understand, actually I heard that note was taken of the fact that I could not be here at the earlier part of today's discussion on the Estimates. I was, quite frankly, on the phone trying to contact people with regard to a very serious matter in my own constituency and that is the impending closure of the Lynn Lake mining and milling operations and the closure of that town.

I can tell the Minister for Seniors that I did not feel as if I was totally neglecting my responsibility because when—let me rephrase that, if that town closes, and I still hope that it will not have to close, but if that mine shuts down it will be the seniors who are most affected because other members of the community, younger members of the community do not have the same investment in the community that the seniors do, just because they have not been there as long. The seniors in that community have their entire lifesavings in many instances invested in their homes, and they paid off their homes, they do not owe anything on their homes. They probably paid tens of thousands of dollars to reach that state of equity and if in fact the town closes, the mine closes, they will lose all the equity in their homes because they will be valueless, they will be worthless unless the Government can come up with some sort of equity program which other Governments have done in similar circumstances.

Also, seniors, and I will use an anecdote to explain exactly the point I am trying to make, and the Minister has probably had similar conversations with people in Lynn Lake because I know he has been there, but the last time when the Leader of the New Democratic Party Caucus (Mr. Doer), the Member for Concordia, and myself were in Lynn Lake, after a public meeting, a gentleman of about 53 or 54 years of age came to me and he said, and I knew this gentleman from before, I have known him for years, and his entire lifesavings was tied up in his house. It was not that he did not try to save a lot of money. His wife was not well, and that cost the family a lot of extra money that they could not save, so all he really had by way of savings was his house. He said to me, and quite frankly he was at the point where he was welling up, tears were in his eyes, you could tell that this was a very difficult situation for him and that he did not like being as helpless and as powerless as he was.

Because of circumstances beyond his control he found himself in that difficult circumstance and he said,

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what am I going to do, to me. He is a miner who is 53 or 54 years old, he will never get another mining job, he will lose all his lifesavings unless the Government comes forward with some equity program for the homeowners there.

He will not be able to carry on with the work that he has done for all of his life because no one is going to hire a 53- or 54-year-old miner, experienced or not. His future is totally destroyed, totally destroyed, and that is why in trying to stop that closure, whatever I can do to help stop that closure, I do not feel as if I am in any way taking away from part of my responsibility as Seniors Critic, although I assume that it is more responsibility as MLA, but the seniors will be those most affected.

I would ask the Minister what action his directorate has taken in light of the possible closure of the community of Lynn Lake, the possible closure of the mine and the effect on the community to ensure that seniors are not unduly affected by losing all their equity in their homes. Is he going to be making representations to other Ministers who would have responsibility for putting together a program that if in fact the closure is not avoided, the Government will come forward to try to help to save those individuals, elderly workers who have worked so long to save up that nest egg and put it into their house to ensure that they are not destitute?

Mr. Downey: The correct answer to the question is, yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cowan: I appreciate that answer to that question and I ask the Minister if he can commit himself to advocating on behalf of the Seniors Directorate for a home equity program that would be at least partially financed by the provincial Government, that would provide for seniors and others in the community, not just seniors, but others in the community who have lost their equity because of the closure if it were to occur. Will he be advocating that the Government put significant sums of money into a program to assist them in that regard?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, that matter dealing with Lynn Lake is being handled by my colleague, the Minister responsible for Mines and Energy (Mr. Neufeld) and my colleague, the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond).

Mr. Cowan: I understand that there will be other lead Ministers, but let me read from the Supplementary Information on the Seniors Directorate and tell you in doing so why I believe it is important for this senior to advocate for that to happen. He has, as part of his responsibility, the liaison with other departments to ensure consideration and inclusion of relevant factors in policy and program development by approaching issues with particularly sensitivity, knowledge and awareness of the population served. He is also to represent the views of seniors and seniors organizations within Government.

