



**Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 27, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

##### Committee of Supply

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson):** Madam 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 Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

##### Provincial Mining Week

**Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines):** Madam Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House on provincial mining.

Members of the House will have noticed the packages of rock that were on their desks when they took their seats this afternoon. They are samples of mineral ores taken from Manitoba mining sites and are the gift of the Mining Association of Manitoba. For the information of the House, the packages have the following: nickel ore and market nickel from Inco; copper zinc ore as well as anode copper and refined zinc, all from Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting; spodumene, pollucite and tantalum from Tantalum Mining Corporation and a diamond-drilled core used for exploring for gold from New Britannia Mine.

The ores have been contributed to demonstrate the rich variety of ores that are mined in our province. They also serve as an introduction to a brief statement I would like to

make about Provincial Mining Week in Manitoba.

I would also like to take a moment to welcome several guests in the public gallery this afternoon: Ed Huebert of the Mining Association of Manitoba, Jim Campbell of Gossan Resources and Brian Gordon and John Knowles of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting.

Madam Speaker, as Minister of Energy and Mines, I am pleased to proclaim the week of May 28 to June 3, 1999, as Provincial Mining Week. Mining and exploration together are significant contributors to our economy, our everyday life and the sustainability of many Manitoba communities, particularly in the North. It surely is no accident that Thompson, the hub of our mining industry and the largest city in the North, ranks third in community size in Manitoba. Mining is our second-largest primary resource industry with a production value of more than \$900 million and spinoff value of many times that amount, and employs more than 4,000 workers.

In Manitoba, for most of this century, Madam Speaker, our mining communities have developed a rich history and community life. They have been built and sustained by generations of strong-willed, self-reliant people, many from other parts of Canada and dozens of other countries. They have been the backbone of the industry in their communities and have taken on and overcome the challenges of work and community involved in the mining industry in our province.

Madam Speaker, we want to make Manitobans aware of the benefits and major impacts of mining for our economy. Increasing citizen awareness will help give Manitobans an appreciation of the improvements the mining industry has made in environmental management, preparedness for emergency responses, occupational health and safety, and the need for sustainability of mining operations. By encouraging a variety of productive

partnerships between government, the industry and communities, we hope to make Manitoba the most effective technologically advanced and socially and environmentally responsible jurisdiction for mining in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I look on Provincial Mining Week as an opportunity to celebrate the vital role of mining in our province. I would like to invite members of this House to the major event of the week which the Mining Association of Manitoba is co-sponsoring with the Mines Accident Prevention Association of Manitoba. This is the Meet the Miners Reception which will take place at the Winnipeg Art Gallery on May 31, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and will offer an opportunity to meet many members of Manitoba's mining and exploration community. I ask all honourable members to join me in support of Provincial Mining Week. Thank you.

\*(1335)

**Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to put a few comments in response to the minister's statement and welcome colleagues who are here from the mining industry and the Mining Association. I am very pleased that they took me up on the idea of providing members of this House with a little sample of the rocks that we collect in Manitoba and produce many important minerals and end products that sustain many of the jobs that we have in Manitoba.

Unfortunately, we have seen metal prices in a low situation in many, many commodities, one of the most critical situations in the mineral industry that we have seen for many years. The consequences have been indeed felt in mining communities in Thompson, in Bissett, in Flin Flon, in Lynn Lake and in other mining communities where we have seen the loss of perhaps about a thousand jobs in Manitoba already.

Madam Speaker, it is a time to celebrate and learn about minerals and mining, and it is a time to understand how important mining is to all people of Manitoba. Not only is it important to the workers and the families who live in the North or mining communities, but it affects every single one of us here in the south, those

living in St. Vital, those in the inner city and those in rural Manitoba. Mining is a fundamental key economic resource for Manitoba. That is why it is important to have a government that cares about mining, that is willing to work with the partners and willing to sustain mining in Manitoba.

I wish to congratulate the Mining Association for working so hard to bring awareness of mining and minerals to Manitobans, and thank the minister for his statement.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 30—The Veterinary Medical Act

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that leave be given to introduce Bill 30, The Veterinary Medical Act (Loi sur la médecine vétérinaire), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Bill 31—The Association of Manitoba Municipalities Incorporation and Consequential Amendments Act

**Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Praznik), that leave be given to introduce Bill 31, The Association of Manitoba Municipalities Incorporation and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi constituant l'Association des municipalités du Manitoba et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have nine Grades 2 to 6 students from Brandon Community School under the direction of Mrs. Cecilia Fjeldsted and Mrs. Bev Leckie.

This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. McCrae).

Also, fifteen Grades 7, 8 and 9 students from Inglis School under the direction of Mr. Dwight Brown. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

We also have forty-two Kindergarten to Grade 8 students from Winkler Elementary School under the direction of Mrs. Lois Guenther. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Also, twenty-three Grade 5 students from Lord Roberts Community School under the direction of Mrs. Terry Welsh. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

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

\* (1340)

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

### Child Development Clinic Staffing

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, at the Child Development Clinic, in this year, the waiting list for children with autism and FAS was some six- to eight-months wait, and that was with a staffing complement that is being depleted daily. Dr. Jocelyn is leaving today.

I would like to ask the minister or the Premier (Mr. Filmon): what impact will this have on an unbearably long waiting list already, and what impact will this have on the assessment and treatment of kids who are facing these challenges?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, as we have discussed in this House on a previous occasion, the individual that the Leader of the Opposition refers to, I am told, is leaving to continue her education, to

further pursue her education. The total complement of the clinic will not only be maintained, but I believe it is being increased by anywhere from one-half to one more position.

Again, with the whole view to address the very issue that he has raised, we have dedicated additional resources to deal with those issues, and we also are supporting the maintenance and enhancement of the staffing at the clinic.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, on May 12, the WHA, one of its seven vice-presidents mentioned that there would be no funds to fill this position. The minister then stated in the hallway and to the public that the WHA has the funds. On May 13, he gave the same answer as he has just given that they would be actually having additional positions. Given the fact that there were 2.5 doctors in January and half a psychologist, and we are now at half a doctor, with the loss of Dr. Jocelyn, and one full-time psychologist, which reinstates something that was there a couple of years ago, how can the minister say to the public that the waiting list will not increase and the assessment programs and treatment programs will not be cancelled for kids?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, as we have discussed before—in fact, the Leader of the Opposition, I think, when he last raised this question in this House, talked about there being two and a half doctor positions at the clinic. I indicated to him that those positions will be maintained. In fact, the clinic will now have three and a half positions, an expansion of one full position. The funding is available for those positions. That certainly is the commitment of our government. The WHA is well aware of that, and that is the action that is being taken to fill three and a half positions to address the very issue that he raises here today.

**Mr. Doer:** The action that is being taken is families who are phoning the clinic for follow-up assessment and treatment interviews are being told they can no longer have treatment for their children.

Mrs. Shemanski is a mother of a five-year-old child that has autism, and she has just been told today that there will be no follow-up

treatments because there are no doctors available for her child. I would like to ask the minister to get a handle on what we are hearing from the parents who have kids versus the government minister in this House versus what the WHA said a couple of weeks ago. We want action for those parents and for those kids, and we are not getting it from this minister.

\*(1345)

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, at least we can agree on the same thing. We want action for those kids as well. I am sure that is one of the many reasons that the Leader of the Opposition and his party supported our 1999 budget, because it does include funds to provide not only the maintenance of the two and a half positions, it provides the funding for three and a half positions. The WHA is well aware of that. It is a high priority for this government. It is a high priority for the WHA. They have the funding to address the issue, and they will be addressing the issue.

### Education System

#### Physical Education Curriculum

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, I have been reading the broadcasting code for advertising to children, and it is amazing the way that the regulations are attempting to ensure that children are not being exploited. It is equally appalling to see the availability now, and the fact that Manitoba children are being offered up as a captive audience to advertisers in our province.

I want to ask the Premier if he is not concerned that children watch, on average, 6.5 hours of television per day, more time than they spend in school, that they see more than 10,000 commercials a year. Meanwhile, one-quarter of children are underactive and overweight, and 60 percent cannot pass fitness tests.

I want to ask the minister: why is his government standing aside while the curriculum for physical education is not being met, and we are now going to have advertising and TV in Manitoba classrooms?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I think the member opposite knows my personal views about lifelong health, commitment to physical activity, commitment to ensuring that all of us do everything possible to maintain a healthy lifestyle. I have done commercials for the Manitoba High School Athletic Association, for Sport Manitoba and worked with them extensively, as have a number of my colleagues, to ensure that they have the resources and the support to make sure that our young people have a lifelong commitment to physical activity that begins in the schools.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Radisson, with a supplementary question.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Madam Speaker, I would like to then ask the Premier if there is a problem in his government, if his commitment is not being translated into policy in this government and he can tell us why they are not taking a position while school divisions in the province are trading phys ed for TV, while they are reducing the time for physical activity and opening the doors for advertising and commercials for YNN.

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, it is difficult to accept at face value things that the member opposite brings to us because they often prove to be incorrect. So I will certainly take that matter as notice on behalf of the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae). If school divisions, if school boards are subverting the intent of the curriculum and the intent of the Department of Education in setting standards to ensure that phys ed remains very much a vibrant and necessary part of children's education, then we will obviously take action on that.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Premier if he does not think it is hypocritical this week to be putting in the newspaper a document which says children need 30 minutes of physical activity every day to improve fitness and health levels and at the same time have his government reducing the time for physical education in our schools.

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, the preamble to the member's original question contains the germ of the answer. That is that it cannot be just the responsibility of those of us in government to be

able to ensure that children learn and are encouraged to have a lifetime devoted to physical health and wellness and activity. It has to be a family thing. She said that the average child spends six and a half hours watching TV outside of school. Now that is obviously at the time when they are in the presence of parents and family. So putting out advertising and encouraging, as I have done, as many of us have done, on an individual basis, encouraging through any number of means that young people are urged by their own parents, by their own families to ensure that they remain physically active so that they can also be mentally alert, that they can contribute to having a healthier future is very, very important. That is why putting in ads of that nature, that is why getting involved as I have done in programs with the Manitoba High School Athletic Association, with Sport Manitoba is to encourage everybody in society to buy into it. It does not come from Big Brother sitting in the Legislature like the members opposite want. All we get from the New Democrats is top down, trying to force people to do things which we must ensure everybody knows is in their best interests.

\* (1350)

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Point of Order

**Ms. Cerilli:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I want you to make sure you call the members opposite to order when they are answering questions, provoking debate to not deal with the matter raised, which is the cuts that this government has systematically made to physical education and the fact that they are now offering up Manitoba's children to be shown advertising in school. More TV, less phys ed, your government.

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

**Mr. Filmon:** On the same point of order, I know that the member opposite is embarrassed when she is shown to be the kind of nondemocrat that she is by standing up and saying it is up to the Legislature to dictate to

people how their children will behave and what their children will do. We reject that, Madam Speaker.

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

#### Flood Conditions Drainage Efforts

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, we in this House can understand the frustration that farmers in the southwest corner of the province feel when they see their crops—hopefully their crops at some point but right now their empty fields covered with water. We still have coming into our offices complaints of counterproductive drainage happening from one farmer to the next and one R.M. to the next. Given the fact that the Water Commission report recommended conditions under which the province would assume responsibility for local emergency management in times like this year's flood, can the Minister of Natural Resources explain what specifically this government is doing to co-ordinate immediate drainage in the southwest part of our province?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, the member for Dauphin did a fly past and he saw a lot of water, I am sure, but one of the problems that occurs in the area that we are referring to is that we need to have an orderly and appropriate way of dealing with the water. In fact, in many cases there is no appropriate direction to drain the water without increasing the problems of the neighbours that would be receiving the water.

As I said earlier this week and the week before, our staff is willing and able and is working with municipalities and land owners to find if there is appropriate emergency drainage that can be undertaken, but it is a very unfortunate situation where we have trapped water in a number of areas. We will have to work with the land owners and in particular with the municipalities to find an appropriate way to deal with it because taking the problem from one person's property and putting it on another one is not an appropriate solution.

**Mr. Struthers:** What specifically, though, what action, has this government taken to help coordinate drainage efforts in the flooded Pembina River Valley?

**Mr. Cummings:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member would rephrase his question. I was temporarily distracted.

\* (1355)

**Mr. Struthers:** I would be glad to, Madam Speaker. The situation in the Pembina River Valley is one in which many farmers are struggling to try to drain some of the swollen Pembina River off of their land, and I am wondering if the minister can indicate what action this government is taking to help coordinate drainage efforts in that part of the province as well.

**Mr. Cummings:** Madam Speaker, the appropriate efforts are being made by people in the field to work with the municipalities and with the individuals. [interjection] In fact, one of my colleagues reminds me there are conservation districts in that area which are very much a key part of the management of the resource.

Further to that, there have been no requests that have come to me from any of the municipalities for the province again to seize the authority and to take Big Brother action to deal with this. In fact, we are currently appealing a ruling in the courts that says that the municipalities in fact have the jurisdiction for drainage. We are awaiting the results of that appeal, but we are in close contact regularly with the municipalities and continue to work with them on this front. This is not a time for confrontation or imposition of authority. It is time to bring reason and common sense to the most practical solution we can.

#### **Compensation—Farmers**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Can the minister explain what specific assistance this government is willing to provide agribusiness and other farm-based businesses who have been negatively impacted by this devastating flood?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, there are a number of departments within this government that have made themselves available, and we will continue to work with the Keystone Agricultural Producers, with the individual farmers. The Department of Agriculture, Departments of Rural Development, Natural Resources have all made every effort to make sure that we provide any assistance that is reasonable to extend to the areas, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is closely working with the various farm organizations to monitor the situation and make sure that they are availed of any support that we can reasonably provide and particularly to make sure that the farmers of these areas know that they will receive the same measure of support that we gave in the Red River Valley two years ago.

#### **Western Opinion Research Government Loan**

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, it is well known that the Progressive Conservative Party uses Western Opinion Research as their polling firm. The government of Manitoba currently uses Western Opinion Research for its Crown corporations, Department of Health, Department of Finance, Department of Justice. This firm has received over a million dollars' worth of business from the party and from the government.

Will the Premier confirm that he recently signed an Order-in-Council giving this firm a \$100,000 totally forgivable loan?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite probably knows that a very similar package of support was given to Angus Reid company that also does polling and has done polling for our government and for Crown corporations in our government. They added 200 jobs. They were eligible for support under the terms and conditions of the programs that we offer, and they added the jobs that I know Manitobans are very happy about.

If the member opposite wants to continue to denigrate companies that are expanding and creating jobs in this province, then we will have in our province what we had when he and his



colleagues were in government, which is a youth unemployment rate 3 percent above Canada's average and a lack of job creation that resulted in the disastrous circumstances that we inherited.

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, does the Premier not see that there is a major conflict of interest having all of his cabinet being supported by this firm politically and then using the firm in government to do the same kind of polling work in government and then giving them a \$100,000 call centre that they used to phone members of the public over the last few months asking them if they are going to support the government? Does he not get it?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, this is a firm that does work for many clients. This is a firm that, like Angus Reid, is out there doing polling for a whole variety of clients. Under those circumstances, if they are expanding and creating job opportunities, they are entitled to the same programs that are available to their competitors. The same terms and conditions that would apply to any other company applied to them, and under those circumstances they qualified because they were doing something the member opposite does not know very much about, and that is creating real jobs in this province.

\* (1400)

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, if the Premier is so sure that there is no conflict of interest and there is nothing wrong with this grant, could he explain to the House why, when his government makes press releases for a few thousand dollars and in some cases a few hundred dollars, there was no press release about this, no publicity, because they knew that there was a smell about this grant, right?

**Mr. Filmon:** You know, I think it is really unfortunate that the member opposite is always searching in the gutter for any black news that he can possibly dredge up, and he will go to any length to damage any businesses or any parts of the Manitoba economy. He is negative, negative, negative, black, black, black. He is the duke of despair, and everybody in Manitoba knows it. That is the kind of embarrassment that he brings every day to his party in this House.