He has a mandate that has been given to him. That mandate is the reason, the very reason for the existence

of Seniors Directorate, that is not to make policy that would be made by other departments, but that is to act as a liaison and an advocate. So I appreciate the fact he says that he thinks a program would be necessary. I am not asking him if he will implement that program within the boundaries of his own directorate or department, but I am asking him if he will now commit himself to advocating, in other words, going on record in support of an equity program to help homeowners, particularly seniors, because they would be the most profoundly impacted, with significant sums of money to help them recover their equity in their homes if in fact that becomes required because of the closure of the LynnGold mining and milling operations in the area.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I think the Member would appreciate this, that this is a somewhat hypothetical question at this particular time and I think that it would be irresponsible of me to respond at this particular time.

Mr. Cowan: I hope nothing more than to find out in the end that this is a purely hypothetical question, that we do not in fact need to put the program in place. Quite frankly, that would be the first choice of everyone in this Chamber, but I can tell you that it is not irresponsible to ask the question now here of the Minister because I represent residents of that area and they have come to me, and I have it in writing if the Minister wants to see it in writing, and ask me what is going to happen to our homes and our equity in the homes if the mine closes? It is as hypothetical there as it is here, but it is much more relevant to them, and they have asked me to find out the answers to this and other questions as their elected official.

* (1650)

That is why I am asking the Minister now for some indication of policy, some indication of commitment. The possible closure of that community is less than a week away now and people are making decisions that are going to affect them the rest of their lives. I had a phone call yesterday from a woman in the community, probably in her late 40s, early 50s, I think that could be considered to be approaching being a senior, may even have been 55, I am not certain. She said to me, we need more information, we need to know what the Government is committed to in the event that the community closes because we do not know whether the community is going to survive or not. We believe that the Government has a responsibility to let us know how they are going to help us if the mine does close and the community shuts down, and what is going to happen to our houses, and what is going to happen to our jobs, and what is going to happen to our infrastructure. They are looking for answers, they are desperately looking for answers.

If there is anything that would be irresponsible at this point in time it would be not to provide the answers when one has an opportunity to do so.

So, yes, it is hypothetical. Yes, let us hope that we never need test the Minister on what he hopefully will say in answer to this question, but the question must

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be answered and he has a responsibility to answer it, just as I have a responsibility to ask it because the people we are elected here to serve are asking those questions of us. Is the Minister prepared to commit to advocating, on behalf and thereby publicly supporting the establishing of an equity program for homeowners in the community of Lynn Lake that would require a significant contribution of Government money to assist them to ensure that they do not lose all of the equity in their home if the mine were to close and the homes were to become of much less value?

That is a question that is being asked all over Lynn Lake right now; that is a question that we have a responsibility to ask and to answer, and I would ask the Minister, even though it is hypothetical, if he would not be a bit more concise, as he was with his first answer, which was a very short and crisp, yes, which I appreciated, and say the same with respect to this, that he will publicly support such a program, that he will have advocate with the other Ministers and, in fact, his entire Government, Cabinet and Government, so that such a program can be put in place if it is required.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, my answer still applies. It is hypothetical and I am unable to say any more on it at this particular time.

Mr. Cowan: I am not going to ask the question again, Mr. Chairperson, because I believe that the Minister has had ample opportunity to answer it. I regret that he has chosen not to answer it. I regret that he has chosen to hide behind a parliamentary tactic of hypotheticality of a question being hypothetical. I regret that he has not taken this chance, this opportunity to be more forthright and forthcoming, but I quite frankly have grown not to expect direct answers from this Minister, have grown not to expect this Minister to be forthright and forthcoming in his answers, and I have also grown to expect over the last number of months, having watched two Minister's in this portfolio, to accept the fact that this Government has put in place a smoke screen directorate rather than a Seniors Directorate, that this Government has put in place a mechanism that they refuse to use to its maximum effectiveness to protect seniors, and to assist seniors in protecting all the things that the Minister earlier indicated they find of utmost value to themselves and to their province.

Quite frankly, I think that the charade will be seen through. I think that those who watch this Minister and watch the previous Minister and watch the Government and watch the directorate will see that they are only there as a public relations gimmick, that they are there to dampen expectations rather than to provide for progress and policy development, and to ensure that seniors are well represented in the Government.

The Minister on every occasion refuses to tell us how he is going to liaise and represent and advocate on behalf of seniors with other Ministers. Maybe he is trying to protect the other Ministers from pressures, but he is there not to protect other Ministers but to pressure other Ministers on behalf of seniors to advocate on behalf of seniors to bring forward their concerns, to bring forward their ideas and suggestions because they have many good ideas and suggestions, and to try to

make the quality of life better for seniors and sometimes that means taking on his own colleagues. Sometimes that means taking on his own Cabinet, and if he does not have the courage to do that or if he does not have the commitment to do that, then he better think again about the service or the disservice that he is doing to seniors.

I would ask the Minister if—and I have to give some credit to the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) because he asked me to ask this question directly, and I think it is an important question and he tells me that he has had discussions with the Minister on the question on numerous occasions—but I would ask the Minister on behalf of the Member for St. Vital and our caucus, and particularly the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) who has had a lot of work in this area in the past, what his Government intends to do to improve Handi-Transit or, more importantly, what his Government intends to do to improve seniors transit programs so that seniors will find it easier to get around, not only in the City of Winnipeg, and I know I am speaking on an issue which is dear to the heart of, not only the Member for Dauphin but all rural and northern Members in this Chamber, when I ask the question with respect to rural and northern communities as well.

I see the Member for St. Vital has entered the Chamber now, and I just want to indicate to him that I have asked the Minister what he plans to do with respect to seniors transportation and how he plans to advocate on that issue, and perhaps before the Minister answers the Member for St. Vital might like to add to the question.

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): I came in, in the middle of this, but I am prompted to ask a question to the Minister before the Estimates are concluded, and before I do that I appreciated the remarks that the Minister gave earlier to an answer to my colleague from Ellice, and that he is concerned with seniors transport not only in Winnipeg, but all of Manitoba, and I know in consultation with him that he has done some work, and gone out to see first-hand or some of his staff at least, to see what the situation is.

My question is prompted by a call that I just got from a lady, a senior lady who lives in St. Vital, just outside of my territory, in fact, in the constituency of the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme), and she had taken a cab downtown and Handi-Transit back and now she is involved in a lawsuit which is because her back was injured. This is what I have been saying to the previous Minister and to the Minister of Urban Affairs, that the equipment for Handi-Transit, which the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba is pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars in—and I must stop here and say that I appreciate the extra service that is being given to the handicapped, but we are all being fooled to think that we are giving adequate and proper service and the type of service that is needed by seniors by this service that takes a lot of booking ahead and cancellations at the last minute and waiting in the heat and waiting in the cold.

My question to the Minister is, in their investigation in looking into the needs of seniors, will he indeed be

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checking into what I have been saying all along, in that Handi-Transit is not doing a job, and that he would take steps to consult with seniors organizations on that to see if indeed the statements that I have been making are correct and if indeed the money that is being spent in that direction by the Province of Manitoba, although we like to see the Government still keep spending the same amount on Handi-Transit, if indeed a cheaper, more efficient and more effective service for the seniors of, particularly the City of Winnipeg, would be more effective under the sort of transportation that is presently in effect in the southwest part of Winnipeg?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I am more than prepared to give consideration to the recommendations and the comments the Member has made. I find that positive input, comments are most helpful and I will answer, yes, I am prepared to meet with the seniors to discuss with him, and any Members of this Assembly, ways in which we can enhance the transportation for seniors in not only Winnipeg, but throughout the province. I think that the mobility of our seniors community is extremely important. They have been part of a country that the transportation is so important, and to see restrictions, or to have restrictions imposed unnecessarily or because of certain outside reasons should be dealt with and I am prepared to deal with them.

Mr. Chairman: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for Private Members' Hour. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

* (1700)

IN SESSION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. William Chornopyski (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), that the report of the committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for Private Members' Business.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS PUBLIC BILLS

BILL NO. 2—THE LANDLORD AND TENANT AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill No. 2, The Landlord and Tenant Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le louage d'immeubles, standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns). Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? (Agreed)

BILL NO. 4—THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), Bill No. 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route, standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), the Honourable Minister of Finance.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I wonder with the indulgence of the House whether or not I may be able to speak on Bill No. 4.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard)? (Agreed) The Honourable Minister of Finance.