### **Driver Licensing Graduated Licenses**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** My question is for the Premier. After a nine-month break, one would expect to see somewhat of a legislative agenda. What we see is a very weak attempt at providing a legislative agenda. We understand; now we have an idea why. The government seems to say that if you have a good idea, put it on hold. If you want confirmation of that, we look to the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) who is quoted in the local paper as saying on graduated licences that it is because of a looming election in part that we are not going to be introducing legislation of this nature.

Can the Premier indicate why we are suppressing good ideas nowadays?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation):** I find the irony coming from the Liberal Party which has offered so few policy options to the people of Manitoba over the past number of years in this Assembly. Government operations are affected by a number of things, not just legislation. They are affected by the budget. The budget that we brought in has some very significant improvements for Manitobans in reducing taxes, so much so, the New Democrats voted for them. Government policy and operations also have a significant impact on the lives of Manitobans. A legislative component is one, and we have many items before this particular session. There are some still coming on which policy work is taking place.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** My question is for the Minister of Highways: then will the Minister of Highways clearly indicate to the House that the member for Portage la Prairie was in fact wrong, that the government is indeed looking at bringing in graduated licences?

**Mr. Praznik:** The issue of graduated licences is just one example. It is a proposal that has come forward that some have advocated. It is one that certainly the previous minister and the department had done some work on looking at the implications. But there are certainly two sides to that issue, and it is not one necessarily

that this government is prepared to accept holus-bolus. So it is not one that we brought forward at this time.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I think that Manitobans—and I ask the Minister of Highways to acknowledge—do recognize that the government does have a role, even if it is leading up to an election, a responsibility to bring forward ideas and bring in legislation where it is duly debated.

My question specific to the Minister of Highways: is the government prepared to bring in the graduated licence legislation so that we can have the debate on the issue?

**Mr. Praznik:** The member is asking me as minister to bring forward a bill so the matter can be debated on an item that this government may not be prepared to accept. The member for Inkster has the perfect right to bring forward a private member's bill if he so chooses if he wants the matter debated in this House. He can bring forward a resolution. If there is anyone coming here today talking about not having the imagination or the strength or the willingness or just, quite frankly, he is being pure lazy in bringing an item to the House, it is the member for Inkster. If he wants it, bring it in a private member's resolution.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Minister of Highways, who is also the government House leader, is definitely imputing motives on my behalf, and when you do not sit for nine months, if anyone should be imputing motives of being lazy, it should be the Liberals accusing the government of being lazy.

The reason why I rise on the point of order is because a very clear point in the paper where David Faurschou, although personally supportive of the graduated licence system, is definitely implying that the government is looking at bringing it in because of—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, I was not imputing a motive. I was making an observation. If the member for Inkster would like the matter debated in this House, then he is perfectly free to bring it forward as a private member's resolution for debate of this issue. We have 31 members in this caucus. We have debates internally in terms of policy issue. That particular one has not received the approval of this government to come to legislative stage. I know it is much easier to have policy debates in a caucus of two.

\*(1410)

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

\* \* \*

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, Justice Alfred Monnin's report on the vote-rigging scandal pointed out that the ethics of the PC Party and its members' behaviour were and continue to be an impairment to democracy, to the workings of democracy in the province of Manitoba. Previously, both the minister and the deputy minister have answered questions on this topic. In a recent letter to the PC Party, Mrs. Jan Nestibo writes: the expulsion of Gary Nestibo—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Does the honourable member have a question?

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, yes, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question posed by Mrs. Nestibo in a letter to the Tory caucus.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** On a point of order, I know the New Democrats do not have any policy issues to talk about, that they support our government and our budget, but, Madam Speaker, I think they are fully aware that, in the rules, to use Question Periods to ask the Ministers of the Crown issues with respect to their party responsibilities is clearly out of order.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Deputy Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, first of all, the member had not posed the question yet, so it is inappropriate for the government House leader to rise before the question was put. Secondly—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Burrows, to complete his statement regarding the point of order.

**Mr. Martindale:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Secondly, the member for Osborne has an important question to ask regarding a public document, the Monnin inquiry report and issues resulting out of that report. I think it is entirely in order, and I hope that you will rule that way. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. On the point of order raised by the government House leader, I stood and requested that the honourable member for Osborne pose her question because (a) she had had a very long preliminary, well beyond our guidelines, and I had asked the honourable member to please pose her question. I am therefore not aware that her question was out of order at this point because, in my opinion, she had not posed the question.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Osborne, with no preamble, to please pose her question now.

**Ms. McGifford:** I was only going to thank you for your ruling, Madam Speaker.

I would like to ask the question asked of the party by Mrs. Jan Nestibo, and that is: where are the PC memberships of the men involved in the Monnin inquiry?

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, the member has clearly asked a question with respect to party responsibilities which is out of order, so I would ask that you rule her as such.

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

**Ms. McGifford:** On the same point of order, if you could ask the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) to be quiet.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. That is a new point of order. The honourable member for Osborne was—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. If the honourable member for Osborne is standing on a new point of order that she made reference to, then I would ask that she allow the Speaker to deal with the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, and that was that her question was indeed out of order.

The honourable member for Osborne, on the same point of order.

**Ms. McGifford:** On the same point of order, I wanted to point out that both the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Deputy Premier (Mr. Stefanson) have shown their willingness to discuss this topic before. It seems to me perhaps that might be considered setting a precedent, but also, this Premier has said repeatedly that the buck stops here. I am giving him the opportunity to stop the buck by answering the question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader (Mr. Praznik), according to Beauchesne's Citation 409.(6), the question is indeed out of order: "A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government." And 410.(10), "The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers."

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Osborne, with a new question?

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, on a new question. As the Premier knows, in the Monnin inquiry certain gentlemen were cited. I refer to Messrs.

Barrett, McFarlane, Sokolyk, Thorsteinson. The report indicated that these gentlemen had put in jeopardy the workings of democracy in the province of Manitoba, and I would like to ask the Premier if these gentlemen, and I use that term advisedly, still enjoy the privileges of membership in his party?

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Once again the honourable member's question is indeed out of order.

### **Victims Rights McEvoy Family**

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Yesterday I took notice of the particulars of the question posed by the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). The member stated that in a case involving the death of Erica McEvoy, the Department of Justice downplayed the seriousness of the crime by reducing the charge from the charge of criminal negligence causing death to the lowest charge of dangerous driving.

Madam Speaker, I have looked into the matter and found that the member for St. Johns has once again misled the House in providing this information. In fact, it was not a guilty plea to the lowest charge of dangerous driving, which the member, being a lawyer, knows only carries a maximum penalty of six months. In fact, the accused pled guilty to the indictable offence of dangerous driving causing death, which carries a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. Why the member, especially since he is a lawyer and would know better, would bring this erroneous information to the House, I cannot say. However, by doing so, he degrades and insults the efforts of the Crown attorney who prosecuted this case and leaves the false impression that the Crown attorney did not care about the victim or the family. It is very regrettable that the member for St. Johns would conduct himself in this manner.

### **Crown Attorneys Plea Bargaining**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, with a question.

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As a follow-up question to the

information from the minister, the minister who should know of course from his investigations that indeed there was a plea bargain in this matter, a plea bargain that we are concerned about, a plea bargain that we suspect may have had an impact on the outcome, would the minister not admit that there was indeed a plea bargain?

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

### **Point of Order**

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** I think that the member is making a statement. His preamble is considerably long for a question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. With the greatest respect to the honourable government House leader, the member was just about to pose his question, well within the guidelines that we operate under.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The minister, having reviewed the record, understands that indeed there was a plea bargain, reducing the charge from criminal negligence causing death to dangerous driving causing death. The first charge attracts a maximum life sentence, a very serious charge. It was reduced to—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The question has been put. The honourable member for St. Johns, please pose his question, and I was of the understanding he had done so, but had also taken the liberty of adding another lengthy preamble.

Would the honourable member please quickly pose his question.

\* (1420)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** My question was interrupted by the government House leader.

My question to the minister is this: is the minister not concerned that by reducing the charge on a plea bargain from criminal negligence causing death to the drive dangerous section that this may well have determined or

helped risk the outcome of a conditional sentence which was the unfortunate outcome? That is the question.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Again, now the member is weaseling in his words, and he says now it is dangerous driving causing death, which he knows the difference between the lowest of the dangerous driving, which is a six-month penalty, and dangerous driving caused death, which is 14 years. The Crown attorney who took a look at that case and who prosecuted that case and who is one of our best Crown attorneys says a guilty plea was accepted for dangerous driving caused death, in full satisfaction of the original charge, because the only evidence available would support that charge. So now the member again is twisting the words and trying to create an impression that this Crown attorney did less than his duty. It is regrettable that that is the way the member treats members of my department who only have the best interests of the victim and the victim's family in mind.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, with a supplementary question.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** A supplementary to the minister is: would he not consider the victims, the survivors in this matter? I ask him: who is misleading this House? Who is trying to escape accountability on a technicality? The charges were reduced on a plea bargain. Would the minister not understand that that undermines, that that reduced the seriousness of this matter before the court?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, here is a member who is a lawyer. He is an officer of the court. He understands what the ethical duty of a lawyer before the court is, and what does he suggest? That this lawyer, this Crown attorney, speaking on behalf of the people of Manitoba generally and the victim specifically, that the victim in some way was shortchanged because of the actions of the Crown attorney.

I know that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) also brought very misleading information, and I will deal with that information in a separate notice, but the evidence is what the Crown attorney has to base

his decision on. The evidence justified the dangerous driving causing death, which is punishable, Madam Speaker, by a 14-year sentence, and for that member to suggest there was anything untoward about the conduct of the Crown attorney is degrading to the Crown attorney, it is degrading to the case and it is degrading to the victim.

### **Victims' Rights McEvoy Family**

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Would the minister get a grip on the issue that is before this House and before Manitobans, and in getting off on some tangent and some misunderstanding of my questions, would he now explain, as well, Madam Speaker, to all Manitobans, particularly to the survivors, why it is—and this is based on our understanding of the mother of the victim—the government's new Victim Impact Statement Program was not explained to this family, to the mother, as she tells us, therefore, in addition to the plea bargain, risking the conditional sentence—

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

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, again, the member chooses his words very carefully. Now he says: why was it not explained to the mother? He has forgotten about the family. In fact, the Crown attorney in this case did explain it to the family. I have information specifically that it was the father he communicated with and indeed that this communication took place several weeks in advance of the time when it was necessary for the family to appear in this particular hearing.

What troubles me more is that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) received a letter on May 4, explaining, Madam Speaker, what steps the Crown attorney took in respect to the victim and also explaining why there were delays in this particular case. The member for Radisson knows that those delays were justifiable. Yet she failed to bring that information to this House, suppressing that information.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** With a new question, Madam Speaker. We are concerned about the information that the minister is giving to this House. The minister should know that the information we have was given by Linda McEvoy, the mother of the victim. The minister appears to want to beat up on her.

Madam Speaker, my question to the minister is this—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I believe the member for St. Johns is imputing motives to the Minister of Justice. I would ask you to call him to order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Here is the minister who yesterday—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Are you on the same point of order?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** No, I am raising the question, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable government House leader was up on a point of order, and I expected a rebuttal from the opposition side. That is why I recognized the honourable member for St. Johns, but if there is none, I will deal with the point of order now.

The honourable government House leader did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, please pose your question now.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** To the Justice minister, Madam Speaker. Here is the minister who yesterday got up in the House, did not answer the questions, did not take the matter as notice, and said that the only remedy was for the family to complain to his department.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Toews:** A point of order, Madam Speaker. The member has just indicated that I did not take those questions as notice. In fact, I did. In his question to me and my response, I indicated: I will, as indicated, take the particulars of the matter as notice, in direct response to his question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** Would the honourable member for St. Johns, please pose his question now?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Will the minister then explain, since yesterday he said that the family should just make a complaint under his so-called Victims' Rights Act, how it is that the family members can trust in a complaint process where the minister now has just got up in this House, dismissed the allegations of the mother of the victim? How can she trust a complaint process that the minister has prejudged?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, I have not dismissed the complaints of the victims. What I have dismissed is the scurrilous accusations of the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) and the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). The member for St. Johns put erroneous information on the record. He indicated that there had been an untoward deal made that allowed someone to escape legal responsibility by pleading to a case of dangerous driving of the lowest sort, and that was clearly wrong. I dismissed that allegation. Indeed, I dismiss the allegations of the member for Radisson.

I say that we are concerned about victims. If there is a complaint which has not yet been filed, members of my department will take a look at that particular case.

\* (1430)

### Point of Order

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Deputy Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I would like to draw your attention to Beauschiesne 489 where the word "scurrilous," which was just used by the Minister of Justice, is an unparliamentary word. I would ask him to withdraw.

I would also ask him to answer the questions asked, which are asked on behalf of the family, on behalf of the people who have been victimized in this case, rather than attacking the person who is asking the question. He should do so now without having to be asked over and over again to deal with the substance of the issue.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Toews:** On the same point of order, Madam Speaker. In respect of the issue about answering the victims' concerns, I certainly will answer the victims' concerns, but what has been demonstrated by both the record and by the comments today is that the member opposite put false information on the record.

In respect of the word "scurrilous," I withdraw the word "scurrilous."

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable Minister of Justice.

### Pesticides/Chemicals Classifications

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

The report of the federal environment commissioner released this week sounded alarm bells about the lack of environmental protection when it comes to the classification of pesticides and other chemicals. The commissioner cited cuts to federal research, noting that of 23,000 chemicals, only 67 have been researched so far.

My question to the minister: can the minister indicate whether she will be lobbying the federal government on behalf of Manitobans to ensure that funding for the classification of pesticides is immediately put in place?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment):** Madam Speaker, the short answer to the question is yes. I mean, we have been doing that. We are in constant communication with other levels, other jurisdictions across the country. This is not new. This is something that has been ongoing. We are concerned that we would like to see the federal government move faster in certain of these areas. Having said that, of course, I would point out to the member that Manitoba has a very good record with those things that are within our jurisdiction that we have been able to address very well. I think the member is familiar with some of the programs we have to address those things. The short answer, yes, we are in communication with the federal government to hasten their endeavours in this regard. We work co-operatively with them and with other provinces to ensure a suitable end to this dilemma.

**Mr. Dewar:** Madam Speaker, given that the commissioner raised concerns about provincial governments being able to fulfill their role under federal-provincial agreements, can the minister indicate what auditing procedure she has undertaken to ensure that Manitobans are protected under these new harmonization agreements?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for the question and for his interest in this particular topic. I am pleased to see that he is showing some interest in some of these environmental issues because they are fundamentally important not just to Manitoba but to Canada, not just to Canada but to North America.

Indeed many of these issues are global in nature, as the member understands. We work in Manitoba. We have many programs through our pesticide container program, et cetera, working in harmony with other jurisdictions, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, in particular. Many of the issues that fall under federal jurisdiction, we

are in constant communication with the federal minister, Minister Stewart, with whom we interact at the official level and at the ministerial level. We will be meeting again very soon with the ministers of the Environment to deal with these and many other issues. Again, the short answer to the question is yes.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Iceland Consul Office

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** Madam Speaker, yesterday it was announced that the government of Iceland has decided to establish a full-time consulate here in Winnipeg. Consul General Svavar Gestsson is coming to this post with a great deal of experience in the Icelandic Parliament where he has sat for over 20 years and held portfolios including Trade, Commerce and Culture. As Consul General, he will work to enhance trade and cultural opportunities between Iceland and Manitoba.

I am certain that the arrival of the Icelandic Consulate will be greatly welcomed by the people of the Gimli constituency. As is well known, this area has a strong and celebrated Icelandic heritage. Anyone who has visited Gimli's annual Icelandic Festival has seen how proud the people are of their roots. Having a Consul General from Iceland here in Manitoba will certainly further strengthen the already strong cultural ties between our province and Iceland and help us to develop trade ties that benefit both partners. Thank you.