Mr. Manness: Bill No. 4 is a very extremely important bill. It is extremely important, I think I should say. I have been in a long session all afternoon with Members of the Opposition trying to show them some of the problems we are having with the goods and services tax, and let me say that it has been a very long afternoon session so maybe that is why I am mixing my words somewhat.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 4 is extremely important. I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. It lays before the people of Manitoba the Liberal philosophy, and the Liberal attitude towards rural Manitoba. If you want to follow my argument, my conclusion and my thesis will be this—that the Liberal Party of Manitoba is against rural Manitoba. It is obvious to all that they care only about the citizens of the City of Winnipeg, and not at all about rural Manitoba. This is an important point. I will deal entirely with Bill No. 4 because the essence of Bill No. 4 is to deal with keeping licence plates free of dirt.—(interjection)— There is dirt in the world.

Now the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), the Honourable Member for Assiniboia who has brought forward this bill, has brought it into the House, couches his party's dislike for rural Manitoba behind the statements that he wants letters, letters as well as numbers on the licence plate to be free of dirt, unobstructed, unobscured completely, so that there can be no obstruction.

Now I can understand, Mr. Speaker, that there are citizens within our province who do not want to see aspects of our licence plate, particularly "Friendly Manitoba" covered over with testimonials or covered over with licence plate covers that of course are trying to sell a product or have some obscenity at times associated with it, covering up a very important term "Friendly Manitoba." I know that the Member for Assiniboia in trying to convince us that his intentions are genuine has an ulterior motive. Now, I hope that is not outside of common decency. I apologize if it is. But, under the guise of greater —(interjection)—

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Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), on a point of order.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Minister of Finance should, in all courtesy, request the presence of the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake)—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) is quite aware of the fact that we do not comment on whether or not a Member is present or absent. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon does not have a point of order. The Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), on a new point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, on a new point of order, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) knows full well that he is not to be making reference to attendance in this Chamber. The NDP Caucus could take a lesson—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I would like to comment to the fact that I have ruled against the Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). That comment has already been made and then looked after. The Honourable Member for Inkster does not have a point of order. The Honourable Minister of Finance.

* (1710)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, again, this is a very, very serious matter and although I can understand why certain Members from time to time may choose, and have to by way of their responsibilities, choose not to be present or at times I say I can understand why certain Members of the Liberal Party from time to time would not and cannot be present, certainly I can understand why many may not wish to be present on the consideration of Bill No. 4 because, under the guise of clean licence plates, what the Liberal Party were asking for, are announcing to the people of Manitoba, is that they are against rural Manitoba. I will tell you why. Where are the gravel roads? Where are the mud roads in this province? Where is it where the most likelihood of a dirty licence plate is to be? Only in rural Manitoba. Do you see a muddy licence plate of any citizen of the City of Winnipeg who drives within the confines and the environments of the City of Winnipeg? Do you see a dirty licence plate? No. Do you see lettering obscured? -(interjection)- Do you see numbering covered with dirt? -(interjection)- It can only happen in rural Manitoba.

This Bill has a bias built into it. This Bill is anti-rural Manitoba. This is a very serious Bill, Mr. Speaker, because, in her first term in this House the Member

for Ellice (Ms. Gray) said, to my memory, do not fix the potholes—one. Secondly, you are spending too much money on highways. What do we spend money on highways for? For pavement, for surfacing of roads to remove the dirt which would cover the licence plates. So let me say the Liberal Party dislikes rural Manitoba.