### Monnin Report

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, as all Manitobans know, Justice Alfred Monnin's report on the vote-rigging scandal pointed out that the ethics of the Progressive Conservative Party and the behaviour of its members were and remain an impairment to democracy and the workings of democracy in the province of Manitoba. Earlier in this session, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) rose to his feet several times and answered questions on the Monnin inquiry, and the Deputy Premier has

also addressed this issue, although I must say the Deputy Premier (Mr. Stefanson) looked fairly distraught and flummoxed last week when he was in a position to answer questions.

One of the things that is disturbing to the people of Manitoba is the fact that the members implicated in the vote-rigging inquiry by Justice Monnin appeared to be members in good standing of the Progressive Conservative Party. Mrs. Jan Nestibo recently wrote a letter to the party and I want to quote from that letter. She says the expulsion of Gary Nestibo from the Progressive Conservative Party was none other than a ploy to somehow make the general public believe the corruptness of the Progressive Conservative Party had now been corrected. Mrs. Nestibo goes on to ask: where are the PC memberships of the men involved in the Monnin inquiry?

**An Honourable Member:** Good question.

**Ms. McGifford:** It is a very good question. It was one that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) chose not to answer today, well, obviously, with the blessing of the Speaker. I think it is a question that should be answered.

A further letter sent to the Brandon Sun by one Dallas Nestibo asks another question that I think people in Manitoba would like to have answered, and that is the question: what I also cannot figure out—

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

### Cactus Jack Wells

**Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek):** I would like to pay tribute to a man who was known to all of us as Cactus Jack Wells. Jack Wells, legendary sports broadcaster, passed away this week here in Winnipeg. Born in 1911, Jack Wells lived his childhood years in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and did not move to Winnipeg until 1941, when he was hired by CJRC, which became CKRC Radio.

He was a member of the constituency of Sturgeon Creek for many years. He became a friend of many people in Manitoba and right



across Canada. He was successful in his career and in making long-lasting relationships. After reading the paper this week, we see so many people say that he was a tremendous human being with kind words about everyone he met.

Cactus Jack Wells was still continuing his broadcasting career last year as he was still doing his famous Happy Honker Award for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers on CJOB's post-game show. He was a very well-respected member of Winnipeg, and I am honoured to have known him.

I would like to express my deepest sympathies to his family, his wife Marguerita-Flicka—his sons John and Richard and his daughter Janice. At the age of 88, Cactus Jack was still a vibrant part of Winnipeg, and I know that he will be sadly missed by many. He was an ardent participant in the Grey Owl Golf Tournament coming up in June. He will certainly be missed at that time.

This was evident recently as many friends and family gathered to celebrate Jack's 88th birthday. Following a ball game, we are going to miss those famous words, "and it turned out nice again." The funeral service was held today at the Assiniboia Christian Centre at 11 a.m.

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to extend our sympathy to all friends and family of Cactus Jack Wells. Rest easy, great servant.

\* (1440)

#### **Youth Unemployment Rate**

**Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East):** Madam Speaker, yesterday in Question Period the Premier (Mr. Filmon) put a misleading statement on the record when he stated that our young people, when the NDP was in office, had an unemployment rate that was 3 percent above Canada's youth unemployment rate. This is totally false. This is incorrect information.

I would refer the First Minister, indeed the government, to the historical records put out by Statistics Canada. If you look at it very carefully, you will find that, on average, youth

unemployment in Manitoba was 3.25 percentage points below Canada's average in the period of '82 to '87. When this government was in office, we were below but only by 1.2 percentage points.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important that we speak the truth in this House and that we have the facts. If the members opposite want, I would be prepared to give them a statement of this or refer them to the historical records that they can see for themselves. But, in 1982, our first full year in office, we were 4.6 below the Canadian average; in 1983, we were 4.3 below; in 1984, we were 3.9 percent below; in 1985, we were 2.5 percentage points below; and in 1986, 2.8 and 1987, 1.4.

When you average this up, it is quite clear that our performance for youth unemployment was far superior to that which has been occurring under this government. For the Premier to get up and state publicly and to be quoted in the press that we had a youth unemployment rate that was above the Canadian average is simply misleading the public of Manitoba. It is not the truth. It is time we speak the truth. Especially the First Minister of this province, the Premier of this province, has a responsibility to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.

#### **Provincial Mining Week**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, very briefly, just in response to the ministerial statement earlier today about the donation given from the Mining Association of Manitoba Inc. in regard to the minerals that were provided on behalf of both myself and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), just to express our appreciation and to wish the industry much continued success in the future, recognizing the very important role the mining industry plays in the overall performance of the Manitoba economy. Thank you.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

##### **House Business**

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would ask if you

could please call report stage on Bill 27. For the information of the House, following report stage, it would be our intention then to go into Committee of Supply for the remainder of the afternoon.

## REPORT STAGE

### Bill 27—The Essential Services Amendment Act

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett),

THAT Bill 27 be amended by striking out the proposed clause (h) as set out in section 2 of the bill and substituting the following—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I have not yet moved report stage. I think I require my motion and then the member—I was rising when he was recognized.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. There is an amendment to the motion, and the amendment must be dealt with prior to the actual motion.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once again, I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett),

THAT Bill 27 be amended by striking out the proposed clause (h) as set out in section 2 of the bill and substituting the following:

(h) The City of Winnipeg, in relation to its ambulance service employees, except for the purpose of section 7 where the union representing those employees has offered, and continues to offer during any work stoppage, to be bound by provisions of *The Fire Departments Arbitration Act* as though the employees were employees to whom the Act applies.

#### Motion presented.

**Mr. Reid:** I guess we should start from the beginning about how this process came about with respect to this amendment and Bill 27 itself, and we can only look back to last week when the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) came before this Legislative Assembly and asked that leave be provided to introduce Bill 27. The Minister of Health at that time stated it was as a result of a request that the government had received from the City of Winnipeg, in fact, the mayor from the City of Winnipeg, indicating that the ambulance service employees were about to take a strike vote and that they were potentially in the position of withdrawing the continuation of ambulance services for the residents of Winnipeg.

What is interesting to note by that process, Madam Speaker, is that the Minister of Health waited five days after receiving that letter when we all know full well that we can draft up an amendment to any legislation. In fact, the bill that he brought forward was so simple, and its drafting process could have been drafted in a day because the amendment that we had here was able to be drafted overnight. So we know the minister was able to table that bill prior to that instead of trying to rush it before this House.

What is also interesting to note, too, is that when the minister tabled that bill, after waiting five days for the drafting of that bill and his presentation to this House with leave, he waited until the potential day of election call for the province of Manitoba for the tabling of that bill, trying to up the ante, I suspect, in the process.

I guess it is interesting to note that the minister did not determine what perhaps would be other ramifications as a result of his hastiness in bringing forward this piece of legislation. One can only ask why the minister did not look at other options that were available, that this amendment that we have brought forward in report stage suggests that under *The Fire Departments Arbitration Act* the government could ask that binding arbitration be the process to resolve the outstanding contractual difficulties that are ongoing between the ambulance service employees, the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg.

The minister decided not to use that option, in fact, even though there is some history in this province for binding arbitration being in effect. We have arbitration for the doctors, we have arbitration for the police, we have arbitration for the firefighters of this province. It is too bad that the minister did not contemplate that we could also have the same level of protection for the residents of Winnipeg through binding arbitration for the paramedics, the people that provide the very important ambulance service in the city of Winnipeg.

So one only has to ask, if the minister was so intent on bringing forward and declaring the paramedics for the city of Winnipeg under The Essential Services Act for the City of Winnipeg, why did the minister also not contemplate what is going to happen with the ambulance services for the community of Selkirk or perhaps the community of Beausejour? Are they, too, going to be declared essential services, and if they are going to be declared essential services, should they too have binding arbitration? Because this is more than just going to affect the City of Winnipeg paramedics. There are other communities in the province that are going to be affected as a result of the government's haste in wanting to bring forward the inclusion of paramedics under the process of essential services laws that the government brought in a couple of years ago. So I hope that the government has contemplated what their intent is, even though the minister has said that he is going to be delaying the implementation of the bill and will not proclaim it. I was happy to see that upon questioning in committee, the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) made a promise that he would consult quite broadly prior to any decision to implement or to proclaim the bill should it receive passage in this House.

\* (1450)

The interesting part is that under The Fire Departments Arbitration Act, the law does allow for employees that are working as a part of the emergency response unit in the city of Winnipeg, that they would be covered under this arbitration act, and yet the government did not take into consideration that the paramedics of the city of Winnipeg are now a part of the firefighters' department under the heading of the

Emergency Response department for the City of Winnipeg.

So, if that is already the case, and as we already know that those two departments have been blended together and they are now forming one department, I guess the technical question needs to be asked here: are those employees, the paramedics, not already considered to be part of The Fire Departments Arbitration Act in this province? Perhaps the minister could turn his mind to that and have some consultation with Legislative Counsel on the interpretation of the act and how that would affect people that are already a part of the City of Winnipeg Fire Department under its new name, the Emergency Response department.

It is our understanding that this government has allowed the process, has slowed down the process of this bill, and after coming forward with what was apparently such haste on the part of the government to go with the introduction of Bill 27, the government has slowed the process down and it has been quite a number of days now since there has been any discussion or further debate on this bill, even though the government was intent to have this bill moved forward with all haste at the time it was tabled.

Since that time it is our understanding there have been further discussions between the ambulance service employees representatives and the City of Winnipeg, and that they have gone through the conciliation process. It is my understanding that the conciliator now has filed a report or is in the process of filing a report with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe), or laying out what the remaining difficulties are since the two parties still have not resolved their contractual difficulties. In the case of the conciliator's report, it is my understanding, too now, that the Minister of Labour has received a request from the paramedics asking for mediation, in fact, has asked for binding mediation. It is interesting to note that, when that was presented in the presence of the conciliator during the negotiations when the paramedics presented that as a part of their proposals during conciliation, the City of Winnipeg representatives actually indicated a willingness to accept binding mediation. Then an hour later, coming back after the lunch

period, decided, no, that was not on, and they withdrew their offer to go to the binding mediation process. So here we have again what appears to be a stonewalling or delaying tactic on the part of the negotiators for the City of Winnipeg, first agreeing to something again, and now withdrawing that offer and going back to their old position.

I would hope that the minister would look at the request that is coming from the paramedics for binding mediation and to commence the mediation process because it is my understanding that the minister has had this request in his hands now for two days and that there should be some progress made with respect to a decision on the appointment of a mediator.

Now, I would expect that the minister would probably, in his capacity as minister, be waiting for a letter from the City of Winnipeg with respect to their position on the appointment of a mediator. I do know, though, that there has been a request to have Mr. Wally Fox-Decent appointed as the mediator for this contract impasse that is occurring, and, failing that, Mr. Paul Teskey will be the second choice.

I hope the minister that has those proposals on his desk before him will make that decision on a short order to allow these negotiations to continue because it is my understanding that the government is now asking the government-appointed people with respect to the Pan Am Games Committee what is going to happen with ambulance-service protection during the course of the Pan Am Games, and that they want to have commitment from the ambulance service employees and from the City of Winnipeg for continuity of service. Since there has been no progress on that regard, it is very difficult, I would imagine, for either of the parties to answer the question about ambulance service. So I would hope that the minister would appoint a mediator to allow for a resolution of the contract impasse and to make sure that the Pan Am Games are able to have some level of comfort or assurance that there will be ambulance services available and provided where, when, and if necessary.

Madam Speaker, I would expect that, after a number of times now that this contract has been

highlighted in the media and has been the focus now for some time and has not been resolved—in fact, I believe it is going back over a year, perhaps two years, without a contract for the paramedics—the government would want to have this matter resolved in an expeditious fashion. I would expect that since the conciliation process has not, from my understanding, been successful, we do not want to have a withdrawal of services and, as I raised in this House last Thursday, the possibility or the spectre of having the City of Winnipeg lock out their paramedics, which, I think, would be detrimental to the residents of Winnipeg and not in the best interests of the citizenry that we represent.

I would hope that the City of Winnipeg would not follow that course of action because I think it would be a total conflict of interest for the City Council and its negotiating representatives to first ask the government to bring forward an essential services inclusion for the paramedics in the City of Winnipeg and then to be contemplating using the lockout provisions of those same employees. I do not understand the logic of how you can deem someone to be an essential service and, at the same time, deem them not to be essential by threatening to lock them out.

Now I guess the bigger question that remains too is what happens, now that the City of Winnipeg, at least from what we understand, has made this indication in options to be considered by councillors, whether or not this constitutes an unfair labour practice in the province of Manitoba. It will be interesting to note whether or not an unfair labour practice is indeed filed with the Manitoba Labour Board because I think it would go a long way to determine how the City of Winnipeg contemplates their action during their negotiating process. I would hope that they would not be contemplating a lockout since they have already asked the government to bring forward The Essential Services Act amendments, Madam Speaker.

We would hope that, with this government's intention now to go through the report stage, going into potentially the third reading of this bill, the minister would contemplate quite clearly moving this matter into the binding arbitration

arena and allow for some debate on that process as a way of resolving the outstanding contractual difficulties between the parties.

Madam Speaker, I do not think anybody in this Chamber or anybody in the city of Winnipeg that would utilize or rely on the ambulance services would want to see an interruption of those very critical services, that we would see that binding arbitration would be a way to solve that problem into the future so that the parties would be able to resolve their differences in a fair and reasonable fashion, and that we see that binding arbitration would give that level of comfort or assurance to the residents of Winnipeg which the government's proposal to put under the essential services agreement does not.

The minister says in his comments during committee on Bill 27 that he does not want to interfere with the negotiation process. Yet, by bringing forward this bill, that is essentially what he has done by putting in an amendment that the government would not proclaim that bill until a time that would be more appropriate. I am not sure on whose terms that that would be declared, because that is still to be defined in committee. When I asked the question, the minister could not tell us who would make the final decision other than perhaps it would be a cabinet decision. We do not know who would trigger the implementation of The Essential Services Act or the proclamation of that Bill 27 that we have before us.

So those are questions that are still to be answered. We hope the minister will take the time now that we are here in debate on report stage of Bill 27 to give us some indication of what his government's intention is with respect to the proclamation of Bill 27 should it pass third reading and to our request to have this process move away from The Essential Services Act and move into the arena of binding arbitration to allow fair and reasonable negotiations between the parties to take place and to make sure that both sides are treated equally and fairly. That is what we are asking by this resolution here today, and we hope that members of this House will support our amendment to Bill 27 that would put binding arbitration into process and allow for fair and reasonable settlement of the outstanding

contractual differences between the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg negotiators.

So I hope other members will take the time to comment as well with respect to this matter and to give their support on this amendment to Bill 27.

\* (1500)

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert):** Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise today and speak to this issue that is before the House. Speaking to this amendment, I must say, right off the bat, that, no, I do not support the member's amendment, and I would like to go into the reasons why. We on this side of the House do not believe in autocratically demanding that the city do anything unless they have had that discussion. The request has not come from the city to go to arbitration, and only the NDP, as they did back in 1970, would impose upon the city such a structure without having consensus between both parties and have it negotiated.

We as a government believe that through mediation and through consultation the members affected, both the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg, can come to an agreement. This type of agreement should be negotiated. If there is going to be arbitration, it should be negotiated between the two parties so they can come to a fair resolution.

When the member spoke about the lockout and unfair labour practices, that issue does raise some fears in my heart, and I do believe that, under the system that we have put in place by our amendment that we brought forward at committee, the bill on proclamation will become law instead of on Royal Assent. That gives us an opportunity to give the paramedics an opportunity to carry on a very open discussion with the City of Winnipeg without them having that capability of using that lockout threat against them.

I think the honourable member just might have been right. If the city did make such a threat and if there is such a document, I would only hope that our brothers within the paramedic system would get hold of that document and use

it against the city in their discussions with the city during their labour dispute.

Madam Speaker, essential services, yes, we all agree. The paramedics agree, the City of Winnipeg agrees, we on this side agree, as do members on the other side of the House, but essential services does not mean necessarily that you have to have arbitration. At this time, both parties, I understand, have put forward their requests for the mediator. The honourable member said that they had asked for Wally Fox-Decent, but what he did not put forward—well, I did not hear him anyway—that they had also requested Paul Teskey as their choice, both the city and the paramedics.

I do believe, given the opportunity for our minister to look at the information being brought forward by both parties, that he will give favourable recommendation. I am hoping that he will give favourable recommendation to this as soon as possible so that we can get on to have the best negotiations possible between both the city and the paramedics.

It is not up to us as a province to get into the negotiations between two parties having a dispute at the City of Winnipeg. If we were to start going into and dealing with all the issues of labour disputes at the City of Winnipeg, we would no longer need the City of Winnipeg Council. We would no longer need some of the legislation that covers and gives them the security that they want.

We must look at the history of it. The Fire Department was in the 1970s brought under The Fire Departments Arbitration Act. That was done by the NDP government of the day, yes. They did not negotiate between the two parties. They arbitrarily brought it in, Madam Speaker, because there was a labour dispute at the time. They just brought it in without consulting the parties, and the parties did not both agree to it. In 1986 when the police services were brought under The City of Winnipeg Act, that was negotiated. That was negotiated between both parties, the police and the City of Winnipeg, and both parties agreed to it. So that one was done correctly.

So, Madam Speaker, for us to indiscriminately stand here today and bring forward an amendment that would impose upon the city arbitration would be unfair. For us to impose upon the city our power to say you will have an arbitrated proposal, I think, would be unfair. We have always dealt fairly with the city and dealt with their requests when they bring them forward. I think that it is important that we can continue to have the consultation that we have. We have come a long way. I mean, even Mayor Glen Murray, who has brought forward this request of the city, I did not hear him asking for the arbitration. I think he is looking at the option of dealing with this at the bargaining table, and that is where this matter should be dealt with, at the bargaining table in all fairness. That is how the bargaining should take place.

I have the sense that the two parties will come to an agreement in the end. When and if—and I am sure it will be when—the minister appoints the mediator in the next day or two or three, I am sure that the two parties will be able to come to consensus on a number of the issues that are being brought forward. I only hope that all parties remember that they are an essential service to the city of Winnipeg. We cannot afford to be having them locked out or threatened. They have worked hard on behalf of Winnipeggers and on behalf of Manitobans. If we are in trouble, if we have an accident or we have a family victim down, that is who we want by our side and that is who I want by my side if something goes wrong.

So, yes, I will stand by my paramedics and I will stand by the City of Winnipeg and hope that they can come to an agreement that will be beneficial to both parties, but I will not arbitrarily put upon the city a law that will turn around and say they will be arbitrated. That has to be something that has to be negotiated. So I cannot support this member's amendment.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I could not believe the words from the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau). He does not, on the one hand, want to be indiscriminate and unilateral in supporting this amendment, but he would move heaven and earth along with the minister last week to move through one, two, three, in one

day a bill to take the City of Winnipeg paramedics and place them from The Labour Relations Act under the provisions of The Essential Services Act. With friends like that, who needs enemies if you are a friend of the paramedics, a so-called friend of the paramedics?

The bottom line is we have a situation where we all agree under The Labour Relations Act, we would prefer the paramedics, ambulance attendants, and the City of Winnipeg to negotiate a collective agreement. When that cannot happen, the real issue is what should this Legislature do about it. Now the real problem we have now is this sort of half essential services, half not essential services act that is called The Essential Services Act, and we saw that demonstrated at committee.

I would recall to members opposite and to the public, the answers we were given and were given after in committee and outside of committee by Mr. Shoemaker and the other individual from the City of Winnipeg responsible for this issue about what this means and what the contingency plan is for the City of Winnipeg. Well, they were quoted in the newspaper as saying a fraction of the ambulance attendants would be essential. Then they were quoted as saying up to a half of the ambulance services could be essential. Then they were quoted as saying in the hallway maybe seven or eight out of 10 on an evening could be essential. Well, our proposal is in the best public interest because it makes all ambulances essential in the sense that they would have the right to go to arbitration. Members opposite want half of the ambulances or part of the ambulances essential, and we and the employees and I dare say the public want all of them, so, yes, there are the ambulance attendants, they are negotiating with the city. The city is management; the ambulance attendants are workers. There is also the public and this Legislature, I would suggest to members opposite, must take the action in legislation that is in the public interest.

So, when you have a disagreement between the employees and the management under The Labour Relations Act, it is our job to represent the public interest. I defy anybody across the way to argue that a portion of the ambulances on

a Friday night that are available by their remedy of putting people under The Essential Services Act is superior to the amendment moved by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) that calls on all of them to be under The Essential Services Act.

I would suggest to members opposite our solution is also consistent with a province-wide parity in the way workers of a similar occupation are treated. In Brandon and in Thompson, ambulance attendees have the right of arbitration. They do not have the right to strike. They are covered under the firefighters or The Fire Departments Arbitration Act and therefore this amendment that we are proposing at report stage would treat the ambulance attendees in a similar way to The Fire Departments Arbitration Act and therefore give people in Winnipeg for ambulance attendees the same rights as the rights of other citizens in other communities.

\* (1510)

So let not members opposite when they vote, if they try to vote against this amendment and we will have them vote, they are voting against the public interest. They are voting in favour of one side of the dispute and it is their job to choose the public interest. It is not their job to take management's side or the workers' side as the custodians of labour relations acts of Manitoba. It is their job to take the public interest and you are not doing it. You are not doing it if you vote or speak against this amendment as the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) is. [interjection]

Well, let me make this very simple for the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). Under our proposal on a Friday night we have 10 ambulances; under their proposal we will have five ambulances, maybe six ambulances on a Friday night. Now, I ask you, if you are a citizen in the city of Winnipeg, what is in your public interest? It is to have arbitration. It is to have arbitration in a way that it provides those services to the citizens. Now, Madam Speaker, this Essential Services Act is very misleading because normally, in the olden days, when you had an essential services legislation, it meant that you did not have the right to strike, but you were given something as an alternative to the

right to strike, i.e., arbitration, to settle your disputes. This is a half-baked idea that is intended to weaken bargaining units but not resolve disputes. They have a solution that does not bring a resolution. We have a solution that brings a resolution and therefore is a real solution.

Now if the City of Winnipeg feels it is in the public interest to treat these employees as fully essential, then they should be prepared to have them treated in the same way as firefighters and police officers of the City of Winnipeg. As a former Minister of Urban Affairs, I was involved with the former deputy mayor, who is now the minister in a hurry to rush this legislation through, to pass this legislation. I notice it is not the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe). It is the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) trying to deal with this issue. I do not know whether we have a Minister of Labour. I know the former Minister of Labour is here.

Well, I would hope that the Minister of Labour and some others there explain to the Minister of Health why he is not representing the public interest. He is representing management interests. There is no question that this proposal is better for management at the City of Winnipeg in terms of bargaining power and negotiating power. If this Legislature was only dealing with the size of the financial potential settlement at the City of Winnipeg, then they should have the honesty to say so in this Legislature, instead of wrapping themselves around the public interest in The Essential Services Act, and therefore having to vote against something that will really provide essential services with our amendment to provide arbitration.

We, the members opposite, mentioned the early '70s. The firefighters had arbitration before The Labour Relations Act was changed. The Labour Relations Act was changed in the early '70s, and it was changed by the Schreyer government—not amended, I might add, by the Lyon government in the '77-81 period, I am sure, with the member for Lakeside's (Mr. Enns) support. I was with former Premier and Senator Roblin last night, going over some of this history with the gentleman. It was interesting to note in the '70s, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) says, the firefighters, which were

maintained under arbitration, may or may not have wanted the right to strike, and the city wanted the right of those people to go to arbitration. I ask the question: what did the Schreyer government do under those circumstances? Did he act in the interests of the public? Did they act in the interests of the public, or did they act contrary to the public interest? I would suggest strongly that in the early '70s—again, the test of the public interest, which must be balanced with the interests of the workers and the interests of the management, by this Legislature in terms of the rules and laws we pass and the regulations; therefore, we must look at public interests.

I suggest that the test of time has shown that the Schreyer government, and, interestingly, the former deputy premier, the former member for Transcona, Mr. Buzz Paulley, acted in the public interest when they required—when The Labour Relations Act was changed, there was an amendment to The Labour Relations Act, and it stated that this act applies to all employees of Manitoba, save three. One of them, I am just going by memory here, was the firefighters; two, teachers under the school act that were covered by laws passed in the early '50s—of course, again abandoned by members opposite in the last couple of years with Bill 72; and three, public employees, civil servants that were under The Civil Service Act. Those three groups of employees were excluded from the provisions of The Labour Relations Act, and what were all three given in exchange for their essential service nature in requiring public services. They were provided with a resolution mechanism which was binding arbitration. Firefighters, teachers and public employees under The Civil Service Act were provided for with arbitration.

What this government is doing, with a false press release, I might add, is providing half a remedy. I would quote the Minister of Health's press release where it states that the City of Winnipeg has asked other employees to be covered under essential services provisions, such as police officers and firefighters. What he failed to mention is this is not the same kind of provision because it does not provide (a) full protection for the public and (b) it does not provide a resolution mechanism if the collective



bargaining process is not concluded successfully.

For members opposite to wrap themselves around collective bargaining is great. Everybody in this Chamber believes in free collective bargaining, and everybody in this Chamber wishes that each and every one of us could see a successful conclusion to all the disputes in labour relations at the bargaining table without strike, lockout, arbitration, mediation, conciliation. That is what we all prefer.

Having said that—[interjection] Well, the member opposite, the former member of the alliance, a well-known trade union leader in his day, maybe he will support arbitration or maybe he can give us a history of how the Mulroney government treated those employees. Of course, the Mulroney government had nothing on the Chretien government. I found it rather interesting, the Liberal Leader, we were gentle on him when he came to committee, because they legislated away the right of collective bargaining for all public employees for five years and legislated a wage cut for all public employees in Canada, but I digress.

Now we are faced with advice from the City of Winnipeg management that came before our committee versus the employees who came before our committee, plus the firefighters that came before our committee that work with these people. I remember at committee the two City of Winnipeg representatives said that this essential services legislation could lead to arbitration—or we should get the Hansard—will lead to arbitration or could lead to arbitration. That is false. There is nothing in this act that provides for arbitration. We do not have to pass The Essential Services Act to deal with arbitration. So, obviously, they knew that arbitration was not a bad idea for the public. They kind of wanted to couch their comments at committee.

Regrettably, though, they did so in such a way that was not available by law, not available through The Essential Services Act amendment proposed by the minister. That is why this amendment by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is very consistent with not only the

employees' interest but the public interest. Yes, one side, it is preferable that both sides agree in arbitration before any legislation comes here. I agree with that. But this government chose to come here with only one side agreeing, management; and, therefore, it has to deal with the public interest. The public interest of 10 ambulances on an evening are superior to something less than that being proposed by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), and it is also superior in the sense there is a resolution mechanism available to it.

Madam Speaker, I would also quote, and I am trying to find my copy of my material here, but I recall the firefighters' presentation because we all know the paramedics presented a brief that talked about arbitration. They gave us a number of good reasons under their critical shortage of staff, and they also spoke eloquently about the fact that they had to go from hospital to hospital, because of the Tory cutbacks to health care in the city of Winnipeg and all across the province. Sometimes ambulances had to drive for an hour and a half to deal with the backup and pressure of the hallway medicine policies that have become regrettably all too familiar with the implementation of opposite members' health care policies.

Close down hospital rooms before you build the hospital beds to replace them or personal care beds to replace them. Fire the nurses after an election, a thousand nurses after an election and try to rehire 600 a couple of weeks before an election campaign. That is the kind of Tory health care policy. Members opposite, the Tory Party of Manitoba, could not run a first aid kit if they were given a chance to do so, and it is pretty evident to members on this side.

\* (1520)

But I digress. They have had more Health ministers in the last three years than Boris Yeltsin has had prime ministers in the last number of years, and it is not a pretty sight I might add. Having said that about the paramedics and ambulance attendants, let me quote from the firefighters: To take—

**An Honourable Member:** You are boring.

**Mr. Doer:** I think the member is heckling me here, Madam Speaker. I think I have been heckled. I think I have been heckled here.

**An Honourable Member:** Who cares what you are thinking?

**Mr. Doer:** You know, here on the one hand, members opposite have asked for our co-operation to give leave through the first reading, give leave through the second reading and they are probably going to ask leave for later on. Of course, the member opposite is so partisan, so vitriolic, so bitter, so negative that she makes comments like who cares what you say. Well, if you do not care what we say, why are you going to ask us for leave on third reading to co-operate with the government? Maybe you had better talk to your House leader and go back to orientation school about good manners in this Legislature and proper decorum in this stately Chamber of the Legislature. I will recommend that to your House leader, that you go back to orientation school, because I think you need remedial education as it applies to the rules and dignity of this Chamber. And I do that as a public service, Madam Speaker.

I quote from the firefighters' presentation: to take away the right to strike and to not give them binding arbitration is wrong and does no service to the City of Winnipeg. Here is another quote: why do they not wish to support those individuals who every day deal in life-and-death decisions? Fairness, honour, and orderly are the reasons the paramedics should have binding arbitration.

So who is supporting binding arbitration? We are. We did it from day one. When members opposite said that the public safety was at risk, we thought, even before we had talked to the employees, that we had to deal not with the essential services legislation but rather with a more creative way of dealing with these problems.

In testimony in committee, the firefighters stated, we are terrified of the thought of having to go in to provide services. We get along really well, but this legislation will lead to frustration and dissension and will make amalgamation

harder. Firefighters are going to be the ones that will have to help people.

Penalizing a group of employees for trying to serve the public—why do you not wish to support people? That is a question for the minister. Why do you not want to support people who are out there working with life-and-death issues? Firefighters cannot understand that. I would say that to the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh). Why do you not understand this? Twenty-six fire stations, paramedics and machines in five of them. Firefighters are already stretched. They do not want to be used that way. We do not want to have to transport people in the back of our truck because there are no contingency plans in place. Essential service legislation could hurt.

Listen to this. You are passing something that could hurt almost as much as a full-blown strike. Those are from people on the front lines. Those are from people who work with people in life-and-limb situations. I would suggest to the member for Assiniboia, fire suppression will suffer if the paramedics go on strike in any way. Why do you want fire suppression to suffer? Why are you passing something because somebody says it is better for the city? Why are you not taking in the interests of the public?

Passing legislation to cover any part of the City of Winnipeg employees is an important step of this Legislature. It should not be done hastily. It should be done with thought. We have co-operated with the government because obviously the public interest is best met with a co-operative approach, but we are bound and determined to convince the government opposite that we are on the public side with this recommendation on binding arbitration as well as the amendments on gender neutral language. Are they going to vote against gender neutral language over there? Are they going to vote against the public safety? [interjection] What did I say? Gender neutral, I thought I said.

A kinder, gentler approach to legislation, of course, and you are going to vote against arbitration if you vote against this amendment. I will tell you, hopefully this thing will be settled, but if there are nine ambulances on the streets on a Friday night and somebody dies because there

were not 10, you are responsible. That is why you should vote for our arbitration proposal and look for the better solution in the public interest, not just go with the proposal from the City of Winnipeg, which regrettably is half-baked.

Therefore, our proposal is a full solution to the challenge and therefore should be supported in an act of generosity, in an act of dignity, in an act of leadership by all members of this Legislature.

Let us rise up and represent the public interest, which is our responsibility. Let us rise up and support this amendment.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, I do have a few words that I would like to put on the record with respect to the amendment that is being proposed from the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). First off, let me pick up when we say let us be generous here, and that the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) asked us to be generous. I do not personally have any problem in terms of supporting the amendment.

Having said that, I think that we could do a better job than that in the sense that the best thing that we can do at this stage of the game, I believe, is not proceed ahead, in fact, to just stop the debate, go into Committee of Supply and continue on. The Leader of the Liberal Party was very clear in terms of the sense of urgency just is not there. If you listened to what was being said at the committees, if you listened to what is being said around us, that sense of urgency is not there.