I hearken again to one of the first comments made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) once it became apparent that certain Members of the Treasury Bench might be sworn into certain responsibilities after the last election. What did she say about the Member for Morris (Mr. Manness)? Well, she threw me into the same pot as the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), when she called certain numbers of us rural red-neck reactionaries. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, you may have been included in that. So I say, there is a definite bias against rural Manitoba, and they have let that bias come forward in Bill 4. They cannot protect it. It can be seen through, and it has all come to light with respect to try and make free licence plates from dirt. I say that this is a very important Bill. I hope that the Liberal Party will see the wisdom of withdrawing Bill No. 4.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, with the leave of the House, I would like to have the Bill stand, and remain standing in the name of the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), and then speak to the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: That has already been agreed to. The Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to rise after such a fine and eloquent presentation by my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), but nonetheless I feel motivated at this time to participate in the debate on this important Bill.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), who introduced this Bill, had every good intention in bringing the Bill before the House. As my colleague, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), indicated earlier in debate that the Member for Assiniboia had good motivations because of his pride in his Province of Manitoba. That was the reason he brought forward this Bill before the House.

Mr. Speaker, friendly Manitoba is something that all of us espouse, and I think it is true that anyone who visits Manitoba as a tourist, any kind of a visitor, understands that we are friendly Manitobans, that we enjoy greeting people, making them welcome, making them feel at home in our province, and we want to translate that—not just in our licence plates, but by word of mouth, by our actions, and our deeds in our everyday lives—so that any visitor that comes to Manitoba will feel welcome as a tourist here, will want to come back here again, and will want to participate in all of the things that we have to offer. So from a tourism perspective, we want to ensure that we translate that message, not just by licence plate, but in other means as well.

Mr. Speaker, following the remarks of the Minister of Finance, I think I should point out to the House that

in fact the Member for Assiniboia speaks out against his own constituents. In Charleswood and Headingley—Headingley, which is represented by the Member for Assiniboia on the north side, has gravel roads. It is not just in rural Manitoba; it is gravel roads in Headingley; it is gravel roads in Charleswood.

Pretty soon the citizens of Winnipeg are going to be forced to comply with a regulation which I will speak to you about in a moment, but I suspect this is a major plank in the Liberal policy platform. I suspect - (interjection)- that although, Mr. Speaker, and as indicated by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), this may well be a plank in their rural economic development policy.

Mr. Speaker, dealing with major legislation such as this coming from the Liberal Party of Manitoba and particular—although I did not see it in any of their literature during the last election campaign. They did not actually highlight this as one of their major policy platforms, but you notice on the Order Paper, it is Bill No. 4, so presumably it is right up there in the top of the Liberal policy platform dealing with this issue.

Now this does not in my humble view rank with the context of the arms reduction talks in Geneva; nor does it rank in the higher echelons of economic policy development across the world at GATT, but nonetheless I am sure that the Member for Assiniboia feels motivated, concerned, that we should have this legislation on the books in Manitoba.

Now it says we must keep our licence plates free from dirt. Now, Mr. Speaker, laudable objective. Laudable objective that we should keep our licence plates free of dirt, clean so that they are easily readable by the general public, but what the Bill does not contemplate, unfortunately, is enforcement, and to what degree is a licence plate dirty or clean?

Now if there is one piece of dirt on the licence plate, what happens now? Does the policeman pull the car over and say, "excuse me, sir or madam, you have a piece of dirt on your licence plate," spread-eagle them all over the car, search them, and then issue them a ticket? Is that the kind of thing that the Liberal Party wants to see in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, one fleck of dirt causing that kind of action in the Province of Manitoba? I do not think so.

How do you define that kind of legislation and what kind of a penalty are we going to pay. Now, if you have one speck of dirt is it worth \$5, and if two specks of dirt, \$10, or do we have if it is completely muddy, maybe it is \$1,000, I do not know. But there is no indication by the Member for Assiniboia bringing this Bill forward, or in fact anywhere in the Bill that there should be some kind of a penalty attached.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Minister has the floor. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, normally Members in the House, all Honourable Members would not want to be involved in mudraking but, Mr. Speaker, here we have

a situation where we really do not know which way we are going to go. Now, for instance, as I talked about earlier, what kind of a penalty is going to be implied if in fact your licence plate is dirty and then, again, how dirty is dirty? Again we talk about two specks, three specks of dirt, three specks of dirt, totally obscured, whatever. I believe it is against the law presently that you cannot have your licence plate obscured, so that in terms of the public interest so that the police can identify a vehicle or the private citizen can identify a vehicle by its licence plate, that already is the law.