It was interesting in listening to some of the comments, whether it was the member for Transcona, in part from the Leader of the New Democratic Party. The reason why this bill is here today is because it was the Liberal Party that denied leave to allow this bill to pass ultimately last Thursday. We recognized—and I will let the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) know right now—we have no intentions at this stage to grant leave with this particular bill.

If we take a look at what has happened over the last number of days, Madam Speaker, we now have what appears to be a consensus for

mediation. Well, if we do have that consensus for mediation, I would suggest to you that it would be a wonderful and a responsible gesture from this Chamber to just stop the debate on this bill. It is just not necessary. I have been given no argument to this date that has convinced me that it is indeed in the public's best interest that this bill actually pass. So if we want to do something in a positive way—and I think that we need to recognize the importance of all of our health care workers, whether it is our paramedics, to our nurses, to our support staff, and I would even extend it to other emergency services, but in particular for our health care people, is that we have to start recognizing the value that they offer and their contributions from the past and start treating them with more respect, that we have to start working with our health care workers.

\* (1530)

I was offended greatly, as I know the paramedics and many were offended, when the bill was introduced. We had absolutely zero notification. We were told the day in which it was being brought in that in fact a request had come from the city. No one else knew about it. It was kept in secret. The union itself had no idea that it was coming forward. I believe that there was a better way in dealing with this particular issue, and I also believe very clearly that we can, in fact, what I would classify or many would classify is conduct some damage control on this issue, to restore, to demonstrate that we have faith in our system. That is what I appeal to the government to recognize, and that is that the urgency just is not there, cannot be justified today. We do not need to speed this thing through.

I was very disappointed last Thursday when there were only the two of us, the Liberals, that recognized that fact. Time after time, we see one party who claims to be the protectors of the workers, who claims to be the guardian of our unions and their rights, who claims to be that and has fooled some of them. Some of the unions and the elites of those unions have been fooled by the New Democrats because, when it came right down to it, Madam Speaker, it was the Liberal Party that stopped this bill from passing last Thursday. It is the Liberal Party

today that is saying that we are not prepared to allow for leave to have it go into third reading today. The reason for that is because we have confidence, trust and faith in our paramedics as a part of our health care workers. I think that it is critical as legislators that we re-enforce that confidence. Actions speak much louder than words, and that is why, when we were in committee, we listened, we listened very closely to what was being said.

We, in second reading, indicated that we did not have any problem in terms of the bill going into the committee stage, that we were quite open to seeing that bill go into committee stage with the idea that we were going to be listening to the presentations that were being made. I applaud the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) to the extent that he did appear to be sensitive to some of the arguments that were being presented, to the degree in which the Minister of Health came up with an amendment. The amendment would have changed the legislation to allow for it to take effect as opposed to on Royal Assent, on proclamation by the government or the cabinet.

That did make the bill somewhat better, but I can, with all honesty, say to the individuals that it was having a very significant impact, that it did not really demonstrate that the government was really listening to what it is that they were saying because what the government was asking was for the union and representatives and others who are following this issue to have faith and trust in the government not proclaiming this legislation prematurely. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), towards the end of the committee, I thought asked some very excellent questions. What would happen, if in the negotiations that take place prior to the passage of this bill, the union and management on the other side came into an agreement that they would have a binding arbitration or if in fact they came up with an agreement? The Minister of Health said: well, then he would be inclined to or at least entertain withdrawing the legislation.

Well, that is one of the strongest arguments that I have today in terms of saying there is no need for us to pass this legislation, to be even dealing with the amendment today. We do have

mediation. We are optimistic that the mediation will in fact resolve it in a positive way, and a part of that positive way could include binding arbitration, which would make this legislation completely useless. If they do come up with binding arbitration through mediation, then the essential service legislation that we are attempting to expedite through this Chamber does not need to be passed.

Then can we see two weeks from now or three weeks from now where the government will be introducing legislation to repeal? I believe that the member for The Maples' questions towards the end of that committee hearing were excellent, and they brought up a point which I would hope that the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) or the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe) will deal with and give the clarification necessary. I think that is very important in order to have us at least get a better understanding of what the government's real intentions are with respect to this bill.

Madam Speaker, we talk about the process we went through in order to get where we are today, whether it was going through the second reading or the committee stage or now into the report stage that I would suggest to you that what we really need to be doing, as I have indicated and I will continue to expand upon, is the question of the urgency. If we try to be objective on the issue, I think the government is in a position in which it can contact both the city and union representatives to try to address the issue of public safety. We within the Liberal Party are very much concerned about public safety and we have always put that first and that is why we listened to some of the comments that were being put on the record in committee stage from members of the union, in particular, Mr. Fotti.

**An Honourable Member:** A good man.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** As the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) points out, "a good man." We do not question that. In fact, as a political party, we recognize that in the consultation that we had, there was virtually no chance of having a walkout over that extended long weekend when we had vacated the premises. Was it a chance? I think that you

have to look at it from the perspective of what message it is that we are sending if we are not prepared to do what we believe is right. If you put yourself in the shoes of a paramedic, I think you would get a better assessment of what it is that this particular union is trying to achieve.

\* (1540)

When you look at the City of Winnipeg and you see that the City of Winnipeg has those three real areas of urgency, the fire and our police and our paramedics, I find it hard to see how we benefit if you have the paramedics and the firefighters amalgamating, working side by side in many cases, and one gets binding arbitration and the other does not get binding arbitration.

We posed the question, do they feel that that would have an impact on the morale, and the answer to that was, yes, it would in fact have an impact and does have an impact on the morale. So there is a sense of fairness. As I sat inside the committee and I listened and I questioned presenters, another component that I thought was really missed and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) also made reference to it was the lack of representation from City Council. I was never provided any information as to why there was no one from council making presentation, but if we were doing it at the request of the city, it would have been advantageous for us to know from the city councillors as to why they believe in having binding for one and no binding for the other. In fact, I had posed the question in terms of if City Council were to debate the issue of binding arbitration, do we have any idea in terms of how that vote would actually turn out? Do a majority of city councillors not want our paramedics to have binding arbitration? Of course, there was no answer to that. I think that those are the types of questions that would have been valuable to have had answered at the committee stage.

So we need and I ask for the government to be sensitive to the reality of the situation in which our paramedics find themselves in today. The reality, Madam Speaker, in their eyes is very clear. Quite frankly, I understand the situation that they are in and am very sympathetic to it, even though realizing that it is something which the city is responsible for

attempting to draw the negotiations to a conclusion.

Recognizing the autonomy that the City of Winnipeg has, we also have a responsibility, and I believe that we need to take that responsibility more seriously. When we see something that on the surface, and I say on the surface because of the lack of presentations from another side at committee stage, where there is a valid argument to be made for binding arbitration that it would be irresponsible of this Legislature not to deal with that issue, especially when you look at it in the sense of the other two services that the City of Winnipeg provides.

This particular amendment would put in binding arbitration. Ideally, what we would like to see is the mediation that will be taking place would bring in the binding arbitration. That is what we would like to see. Failing that, we would like for the government to recognize the situation of the three emergency services that are being provided at that local level and to put themselves at least in part in the shoes of the reality of the day and life of a paramedic. It is not necessarily to go into the discussion of wages or anything of that nature. Rather, what I am referring to is that sense of fairness in terms of the way in which they are treated.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) or the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe), I believe, could send a very strong message this afternoon. That message could come in a couple of different ways. One is, at the very least, that the government does not ask for leave to continue to expedite the bill. That would be one way. The second, mine and the Liberal Party's preferred route, is to put a hold on this bill at least until the issue of mediation and the results of the mediation are actually known. I think that would be a responsible thing to do. I do not believe that a majority of city councillors would oppose that, nor do I believe—

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

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I just want to put a few comments on the record about the amendment proposed by the opposition and, of course, the

original amendment to the act. I want to remind all members of the Chamber why this was done in the first place, and it was done first and foremost to protect the citizens, primarily of the city of Winnipeg, obviously, and of the province of Manitoba in terms of their very important ambulance services.

What has ended up happening with this issue is because we are also in the midst of collective bargaining, we have ended up with the two issues obviously fairly directly interrelated in many respects, but I think it is important for us to step back and separate them. I certainly encourage members of the Liberal Party to do that, based on some discussions I have had with some of their members.

Madam Speaker, if you look at the history of essential services, it was first introduced back in May of 1996. At that particular point in time, it was applicable only to the provincial civil service. Then a request came from our health facilities to be included in essential services legislation back in 1997, and in April '97 The Essential Services Act was extended to health facilities and to Child and Family Services agencies. That legislation was passed in June of 1997. So the legislation applicable to the province includes hospitals, personal care homes, Child and Family Services agencies, regional health authorities, St. Amant Centre and Pelican Lake Centre. Again, I think everybody agreed on one thing, certainly, at committee, and I think all of the representations agreed to the fact that ambulance services are definitely an essential public service. It was with that view in mind that this original amendment was introduced back on I believe it was May 18 to protect the citizens here in the city of Winnipeg in terms of that very important service.

I also want to outline the procedure because I think the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) does a little bit of a disservice to the sequence of events, that he should recognize that the first request came in on Thursday, May 13, from the City of Winnipeg. We know what Thursday means in terms of the cycle of this Chamber. The first request came in on Thursday. We do not sit on Friday. On Monday, everybody knew that the association was taking a strike vote that day and that night. Obviously, it was prudent to

wait and see what came as a result of that particular event, Madam Speaker. We all know that that event did lead to a strike vote from the ambulance association, the paramedics.

So on May 18, a subsequent letter, a second letter came from the mayor of the City of Winnipeg outlining that the city ambulance workers had voted to support strike action and therefore they are in a legal strike position at this time, and in the circumstances, he requested that we initiate the necessary action to amend The Essential Services Act to ensure that essential ambulance services provided by the City of Winnipeg are maintained, and that is the key issue. That is the fundamental issue, Madam Speaker. He went on to say: please note that we have not been able to achieve a voluntary agreement on essential services with the Emergency Response Services Employees Association of Winnipeg union.

\* (1550)

So the second letter came on May 18, and that was the day that this amendment was introduced here into this Legislature, Madam Speaker. Subsequently, on May 19, another letter came from the deputy mayor or the acting mayor outlining many of the same concerns. Once again, in her letter, she goes on to talk about that the membership has rejected the city's latest offer, that the City of Winnipeg is prepared to continue discussions with the association in good faith in order to come to a mutually agreeable resolution to the contract issues. She goes on to say: In the meantime, however, it is imperative that the safety and security of our citizens not be put at risk during this process.

That is the key issue, Madam Speaker. That is the reason that the original amendment was put in place, and I think that is the reason that it is so important to continue down the path of dealing with this amendment that is before us here today.

Now, when we talk about the collective bargaining process—and that really was the reason for the subsequent amendment that we introduced at committee, the amendment that indicates that this legislation will not come into effect until it is proclaimed, to certainly do our

utmost to not influence the collective bargaining process and to allow the parties to work through that process to hopefully reach an agreement at the collective bargaining table.

Now, what is wrong with the amendment that the opposition have before us, Madam Speaker, is they are proposing that we automatically go to binding arbitration. If you look at the history of binding arbitration in Manitoba, we do have binding arbitration for the firefighters in Manitoba under The Fire Departments Arbitration Act. That was put in place back in the 1970s. I am told that that was done on a unilateral basis by the provincial government of the day. It was not done as a result of a request from both parties, the employer and the employees, to have binding arbitration.

The other group that does have binding arbitration is the City of Winnipeg Police Association. That is covered under The City of Winnipeg Act, and that was put in place in the '80s at the request of both parties. The City of Winnipeg requested that they be included under binding arbitration, and the employees requested that they be included under binding arbitration. At the City of Winnipeg level we also have binding arbitration for a group called WAPSO, which is their middle management group. That is not done through legislation. That is done through agreement by both parties once again. So in each case where we have had binding arbitration, other than the one exception back in the 1970s where it was imposed by the Legislature by the government of the day, the only way that binding arbitration has been introduced is by both parties agreeing to binding arbitration.

We look at the process they are in right now, the City of Winnipeg and the ambulance attendants and the paramedics. They had a conciliation officer in place. As we have said in this House, there still are a number of options available to them to resolve their disputes. They can jointly request a mediation officer be appointed. I understand that has taken place, and I fully expect that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe) will be appointing a mediation officer either later today or tomorrow.

They could also jointly request to go to binding arbitration. So at the bargaining table there continue to be a number of avenues available to them to reach an agreement at the bargaining table. The other issue of binding arbitration—we are into binding arbitration today with doctors here in Manitoba. Once again, that was done through mutual agreement. The employer agreed to binding arbitration; the doctors agreed to binding arbitration.

We all recall that during the collective bargaining process with the nurses, the employer offered to go to binding arbitration, and the nurses turned that down. Fortunately, an agreement with the nurses was reached through the mediation process at the bargaining table. So, Madam Speaker, what is wrong with the NDP amendment, or the opposition amendment, is that it is unilaterally imposing binding arbitration when it does not have the support of both parties. It is the heavy hand of government. Again, I think I would just say where we differ from them, it would be no different than a provincial government having the heavy hand of a federal government imposing something on our level of government. I know, and I fully expect, that the opposition would be opposed to that kind of undertaking.

So, if we had both parties, if we had the City of Winnipeg and we had the ambulance service workers and paramedics requesting binding arbitration legislation, obviously that is something that would be looked at to be implemented on that kind of a basis. That is not what we have, and I do not think it is responsible to impose it when you do not have both parties requesting it at this particular point in time, particularly when we can cover essential services under The Essential Services Act, and we also still have the two parties at the table working towards a collective bargaining process.

So that is where we differ from the official opposition, and where we differ from the Liberals is we are not prepared to put the public or the patients at risk here in the City of Winnipeg in terms of the important issue of essential services. That is where I am concerned about the position that they have adopted because I believe that we can address both issues. We can address the issue of protecting

the ambulance services for the city of Winnipeg by passing this amendment that we have introduced here, but we can also respect the collective bargaining process through the amendment that we introduced by not proclaiming the legislation unless we reached a point where we had to do it to protect the safety of the public.

So we are striking the right balance between the essential services that we all agree ambulance services are and also respecting the collective bargaining process. That is where I have a great deal of concern with the position of the Liberal Party. In spite of all of the best intentions and all of the discussions and so on, the position they take still puts the public at risk when it comes to that very important service. That is something we do not support doing.

So I think I have covered the key issues that I wanted to mention relative to this issue. We could obviously go on at length certainly dealing with some of the rhetoric from the Leader of the official opposition, but I think at this stage not a great deal will be gained by rising to debate with some of his silly comments about running a first aid kit and so on. I think all Manitobans need to do is look at his performance in government in the 1980s, and that tells the entire tale.

So, once again, I would encourage this House not to support the amendment put forward by the official opposition but to support the resolution as amended that is coming from the committee, from the committee discussion. I would certainly encourage everybody to do that today, with leave, so that we can continue to protect the citizens here in Winnipeg and Manitoba for what we all agree, nobody disputed, we all agree it is an essential service. I do not believe in putting the public at risk and I hope that is the view of everybody here in this Chamber.

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Madam Speaker, I am delighted to put some comments on the record in support of the amendment brought forward by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). I was privileged to listen to the speeches and the presentations that were made at the public hearings dealing with Bill 27, and they were quite illuminating in what was said.

It is interesting how saying the same statement can mean almost exactly the opposite thing. The Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) in his comments today and through his comments and questions at the committee hearing, as well as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) today in his comments as well as his comments at the public hearings and the members of the official opposition in our comments today and in the public hearings, all stated that we wanted to protect essential services, as did every presenter to the committee hearings last week.

However, I suggest, and I am supported I believe by the firefighters and the paramedics who made presentations at committee, that only the amendment brought forward by the official opposition, the member for Transcona replacing the essential services agreement with binding arbitration actually, in effect, does protect the citizens of the province and it is very simple. It was made very clear by the city presentation at the committee hearings last week.