So, Mr. Speaker, now what are we attempting to accomplish? As I said, I am sure that this would not rank in the ranks of the arms reduction talks in Geneva or things of that nature, but nonetheless this major plank in the Liberal policy platform has to be debated and should be debated well in this House.

* (1720)

Mr. Speaker, I tend to concur that I think the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) did not really think through this Bill when introducing this legislation into the House. I honestly think he should be given the opportunity of withdrawing the Bill before this causes him any further embarrassment because I intend to tell the people of Charleswood, and the people of Headingley, who are faced with gravel roads, who are faced with dust and dirt from time to time, generally speaking, during those months when there is not snow on the roads, that they are faced with a situation where their Member, the Member who represents North Headingley, has brought a Bill into the House that would require them to clean their licence plates.

There is another problem in this regard. The people of Headingley have to haul their water and if they have to haul their water out there, the cost of dealing with this legislation, in terms of washing their licence plates on a three, four, five times a day basis, in order to comply with the legislation, is going to cost them some more money.

Now, where is the Member for Assiniboia, who represents those people, imposing another cost on those people that have already paid two, or three, or four times the cost of water that the other residents of Winnipeg are faced with? Now I find all of these things somewhat abhorrent and I commend to the Member for Assiniboia that he truly think about this Bill further and that he should perhaps withdraw it without further embarrassment to himself. Thank you.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, there may be a willingness to call it six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? No? No, there is not leave.

As previously agreed, this matter remains standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, it is very disappointing that our families are going to be left to deal with the many,

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many children who are going to come to our doors in search of Halloween treats. There was a willingness on the part of the other two Parties to go out and do our community duty and be a part of this very important tradition. It is unfortunate that the Liberals felt that it was more important to speak to a Bill that is apparently—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), on a point of order.

Mr. Richard Kozak (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Member for Flin Flon is speaking to any particular Bill. If he is, I would suggest that our rules of relevancy be applied. I would suggest to him that I have as a matter of honour an obligation to the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) who is waiting for my remarks on Bill 21 to speak today. I see that I do not have his permission not to make my remarks today.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), I have recognized the Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) for Bill No. 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2). I would ask the Honourable Member to be relevant. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: Going to address the principles of this Bill and what I was saying, Mr. Speaker, was that this Bill really is redundant. The Member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) I think quite aptly pointed out that it is already a violation of The Highway Traffic Act to have an obscured licence plate. It is not unusual to have Liberals anxious to debate redundant points where we understand that, but when there was a willingness on the part of the other two Parties, it is unfortunate that this debate needed to be continued because this Bill is redundant.

The point I believe that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) was trying to make, which is a legitimate point, if he had perhaps cared to consider it a bit further he perhaps would have understood that really this is already a matter that is dealt with under The Highway Traffic Act in many respects.- (interjection)-

Mr. Speaker, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) says perhaps that this is his first time at considering it rather than a true reconsideration of the matter or an understanding of the Act, but that be as it may.

I did want to comment on the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) comments because I believe the Minister of Finance has been perhaps unfair to our Liberal colleagues in the Legislature because I do not believe this is necessarily just an attack on rural Manitoba. I think this is an attack on practically everyone. I think we can broaden it that I know that dirt is not the sole preserve of rural Manitoba and I recognize the Minister of Finance as a self-described dirt farmer, but dirt exists elsewhere. I think the Minister of Finance has to come to that realization.

Perhaps it is the in-built arrogance of the Member for Morris (Mr. Manness), a dirt farmer, that dirt only exists in Morris. Mr. Speaker, dirt exists elsewhere. My colleague, the Member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst), amply demonstrated that dirt exists in Charleswood. He has been under much of it on some occasions. He has been throwing a lot of the dirt as a matter of fact in Charleswood for many years.

Mr. Speaker, dirt also exists in northern Manitoba and, yes, we recognize in the New Democratic Party that dirt is a part of the heritage of Winnipeg as well, that in fact in this province we are blessed with dirt practically everywhere. It comes in different forms. It is silt of one variety. It is loam in other parts of the province. It is clay in other parts of the province. In fact, it is emissions from smelters in other parts of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that in Flon Flon cars are continually covered with the results of emissions from the smelter. They float down and they precipitate through the atmosphere and end up on vehicles and on licence plates and, yes, in fact, dirt is a part of living everywhere.

I do not think the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has any right to stand in his place and condemn this Bill as some sort of liberal arrogance with respect to the city or any direct attack on rural Manitoba. I think it is simply a misdirected Bill. I think it is simply misdirected.

The fact is that we do need a balanced approach and the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) is quite right and we have to recognize that the problems of dirt on the licence plate, a legitimate problem, a genuine concern, particularly amongst those who enforce laws in the Province of Manitoba, that this has to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that this necessarily addresses the problem that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) wished to address. We believe that it may already be covered and on the other hand if it is not covered satisfactorily, then the Minister of Finance may have been too quick to dismiss this as a piece of Liberal propaganda.

I am not sure that I agree that it is probably one of the main planks of the Liberal Party. Most of their planks do not last two sentences, so it is quite conceivable that this is actually a subversive effort on the part of someone to introduce more Liberal policy than actually exists. I would hate to think that has actually become a part of this process because if now we are going to have Liberal policy that is two sentences, what is next? It could be three. We may have whole paragraphs from the Liberal Party on issues as diverse as dirt on licence plates or covering gas caps. We do not know what would be next.

This does lead one to conclude that there may have been some subversion. I do not know, the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) may want to check with his department whether actually officials in his department added a new idea because I suppose it is conceivable it could have come from another Liberal Member,

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another idea, but I would say that it is more likely that someone in the Attorney General's office, perhaps a legislative draftsperson, misunderstood the intent of the Member and added that extra idea.

* (1730)

There are actually two ideas in this and I think the Minister of Finance actually may have missed this in his remarks. The one idea is that there is dirt in the province, it is not novel but it is novel to some Liberals. The other idea that is apparent in this address is that also there are some things that sometimes obscure particularly the validation sticker on licence plates.

The problem that is addressed is twofold and that is novel that they picked up both of those ideas at once. Anyway this Bill needs to be considered further I think and perhaps it is time that we heard from some of the Liberal colleagues as to the real intent of this and whether our surmise that this may actually be covered in The Highway Traffic Act is not the fact. If it is, then it is clearly redundant and we should be all out trick or treating. If not, then perhaps my colleague, my friend from Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), is correct and we should have remained in our places and debated this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it is not my place to make those kinds of fine legal distinctions. We can only talk about the principle of the Bill here and certainly the principle is difficult to decipher, but we know that it is in there because it must be part of the Liberal philosophy of Government. I do not think, as the Minister of Finance suggests, that it is simply an attack on rural Manitoba. I think it is more a result of a misunderstanding of Manitoba because there is clearly dirt everywhere. I certainly, as the Member for Flin Flon, want it to be known that if there is dirt in rural Manitoba, there is dirt in northern Manitoba and my colleague

from Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) assures us there is dirt in Charleswood.

Mr. Speaker, the applicability of this law appears to be pretty well universal or provincial at least. We think that perhaps we should have some further clarification from the Attorney General or Legislative Counsel about the impact of this legislation because we are not quite as concerned as the Member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) about the definition of obscurity. The Member for Charleswood raised a legitimate question about whether one particle—or he was trying to I think define a problem about how this was going to be enforced. We are not so concerned about the question of enforcement because of the level of obscurity, but we are concerned that the definitions in here of dirt may actually not fit with respect to northern Manitoba.

It certainly needs more study and anyway I appreciate that I have not used up all my time, but I know that there are many others anxious to debate this important question and I leave it to others to add to the debate.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Transcona, on a point of order.

Mr. Kozak: I feel I have the assurance of the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) that he can wait for my remarks on Bill 21 to another occasion. I would not want the Members of the Government and of the third Party to waste their most excellent Halloween costumes that we see this afternoon and would be pleased to call it six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House call it six o'clock?

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).