Mr. Shoemaker in response, I believe, to a question from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) stated that, and I do not have Hansard in front of me so I cannot quote specifically, but he made it very clear that the number of ambulances that would be on the road that would be available to serve the people of Winnipeg and some outlying areas as well in the case of a strike, in the case of Bill 27 being implemented, would be by definition less than 100 percent. He did not say how much less than 100 percent. There have been figures as low as half and figures as high as 90 percent of the ambulances and the staff needed to staff those ambulances would be deemed to be essential services.

\* (1600)

Mr. Shoemaker was very clear that there would be less than 100 percent, i.e., less than currently 10 ambulances on the streets of Winnipeg should the essential services agreement legislation be needed to be enforced, and the reason Mr. Shoemaker gave that figure was that he said that it was essential that the paramedics, the staff of the ambulances, not lose their right to strike. If 100 percent of the ambulance attendants, the paramedics in the city of Winnipeg were declared essential, then by definition they would lose their right to strike.



So Mr. Shoemaker admitted that the public in the case of a labour dispute that was unresolvable under the current legislation would not be protected to the level that it has come to expect. I think it is critical that we recognize that. Mr. Shoemaker does not necessarily represent the ultimate employer-management position.

My understanding is that the management, the City Council or the city management and then, by extension, City Council, could under essential services legislation deem that every single member of the paramedic employees was deemed essential and thereby they would lose the right to strike, so thereby they would lose at both ends. They would not have any ultimate bargaining tool that unions have, by definition, in the collective bargaining process, which is ultimately the right to strike. They would not have that. On the other hand, they would be at the beck and call of the management who would determine how many and when they would be declared essential.

So it is a lose-lose situation for the workers of the city, and it is also a lose-lose situation for the people of the city. So I do not understand why the minister and the government say that their bill, Bill 27, unamended, if it remains unamended by our amendment, protects the population of the city of Winnipeg, because it cannot possibly do so.

The minister also said this afternoon in his comments that this legislation respects the collective bargaining process. Well, Madam Speaker, it does not. It has the potential for completely gutting the collective bargaining process because, by definition, the collective bargaining process gives management certain rights and the union certain rights. I think members opposite find the whole concept of workers actually having rights to be anathema. They do not believe in it basically, and whenever they have the opportunity, either openly or by stealth they attempt to reduce the rights and capabilities of the workers of the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) said—basically his argument was that we do not need this legislation because

there is no sense of urgency, there is no sense of emergency to this, and we need to let the process unwind. He has faith in the collective bargaining process and the two sides being able to come forward and reach an agreement. Well, I would suggest that at least two things, one on the side of management and one on the side of the unions, say that we have a potentially very serious problem here that we do need to address.

On the side of management is the letter that was written on May 13 by the mayor and a second letter that was virtually identical written by the deputy mayor on May 18 requesting changes to the essential services legislation because the collective bargaining process had broken down. Now, Madam Speaker, that does not sound like things are going along as they should.

Since then, we have not had much positive news on that mediation front or conciliation. It would appear that the two sides still are far apart. So I would suggest that the management, having written those two letters, the urgency that they see does not bode well for the collective bargaining process.

On the side of the workers, the workers took a strike vote. Now, taking a strike vote does not mean that the workers are going to go out. It just gives an indication to the workers and to management and in this case to the citizens of the city of Winnipeg and all of those who are under the responsibility of the ambulances and paramedics that there is the potential for, and the union has given their negotiating team a mandate, a strike mandate. That strike vote that was taken was overwhelming. Madam Speaker, 131 members voted. Now, there are only 135 members of the paramedics. I am not sure what the exact percentage is, but it is way, way, way—it is in the high 90 percent approval for a strike vote.

That is an overwhelming problem for the collective bargaining process; the one, on the one hand, of management saying we are in a crisis, and on the other hand, the union saying we are in a critical situation. So the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I believe, is erroneous in his reading of the situation when he says that we are not in a crisis.

He also says that we have confidence in the paramedics. I do not believe anyone in this Chamber or anyone who came to the hearings has less than the utmost confidence in the paramedics. The paramedics want to do what is in the public's best interest. The paramedics want binding arbitration. The paramedics do not want to be in a situation where they feel that they have to choose between a living wage and good benefits and all of those things that we say through the collective bargaining process are the rights of workers in this city and this province on the one hand, with the public safety on the other. That is why it is essential that this amendment brought forward by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) be approved by this House, because only if you go to binding arbitration do you protect the rights of the workers. The United Nations and the International Labour Organization and many other organizations throughout the world say that rights of workers are essential to be protected, whether this government believes that or not.

The only way you can protect the rights of the workers, in this case, the paramedics, and protect the citizens of the city of Winnipeg, is through binding arbitration.

*Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), I was listening to his comments earlier this afternoon, and again I do not have Hansard, but what I heard the member for St. Norbert speak, I think, he sort of was mixing things up just a bit. My sense of what the member for St. Norbert said, and I will check with Hansard when it is available, is that he was putting binding arbitration in opposition to negotiation. I think this is something that the government has mixed up all along, whether on purpose or accidentally.

Binding arbitration or essential services legislation is the end result. They are not in opposition to or in place of negotiations. You go to binding arbitration or a strike or an essential services legislation only after the collective bargaining process has failed. So we are talking here today not about the collective bargaining process itself, which is still underway, although

it is kind of rocky; we are talking about what do we do when and if that process breaks down.

\* (1610)

I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, as I have said earlier, the only way to effectively ensure the safety of the people of Winnipeg and provide for workers' rights is to go to binding arbitration. Now, the government has said on several occasions they are only responding to a request from the city. They are only listening to the city. Yes, they are listening to the city, but, in this sense, they are listening to one partner in a negotiation. They are listening to and responding to the management side, not to the public interest or their workers' best interests.

I do not think we should be surprised by this. The government has never shown itself to be a fan of or in favour of workers' rights. We can go through 11 years of bad labour negotiations and bad labour relations, but let us be very clear, the government was asked to intervene on the part of one partner to a labour impasse, was asked to intervene quickly in a collective bargaining situation.

We on this side of the House, in putting this forward, this amendment, are not saying, in effect, to intervene in the collective bargaining process, not at all. As a matter of fact, we are the champions of collective bargaining and think that in most cases it can work very well. What we are saying is that, if the two sides are unable to come to a collective agreement together, agreeing together, if that is not able to happen, then the best dispute resolution mechanism is binding arbitration, because that takes it out of the political arena. It takes it out of the media. It puts the two sides together with an arbitrator, and it says: you guys, both sides, sit down, and let us talk about it.

We have example after example of where binding arbitration has worked. We have had example after example of where essential services agreements have not worked and are not working because we have seen too often where management decides that 100 percent or, in some cases in the health care system, more than 100 percent of the workers are deemed essential.

In some situations in health care today, there are more hospital workers on the floors of hospitals under essential services legislation than under regular operations, so we do not believe that this is the way to go. Yes, paramedics are essential; they agree, we agree. But the way to ensure that 100 percent of the paramedics and the ambulances are on call when they need to be is through binding arbitration, not through amendments to The Essential Services Act.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that we are talking in terms here of 10 ambulances, and everybody agrees that 10 ambulances are not even enough. What are we going to do when the Pan Am Games come to town? What are we going to do? We need more than 10 ambulances.

That is another issue, but it does impact on this legislation because if this legislation is not amended and the city deems less than 100 percent of their workers to be essential, which, if they are going to follow Mr. Shoemaker's comments at committee, they will do. That means not only are we when we are at full capacity understaffed and underserved, but we are if the essential services legislation comes into effect unamended, we are going to be even in more trouble.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we need to take a sober second thought, a sober second look at this situation, put in the amendment to allow for binding arbitration or to require binding arbitration, put the city paramedics on a par with the paramedics and the firefighters and the police officers in Brandon and Thompson and the firefighters and police officers in Winnipeg and the teachers throughout the province, all of whom are essential services, all of whom provide vital functions for us, and all of whom, with the exemption of the paramedics in Winnipeg, are covered under binding arbitrations. It is only fair and democratic and appropriate and in the public's best interest that they all remain equal. That is why we support this amendment today. Thank you.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to address this issue, a very important and very good amendment made by my colleague the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), our critic for Labour.

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), the member for Transcona, myself and the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) had the privilege of sitting in on the committee which considered this important issue, and I think that it is a matter of principle that we are dealing with here. It is essentially the question of the consequences of a government that failed to take action to provide the kind of resources necessary for our health care system so that we now have an ambulance system in Winnipeg that is seriously stretched beyond its reasonable limits.

I bring to the House's attention the remarks of Mr. Shoemaker, who in committee responded to questions about delays in answering calls and indicated, as did Janice Johnson, that we are now looking at substantial delays because ambulances are frequently taking acutely ill people from one hospital to another looking for an emergency department that is able to accept a critically ill patient.

I recall that one of my constituents, who is a nurse in Victoria Hospital, told me that a couple of weeks ago there were 52 people awaiting admission and that the emergency and holding observation beds, the hallways—the entire emergency department was simply at the point that they could not accept any more patients.

Naturally, then, an ambulance had picked up a patient that would normally go to Victoria is out of service for a much longer time than necessary because the ambulance drives to Grace or to St. Boniface or Health Sciences Centre or even Seven Oaks or Concordia to take the patient who is acutely ill to receive medical care in a department that is open.

When we look at the question then of how essential services would operate in this situation, we have to understand that the context of that question is an ambulance system that has already agreed to be understaffed and stretched beyond its reasonable limits. Specifically, the ambulance

attendants told us, and this was also confirmed by management of the city, that just on a regular day, an ordinary day in the city of Winnipeg, it takes 20 percent of staff on overtime just to meet the regular needs of the ambulance service to staff it at a regular level. That does not count any additional staff who book off sick or who are injured. Just to run the service requires 20 percent overtime on a regular basis.

Now, what is one to say about essential services in that kind of situation? How is it conceivable that the essential service will be less than 100 percent of a service which has admitted to be inadequate? We were told that for a city of our size and population dispersal we need 13 ambulances; we have 10. The minimum service level, the acceptable service level, is 13, three more than we have now.

If the essential services agreement is applied, what level will be provided? Now Mr. Shoemaker said it would be less than the current number of cars that are on the street at any one time. He said that in committee. However, to the press in the hallway, he said that his estimate was that it would be at least nine out of 10 would be required, would be deemed to be essential. The tenth, of course, is one that is funded currently by the province because the city is not funding even 10 ambulances. Then later he amended that and said, well, perhaps it might even be one or two of the cars that are also on call during busy periods.

Essentially what Mr. Shoemaker was saying that 100 percent of the workers would be deemed to be essential. At which point one asks: how are they then to have any reasonable ability to bargain fairly because one of the rights we are talking about respecting in this province is the right of management and the right of labour to work together through maybe a difficult process but to work together to reach a fair solution and a fair settlement? Essentially, I think, as legislators, as citizens, that we have to recognize that, if you take that right away from either side in an unfair way, then you set up an unbalanced and unstable labour-management situation. At the end of the day, it usually, under this government, is labour that has their rights unfairly affected, and that, I believe, would be the case if this legislation passed unamended.

Essentially, we are saying to an essential service: you are, yes, essential, but you have no right to seek a solution to your problems by any other means. So all of you have to work, and you could have a theoretical strike, but you cannot do anything that would actually bring any pressure to bear on your employer.

\* (1620)

No one wants a strike. Certainly, this side of the House is proposing an amendment that would provide all of the essential services and give these workers the same dignity, the same rights, the same respect for the importance of their service as our firefighters and our police.

Madam Speaker, we also heard from Mr. Shoemaker that he was in the process of integrating the ambulance paramedic service and the Fire Department. He certainly agreed that the Fire Department should be covered by binding arbitration, and, obviously, the police are covered as well. So it seems to us only reasonable that, if you are integrating two services and you agree that those two services are both essential, and you agree that you want to respect the process of bargaining, then you give them the same rights. The right in this case is the right to binding arbitration, if that becomes the only resolution mechanism that remains.

We also learned in committee that the firefighters of Brandon and Thompson had access to binding arbitration, and, in that case, the ambulance services of those two cities are part of the fire department. So we have ambulance attendants, some of them trained to a very high level, to a paramedic level, and others trained to a lower level, who, in the cities of Thompson and Brandon, are not only deemed to be worthy of protection, but they are deemed to have access under The Fire Departments Arbitration Act to binding arbitration in the event of a labour dispute that cannot be resolved by a normal bargaining process. So by what reasonable criteria do we make a distinction between Thompson, Brandon and Winnipeg?

Winnipeg surely has the same needs of citizens and it has the same need for high-quality ambulance services. It has the same need for highly trained and skilled staff, but apparently,

according to the government, the people of Brandon and Thompson have protection for 100 percent of their services 100 percent of the time. The people of Winnipeg are not to be granted that same protection. They can only be granted protection of some lesser level. Is it 50 percent? Of course, the question then is: which quadrants of the city, which neighbourhoods, are going to be without ambulance services if the intention of this legislation is, as the Minister of Health has told us it is, that is to allow for some service level less than 100 percent? That is his understanding of the intention. What neighbourhoods in the city? Will it be my neighbourhood, will it be the neighbourhood of the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer)? Will it be the neighbourhood of the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), the neighbourhood of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that is without ambulance services, as a consequence of this government's action?

No one was willing to answer that question, and so the position of the opposition and my honourable friend for Transcona who moved the amendment is that we want all the citizens of Winnipeg to have the ambulance services that they need. We recognize that what they have now is not sufficient, so every single one of those services is clearly essential because it is admitted by all parties that we have inadequate services at present. We want at least that level of service to be maintained through any labour dispute. We want there not to be the possibility of a strike, which causes any level of ambulance service to be withdrawn from the citizens of our city, and we want the workers to be treated with the same dignity and the same respect that is accorded to our police and our firefighters.

We think it is only reasonable that the government would see the wisdom of the amendment that is now before us, which would encourage people to bargain, encourage people to bargain responsibly, which does not take away the possibilities of conciliation and mediation. In fact, we have just been notified that mediator, Mr. Teskey, whom I know as a lawyer myself, has been appointed, and we welcome that appointment. That is a very good appointment, and we look forward to Mr. Teskey's report. I believe he will do his utmost

to bring the parties a responsible and fair settlement for both parties. What we are simply saying is that in the event that this does not happen—we hope that it does—that the citizens of our city have a right to adequate ambulance and emergency response services and that the government's legislation essentially puts that right at risk, puts at jeopardy for my neighbours, for my colleagues' neighbours, the ability to have the response that we have now.

I want to underline for the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) that I am sure he is aware that Mr. Shoemaker said and the ambulance people have said: what we have now is not adequate. We have response times that, because of the backlog in emergency rooms, because of the inadequate funding of this government and support of this government to our emergency services at the hospitals, we already have an ambulance system that will not meet our needs. Yet the legislation put forward by the government in haste, without careful thought, would put those services even more at risk because, let me underline this, there is no agreement that overtime can be compelled in the event of a strike. There is nothing in the current agreement between the ambulance attendants, the paramedics, and the City of Winnipeg which makes overtime compulsory. There is no compulsory overtime in this agreement.

As I have said earlier in my remarks, just to put the ambulances on the street every day requires 20 percent of the staffing to be voluntary overtime. So by what mechanism would the city be able to field more than six or seven ambulances without compulsory overtime? By what mechanism could they access compulsory overtime if it is not in the collective agreement now, because the collective agreement that is in place now governs what happens during a strike?

The Minister of Health I think has got himself in a very difficult situation, because he is putting forward a bill that by definition will remove at least 20 percent of the current ambulance services from the City of Winnipeg. Furthermore, the plans of the city apparently are to require the Fire Department to respond to calls that might normally be taken by ambulance staff. Perhaps the minister has forgotten that the

Fire Department is also a union and it may have some difficulty with taking over work that is normally done by ambulance attendants.

By his hasty action, the Minister of Health and this government, this Premier have put at risk the lives, the well-being of the citizens of Winnipeg. They have inflamed a situation which they ought to be calming rather than inflaming, and they have put forward legislation that is guaranteed to reduce the level of services below an already unacceptably low level in the event that this labour dispute is settled by Mr. Teskey in his role as mediator.

I support strongly the amendments of my honourable colleague. They provide dignity to the workers, they provide assurance of service to the citizens of Winnipeg, they provide lots of incentive for both parties to settle fairly at the table under the guidance of Mr. Teskey. I think the legislation as amended would serve as a very useful support to the democratic process that we all want to support. I hope that all members of the House will support these very appropriate and essential amendments.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is the report stage amendment to Bill 27 proposed by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). Do you wish to have the motion read?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** No.

#### Voice Vote

**Madam Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Madam Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

#### Formal Vote

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Deputy Opposition House Leader):** Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is the proposed amendment to Bill 27.

#### Division

*A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:*

#### Yeas

*Barrett, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Friesen, Hickes, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Reid, Sale, Santos, Struthers.*

#### Nays

*Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Charleswood), Driedger (Steinbach), Dyck, Enns, Faurschou, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.*

**Mr. Clerk (William Remnant):** Yeas 15, Nays 28.

**Madam Speaker:** The amendment is accordingly defeated.

\* (1640)

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh), that Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services essentiels), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee of Law Amendments, be concurred in.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, I would ask if there would be leave of the House to have third reading of this bill.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House to proceed with third reading of this bill?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** No. Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, with the waiving of private members' hour today, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae), that this House now resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

**Motion agreed to.**

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY  
(Concurrent Sections)**

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine):** Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. When the committee last sat, it was considering item 16.2. School Programs (d) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 48 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister about the number of courses that are being delivered across Manitoba by school divisions on the Web. This particular program area does deal with piloting the development and delivery of a Web-based course, Senior 3 Applied Mathematics. I assume that is something that the department intends to complete this year, so that is part (a) of the question.

Part (b) is: what other Web-based courses are there across Manitoba? I understand that

there are several school divisions which are doing it, some of which are doing it within one school, if we are looking at Garden Valley, for example; others which are doing it, if we look at Interlake School Division, across several schools.

So does the minister have a compilation of that, and is there any intent to bring any of this Web-based instruction together and to make it more widely available across school divisions? What kind of co-ordinating role is the department intending to play in this?

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training):** Mr. Chairman, we are obtaining that information, and while that is happening I would like to follow up on some things from yesterday. We tabled yesterday a document about Manitoba schools with aboriginal language instruction. The honourable member was wanting to know the number of students and not just the schools. We said we would get the number of students for her and table that information, as well, but in fact the document that I tabled—and I overlooked this—did include not only the schools but also the number of students corresponding to each school. If that is not the point the honourable member was making, then maybe we could get that cleared up now.

**Ms. Friesen:** Mr. Chairman, yes, the material that the minister tabled before certainly did give the number of students in the school. But the issue I had raised and which I repeated was that I was interested in the number of students who are actually taking courses in native languages. What the numbers in the document that the minister had indicated are the numbers of students in the schools where native languages are offered, so that, for example, you have numbers like 300, et cetera. It does not specifically indicate the number of students who are taking native languages, and that was my understanding. Perhaps, I am misreading the document the minister offered, but it seemed to me to be a much broader answer to a quite specific question.

**Mr. McCrae:** Mr. Chairman, the numbers that were provided do reflect the number of students actually taking native language courses. So the

numbers that we gave the honourable member refer not only to kids attending schools that offer those things but the numbers, I am advised, do apply to the number of children actually taking them.

\* (1700)

For example, on the third page of the document at the bottom, Lord Selkirk School Division, the school is listed amongst these schools, but it is not being taught this year at Lord Selkirk, which indicates there are no children enrolled in that program, but that is still, I guess, available if they have sufficient numbers. But the point is, just to confirm again, it does refer to the number of students actually taking the courses, not just attending the schools where the courses are taught.

In addition, I have another document which may be of interest to the honourable member which deals with special language credits actually granted for aboriginal languages, which means children who have completed the courses in aboriginal languages and challenged for the credits and got them. I am making that information available to the honourable member.

We talked yesterday about copyright fees. The copyright fees for materials used in four forms of the English language arts examinations and standards tests administered during the 1998-99 school year are as follows and this refers to the January S4, the June S4, June Grade 3 and June Grade 6 exams. The total copyright fees for English language examinations and standards tests was \$6,495. The average copyright cost per test was \$1,624. The restrictions placed on current copyright materials prevent them from being used in electronic form after the test is administered. This would prevent them from being posted on the Internet.

However, for future copyright materials, electronic permission can be pursued. Our current experience is that some copyright holders will provide permission to use an electronic version and others will not. If one copyright owner refuses to do so, the department would not be able to publish the test electronically. After provincial examinations and standards tests are administered, sample

copies are sent to the Education and Training library and can be obtained by individuals, including parents. The availability of previously written ELA examinations through public libraries would depend upon the conditions for use identified by the copyright holders. This matter will be explored with copyright holders. There are currently no copyright materials used on provincial mathematics examinations and standards tests. Copyright permission will likely be necessary for upcoming social studies and science provincial standards tests.

We discussed yesterday post-secondary representation on school programs committees and teams. Some of this information would be of interest to the honourable member. We have ongoing consultation between representatives of Manitoba Education and Training and the province's post-secondary institutions as essential to ensure that educational programs developed and implemented in the province's public school system articulate with those offered in colleges and universities. A close alignment of programming facilitates students' transition from high school to post-secondary programs. A number of structures and processes are in place to support communication between the department and post-secondary institutions, including post-secondary appointments to departmental advisory committees, post-secondary appointments to departmental curriculum teams, departmental appointments to post-secondary committees, informal consultation regarding new curricula and admission requirements, formal consultations related to the development of new curricula, distribution of new curricula and policy documents to post-secondary institutions.

I think the honourable member would be interested perhaps in knowing, for example, on the inter-organizational curriculum advisory committee, there is representation there from the Faculty of Education, David Jenkinson, University of Manitoba. With respect to English Language Arts, kindergarten to Senior 4 steering committee, Deborah Schnitzer of the English Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Winnipeg; Deborah Begoray, from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba; and Jean Louis Guillas of Assiniboine Community College from the Dauphin campus.



Mathematics kindergarten to Senior 4 steering committee, there is Grant Woods, from the Math Department of the Arts Faculty of the University of Manitoba; Lars Jansson, a retired senior scholar from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba; and Gene Karlik from the Red River Community College.

Science kindergarten to Senior 4 steering committee: Gordon G.C. Robinson from the Faculty of Science, U of M; Arthur Stinner, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba; and Andy Burzynski from Applied Science, Red River College.

Social Studies, kindergarten to Senior 4 steering committee: Bill Norton from the Geography Department, Faculty of Arts, U of M; Jack Deines, Faculty of Education from Brandon University.

So I think that covers the issue related to post-secondary representation as discussed yesterday. Now the honourable member asked us about some statistics respecting home schooling. I have some statistics to share with her. There has been an increase of 53 when compared to the number that I gave to the honourable member two days ago. The increase represents activity in the time since the compilation of the statistic that I shared with the honourable member.

In Grade 1, in home school study in Manitoba there are 84; in Grade 2, 125; in Grade 3, 139; in Grade 4, 150; in Grade 5, 148; in Grade 6, 130; in Grade 7, 119; in Grade 8, 120; in Grade 9, 95; in Grade 10, 79; in Grade 11, 42; and in Grade 12, 7, for a total of 1,238. These statistics are as of May 27, that is today, 1999. That represents a current total enrollment of 53 pupils over and above the enrollment reported on March 1, 1999. That is the information that I brought to bring us up to date. There may yet be an undertaking or two that we have made. As far as we know, there is one left that we have not provided information on yet. We are still working on it.

Oh, I am sorry, in answer to the honourable member's question, we are aware of one consortium, the southwest consortium delivering Senior 4 world issues online. Also, Garden

Valley School Division is offering a Senior 4 English language arts course online, as is the Brandon Adult Learning Centre, which is affiliated with Assiniboine Community College and the Brandon School Division. A number of school divisions are currently interested in pursuing the online delivery of courses. Those divisions are: Morris-Macdonald, Fort Garry, Interlake, Swan Valley, Garden Valley, River East, Evergreen, Agassiz school divisions. They have all expressed interest in this regard, as has the southwest consortium expressed its ongoing interest in this area.

\* (1710)

Staff of the department are meeting with these various school divisions and have as well hosted a number of workshops on the topic of Web-based courses as well as demonstrations on the various software platforms that can be used to develop and deliver online courses. We are pursuing Web-based development and delivery as well and will pilot along with divisions and schools an online version of Senior 3 applied math in the 1999-2000 school year. These efforts are being co-ordinated by the staff in the School Programs Division through a partnership approach within its branches, program implementation and program development, and in units, the Distance Delivery Unit and the Learning Technology Unit with the MERLIN. Most particularly we are partnering with school divisions interested in online learning.

**Ms. Friesen:** I am interested in the co-ordinating role of the department. The minister has talked about partnerships. I am wondering: is the minister prepared to have a situation where different school divisions will be developing the same course on the Web, or is there an intent on the part of the department to rationalize or to enable co-operation between school divisions so that the best use can be made of this interest and activity across the province? I am interested in what direction the government is going in this area.

**Mr. McCrae:** Yes, the divisions and groupings that I referred to do not amount to everybody. So it is not like everybody is doing this at this point. I think we are in a fledgling area where things need to happen fast because the

technology changes pretty fast. We still need to try to find some way to identify the best practices in this area. I do not think it is useful for us to preside over a whole lot of duplication in this area. It is for this reason that the branches that I referred to and MERLIN are engaged in a co-ordinating role and at this point working with these various parties to develop the best way of proceeding, keeping in mind there is a requirement of curriculum congruency. We will continue to partner with school divisions to determine which courses will be put online in response to student needs.

An important role for the department is to co-ordinate the activities of the various partners to try to ensure that we are not duplicating a whole lot of effort. In an area like this that must be a challenging thing. I am not into technology as much as I would like to be, but I do know that there is more than one way to do things. Finding the best way, we may do that this school year and find that next school year there are already better ways being discovered. So we need to be able to move without too much duplication along with the technology so that we are always trying to keep right on top of the latest opportunities that we can make available to Manitoba students. So I think that is as much as I can say about that.

**Ms. Friesen:** I wonder if the minister could tell me what the role of the Assiniboine Community College is in the development of high school programs on the Web or by other means of distance education.

I have another question too dealing with the Web. Obviously when you are doing a Web-based course you are going to be putting curriculum resources, not just curriculum outline, not just questions and answers, but actually other people's resources. I am wondering what the difference is in terms of copyright between those resources on the Web and the difficulties the minister was outlining earlier with similar kinds of resources essentially put on the Web for the English exam.

**Mr. McCrae:** There is a lot of exploration work going on in the area of Web-based material. The copyright issue exists I guess every time you address Web-based material, because somebody

is there and wanting to get their appropriate credit for their property. So we are always going to be in a position as long as this situation exists where we are going to have to be negotiating copyright agreements. The other thing, I guess, is to try to avoid, in whatever legal ways are available, copyright issues because, obviously, there is going to be a saving there, and we are not also going to have to be tying up human resources in these negotiations.

\* (1720)

With respect to the question raised by the honourable member about Assiniboine College. Assiniboine Community College has been partnering with the southwest consortia and the Brandon Adult Learning Centre using the ACC-developed platform called On-line Learning Environment, OLE for short. The southwest consortia developed and delivered world issues, and the Brandon Adult Learning Centre developed and delivered the Senior 4 ELA. The content for these courses is developed and delivered by the school divisions involved using certified teachers as subject matter experts. ACC's role has been in the area of technical support related to the OLE platform and in relation to providing a server to host the Web-based course.

Manitoba Education and Training has also explored with ACC the possibility of using OLE as its platform for developing Senior 3 Applied Mathematics. We are now considering OLE and WebCT as potential platforms for the development and delivery of this course.

**Ms. Friesen:** The minister mentioned specifically, obviously, I think guessing at one of my concerns, and that is who is actually developing the curriculum and he said that teachers were. I am wondering what the relationship is between the college and the school divisions who are delivering this. What is the financial arrangement and does this financial arrangement pass through the Council on Post-Secondary Education? Does it pass through MERLIN? Does it pass through the department? How are these kinds of negotiations and partnerships developed? So that would be part one. I am interested in how it

is operating at the school division/community college level.

Then, secondly, the department is considering this same base or platform for its own pilot project. I wonder if the minister can tell me what the advantages are in that to the department. Where does MERLIN fit in this? I am having difficulty understanding what the role of MERLIN is when there seems to be so many—it is as though you have a central core of a wheel which is supposed to be MERLIN which is initiating and developing these partnerships and assisting in, one assumes, the kind of financial arrangements that would give the greatest financial benefit to all concerned, and yet the department seems to be operating on a completely different spoke here.

We also have the Council on Post-Secondary Education with its own distance education component seems to be operating on a different level. So I wonder if the minister can for the record make sense of this and give me some indication of where the co-ordination is and what the direction is for both Web-based and distance education in the high school system which is what we are looking at at the moment.

**Mr. McCrae:** I think it needs to be clear that ACC does not develop curriculum. ACC has played a role in assisting with the development of a platform to assist with that. By the same token, MERLIN serves in capacities that assist school divisions, assist the government in its endeavours. The consortia I referred to contracts with ACC to use its platform, the OLE platform I referred to. ACC got a grant from the Human Resources Development department and, of course, the Council on Post-Secondary Education also is involved because it is through the council that the operating grants for colleges like ACC are flowed. Interesting that the honourable member should mention the Council on Post-Secondary Education in this context.

It is, in my view, desirable that our colleges, universities and every other sector work more closely together and in a more co-ordinated way, and the Council on Post-Secondary Education plays an important role in that regard. Now, when you take into account the traditional way of funding the various institutions and then you

bring in the Council on Post-Secondary Education, you can imagine that there are some adjustments that need to be made. Certainly the colleges, it has only been a few years the colleges have been involved with their own governance structures. In this regard, I am trying very hard to make sure there is a clear understanding of what everybody's objectives are here.

I have really sensed long before I ever was appointed Minister of Education and Training that we need to get past the era where everybody sort of works away, sometimes very hard but in sort of a splendid kind of isolation where it does not matter, because we have an autonomous system or structure for a given institution. It does not matter so much what is happening elsewhere, but more and more the realities of the '90s and the new millennium suggest that a much more partnership-oriented approach is what we need. I think former Senator Roblin, former Premier Roblin, recognized that and made certain recommendations. COPSE, as we call it, the Council on Post-Secondary Education, is there to carry out some of the role carried out by the previous agency, the Universities Grants Commission.

Well, I think the COPSE, its role needs to be well understood. It needs to be well talked about. I enjoyed the opportunity just today to meet with chairs of boards of universities and colleges and vice-chairs, along with the chair of the Council on Post-Secondary Education and some of the staff there and myself, and to talk about issues related to the ongoing understanding that we need to have. It was a good discussion, because I think everybody wants this to happen. It is hard sometimes to break down some of the way that we used to look at the world in light of what the world was like a dozen years ago. Well, there is a lot of change that has happened since then, change for the good, and we want to maximize on that. We want to do that in our institutions too.

\* (1730)

I think that is one of the reasons too that we have in our budget this year, and we are pleased for the support we have been getting for that budget, by the way. We have that in there, that

strategic money in there, so they can all develop the programming that we need to meet the needs of the market. I think it was just yesterday the honourable member was asking me questions about this, and these are the answers to the questions.

We certainly have challenges in front of us. I think of them as opportunities but whatever they are called, we are in a position now where we have jobs galore in Manitoba, and we need a really good understanding of where the jobs are, what kinds of activities in the private sector need the support of an educated workforce. So we need to know whether we are educating appropriately and training appropriately the right numbers and the right kinds of people for the new economy.

I think the Council on Post-Secondary Education can play a very valuable role, already is, in this regard, but I think it is thanks to a lot of forward-looking people in the last few years in Manitoba that we find ourselves in the enviable position of addressing a new challenge, that being making sure we align our post-secondary education system in such a way that we maximize the opportunity.

I was pleased to see a headline in today's newspaper, that Manitoba grads are staying in Manitoba in droves, and this is good news. It is not all good news because there is always another side to it, but it is a lot better news than we used to read daily in our newspaper. MERLIN's role is to assist us in evaluating any or all platforms and giving advice on network design. That is the role that MERLIN plays. It will assist in obtaining the best prices we can for services and for equipment. As I said, this is quite a different world that we are working in today. Strategic partnerships are absolutely required. It is not just desired, it is required to make new and complex things work, things like technology and curriculum delivery, evaluation, design, software creation, platform creation, training, and on and on.

There are many players in all of this. MERLIN is just one. It is not, for instance, a writer of curricula. It does not write software or create platforms, but it does evaluate certain types of software. It evaluates platforms. It

brokers and delivers certain types of technology training. It purchases equipment at the best price, for example, on personal computers and modems and servers and routers and provides advice on platform design tasks such as networks, all of which is fairly technical and sounds to me like MERLIN provides a lot of technical services, but I would not want the honourable member to think that they write or that ACC actually develops curriculum. We have talked at length about how that happens and the kinds of people that are involved in it.

I read out a while ago for the honourable member some information about consultation with Manitoba's post-secondary institutions with respect to departmental advisory committees; departmental curriculum teams and appointments to post-secondary committees and informal consultation regarding new curricula and admission requirements; formal consultations related to development of new curricula; distribution of new curricula and policy documents to post-secondary institutions.

I do not mean to imply—I hope I was not. I did not mean to be unclear about that, but I am pretty in favour of getting people working together. It is not only a nice, pleasant way to do our work and to get it done, but if we are at all results oriented, we know that putting the best minds to work on what are indeed pretty complex issues and tasks that we have to do in our system, it is good to have as much partnership as we can get.

With respect to MERLIN, the Education Resource and Learning Information Network, the stated objective of the MERLIN is to be a central co-ordinating body for technical resources to provide direction and management in the educational use of telecommunications networks; to provide service offerings to support the education use of technology; to support education using learning technologies; and to identify partnerships with the private sector. I think that I did not mean to be unclear. I hope I have straightened that up.

**Ms. Friesen:** Did the minister suggest that there is no payment, there is no exchange of money between a school division which is using the

ACC platform? I am not quite sure what ACC's role in this is.

\* (1740)

**Mr. McCrae:** I know of no invoice sent out by the ACC for its role in the development of this online learning environment platform. The Adult Learning Centre is an agency of the ACC, so it is in ACC's own interest to do this. I do not know all the answers here. It may also be that students at ACC could have been part of this which has an educational aspect for them, and it may be in the developmental stage that this online environment business—there may be a time when ACC will make it available elsewhere and for dollars, I do not know that. The fact is they are funded by Human Resources Development Canada, and, as far as I know, they are not into, at this stage, making money on this.

**Ms. Friesen:** I had understood from what you said, and it could be I was running two sentences together, that ACC was also involved with the southwest consortium as well as the Brandon Adult Learning Centre.

**Mr. McCrae:** Mr. Chairman, I am a little intrigued by the questions here. I am going to undertake to make myself a little more acquainted with this particular topic, and it may be that next day we can talk about it further. I am not really undertaking to bring back a whole lot more information because I do not know what I am going to find out at this point. But I am going to find out some things, and we will be able to talk about it a little better next time.

**Ms. Friesen:** The minister mentioned earlier the coming on stream of standard tests in social studies, and I wondered if he could give me a date for that and the grade levels. I am interested in the curriculum in information technology, much of which is at a local level, and I wondered if the department kept a compendium of locally initiated curriculum in information technology.

I notice the government, for example, is interested specifically in the middle years keyboarding program. One of the comments that I frequently hear from parents is that the students seem to be doing keyboarding over and

over and that the curriculum, particularly in the middle years, does not seem to develop beyond that, and parents are puzzled by that.

Now, I understand the issues of teaching across the curriculum with information technology, but I am also specifically interested in the longitudinal development of skills in the use of information technology. The government I think also has an advisory committee working on this, so I am interested in the timetable for that, and whatever documents the government is able to make available on that I think would be warmly received.

**Mr. McCrae:** Mr. Chairman, the April 1998 educational change update scheduled social studies standards tests for Grade 6 in June 2001 and for Senior 1 in January and June 2001, dependent on release of Manitoba curriculum frameworks. Timelines for implementation of social studies frameworks and standards tests have been extended in order to align Manitoba curriculum development with the Western Canadian Protocol of social studies project. As an interim measure until new Manitoba social studies curricula are developed, the department will update an online version of the social studies overview, kindergarten to Grade 12. Till further notice, schools should continue using existing curricula for kindergarten to Senior 4 Social Studies. In December of '97, there was a ministerial letter to school divisions Senior 3 Social Studies, as indicated in that letter, Senior 3 Social Studies will continue as a compulsory core requirement even after the release of the new social studies curriculum. The honourable member knows the history of that one.

In the English program, this requirement alters the configuration of credits for compulsory core and compulsory complementary subject areas but does not change the number of credits students can earn for optional supplementary courses. I think we have discussed how we are working with the Western Canadian Protocol on social studies. Yes, I remember, and the honourable member has made a point that it is an old curriculum, well, the fact is that is true. On the other hand, history is the type of subject for which there is a lot of other resource material available in order that children and students can receive a quality education in history pending

the completion of our work through the Western Canadian Protocol social studies project and getting ourselves up to speed in terms of implementation of that curriculum in Manitoba. There is another benefit as well and we have referred to it. The profession has been very busy adjusting to new curricula in the other areas and trying to digest all the material and trying to make sure that all of the issues related to New Directions are being done well.

\* (1750)

I had a chance today to speak to the Manitoba Teachers' Society annual meeting and, oh, there must have been 200 or 300 maybe more teachers there today, more than 200 anyway, I think. I was able to have the opportunity to thank them most sincerely for their work in the past two years as Manitoba has moved to improve our education system in the K to 12 system. I was quite cordially greeted by the outgoing president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society as well as the incoming president of the Teachers' Society. I was able to have a few moments to speak with the teachers who were there as delegates to the convention, and it was clear to me that it is the kind of message that strikes a responsive chord when you remind teachers that they are indeed very much appreciated for their efforts. In a time of change, there is sometimes a tendency for the people involved in the field to feel that, well, if you are changing something, it must be that we were not doing something right. That certainly is an unfair characterization of the situation in Manitoba, because that is simply not what this is about. I think that by reminding teachers that their efforts are appreciated, we tend to dispel any suggestion that New Directions is all about casting some kind of criticism in any particular direction.

The teachers of Manitoba have brought us, to a large extent, to where we are today as a modern society, a modern provincial society within a Canadian federation and in a global economy. We are doing very well, thank you very much, in terms of our ability to work within that global economy. We are taking advantage of lots of the opportunities that that economy presents. I firmly believe that that would not be possible if it were not for the work done by the

teachers that have helped to bring Manitoba's population to the point where that population is able to take advantage of the opportunities that exist.

So I enjoyed that opportunity, although Mr. MacIntyre reminds me he reads all these proceedings in Estimates review. It is hard for me to believe that that gentleman, as busy as he is with his responsibilities, could have the time to read everything that goes on here in this Estimates review. My assumption is he, like I, had good teachers and learned to read very fast. I think he has probably learned to read a lot faster than I am able to read but, in any event, he reminds me that he pays close attention to what is going on in the review of the Estimates, but he also, after I made my comments today to what I thought was a fairly warm response from the gathered delegates to the convention, used the opportunity in thanking me to give me a gift.

The gift was a button that said to stop the YNN, which is the Athena project that the honourable member has been asking me about recently. I thought, well, I wonder why that is happening. There are lots of issues that we could talk about in a public forum like that, but then I was asked about this later by the media.

It seems Mr. MacIntyre, the outgoing president of the MTS, is thinking of running for the New Democrats in one of the provincial constituencies. Well, that has basically been confirmed. I understand it says so on the website, the NDP website. So then you start to wonder, okay, well, now, he is the outgoing president and he is making a big, fairly big, deal out of this matter. It all starts to come together just a little better.

You know, whatever your individual views are about the Athena project, I guess Mr. MacIntyre wants me, as Minister of Education, just to say to everybody, no, for philosophical reasons we will not allow this to go on. I think that school superintendents, school trustees, teachers, and parents in Manitoba are quite able to look at the proposals coming forward and to make decisions on them. I noticed in Brandon School Division No. 40 they have decided not to go for that. That is their right to do that. The point that is being impressed on me is that I

should not allow some other division who may see some benefit in it from proceeding

It occurs to me that one of the arguments being used is that this proposal has, I guess there is some youth news on it, and there are commercials there that are basically commercials that would be directed at a young audience. The allegation is that you have got a captive audience when you have a classroom full of kids and, therefore, this is wrong.

Then I think, well, now, teachers have a captive audience too, and we certainly trust their professionalism but, now, I wonder, if a division makes a decision to go a certain direction that the teacher does not agree with, well, is Mr. MacIntyre suggesting that teachers should use that audience in an inappropriate way? I certainly hope not, because it would not be a very professional thing to do, in my opinion. Anyway, it was an interesting event.

I enjoyed the opportunity to attend and to say good-bye to Mr. MacIntyre and to wish him well in his endeavours and to say hello to Mrs. Speelman and to offer to get together and talk about some of the issues that the MTS has raised with me. There are about seven of them, and I am thinking that one thing we should do is maybe arrange about seven meetings on the different topics that were raised and hash them out with the members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, something I look forward to doing.

I find that members of that profession are amongst the most positive thinkers that I know of. You would not always know that when you follow the reports in the newspaper but, as a matter of fact, it just does not seem to come through that a teacher, as a member of the Teachers' Society, may indeed have some kind of opinion about this or that, and that is perfectly all right. It does not mean that it is the view of all the teachers out there on any given issue. Nothing is ever unanimous. I understand that, but I certainly see a more positive group of people than you see portrayed in the newspapers when you read about different disagreements going on between the teachers and the government, the Teachers' Society and the government. Mr. MacIntyre even joked about that I was the fellow who showed up and I was

actually the one who was invited today, a reference to a recent conference put on by the Teachers' Society at which the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was invited and declined and sent me in his stead and Mr. MacIntyre would not let me speak. He was even able to joke about that this afternoon, which I thought broke whatever tension there might even have existed. I think that it was a positive experience attending the annual meeting today.

There is more to be said about the issues raised by the honourable member respecting information technology and the issue she has raised about the middle years and keyboarding and some of the comments parents have made to her. I have had comments made to me too and I look forward to discussing that maybe the next time we get together.

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

## HOUSING

**Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson):** Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Housing. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 30.1. Housing Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits, on page 98 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** I know that the Minister of Housing is a very flexible person and very knowledgeable about his department in some ways, and therefore he is able to answer any questions that I might have, even though it might not necessarily be on the proper line. Therefore I have some questions which may not be relevant to this line, but I am sure the minister can help me out in any case.

I wonder if the minister could tell us about the visit that he and staff made to Kenilworth, I think it is called, in Washington, D.C., and what he learned there and what aspects of management of public housing there he thinks might be transferable to Manitoba.

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing):** What precipitated the trip down to Washington actually came about in looking back to when there were conversations with the Gilbert Park Tenants Association, and they had indicated their desire to go towards some sort of self-management within their complex. There was a fair number of conversations that we had with them as to what were some of the parameters and directions and everything. It just so happened that there was a special on PBS television in regard to some things that were happening in Washington in regard to a public housing complex and how a lady by the name of Kimmie Grey had come about changing the complex and the face of management at this particular public housing complex.

\* (1650)

The television program that was on PBS outlined how this tenants association more or less decided that they wanted to change their complex down in Washington. I am trying to remember how many units there were there, approximately. I think there were somewhere close to 500 or more units down there, and they were having an awful lot of problems with vandalism; they were having problems with gang activity; they were having trouble with prostitution and just a tremendous number of vacancies in this complex. It seemed to parallel to a degree some of the problems that we were having back here in Winnipeg in regard to a couple of our very large housing complexes, in particular Gilbert Park and Lord Selkirk Park. So it sparked a fair amount of interest and conversation not only within the tenants association but also with a Mr. Tom Simms with CEDA, who also saw the program on PBS.

So we got hold of the tape. We looked at it. The tenants in Gilbert Park also got hold of the tape, and they watched it, and it sparked an interest as to trying to find out some more information on it. So the Gilbert Park residents association, along with Mr. Tom Simms, as I mentioned before, with CEDA, started to make some inquiries as to how they could go down there and visit the complex. They were fortunate enough to get some funding from the Winnipeg Foundation, the Sill Foundation, I believe, one of the credit unions, I cannot remember exactly

which one it was. So a delegation was set to go down and visit this housing complex in Washington with I think there was about four or five from Gilbert Park and four or five from Lord Selkirk Park, plus myself and two staff from my department.

We went down there. We spent—actually the group went down before myself and the staff went down, and I think there was a total of about four days that we were down in Washington. During that time we had an opportunity to tour the complex, and I think what became very evident right from the very beginning when we got down there was this sense of self-ownership by this group and this tenants association of this housing complex.

We have to look back. They said that they started this back in the late '80s, so this was not an overnight sensation. This had taken quite a few years to transpire. There was a lot of meetings. There was a lot of growing pains. There was a lot of working with legislators and administrators and the cities to try to get them to recognize that they wanted to be the management association for this complex. They did slowly evolve to that place. So when we came down there, we saw the finished product, if you want to call it, which was very, very well managed. They had set up a system where they started to self-police the unit with having patrols. They set up a training program for people. They set up a screening process for applications. They set up house rules for people who were moving in.

They set up patrols for truancy for schools. If students did not go to school, there was a reporting mechanism that the schools would report back to the association saying that this such and such a child was not at school so they were looking for him. They had a program where the child if he was kicked out of the classroom would not go home and just sit in front of the TV. He would be sort of seconded to the maintenance department of the complex to do work. This was not only older children but young children that they would always find something for them to do. They would be working literally on the complex from the school hours that they should have been in school, they would be doing work on the complex. So the



children became quite attentive to not only going to school but behaving in school because they knew if they did not, they had to go back to the complex and someone in the complex would make them do some sort of work to supplement the time that they were kicked out of school. If they were kicked out by the principal for two days or something like that, they would be working onsite.

They also had a setup, what they call a CEO program for new tenants, where tenants that were coming in were given training of sorts to learn how to do the basics of bookkeeping, meal preparation, handling of children type of thing, and this was all set up by the tenants themselves. They monitored it; they policed it; they set up the training programs. They also set up a job preparation training program in life skills and in trying to find work for some of the people who were unemployed in the complex. They had a child daycare centre onsite. They had set up a grocery store onsite for the tenants to be involved with the buying and the selling of food right onsite. They set up a drug and alcohol treatment centre right within the complex also for treating some of the people who had addiction problems. They had people come in and counsel and supervise these people. There was a health centre for prenatal and education right on the site. They had set up an after-school program for students that came in. We happened to be on the site one time just as the students were coming out of school, and there was a noticeable degree of respect for older people as these children were coming off the buses and milling around and playing just like all children do when they come off a bus towards us as older people.

You would never know that you were in a so-called housing complex or a low-rent area. That is a bad expression, but the stigma that is put towards that sometimes puts a stereotype blanket on these types of housing complexes. But you certainly did not feel that or sense that by the attitude of the people that we talked to or the children that we met or the workers or the staff. They were all very, very upbeat. They were very, very proud of their complex. They were very jealous of it. If there was any type of even hint of gang activity or drug trafficking, they worked very, very closely with the police.

Whenever someone, from what I understand, noticed there was any type of criminal activity, they phoned the police. The police responded very, very quickly into that area to eliminate the problem areas.

So it was a very impressive and a well-managed complex. The lady that started it, like I mentioned earlier, her name is Kimmie Grey, a very forceful, a very dedicated lady, a lady that commanded a tremendous amount of respect by all the workers and everybody that was around her, the tenants. You could see that just by the people who came in contact with her while we were there. They held her in very high respect and regard.

It was quite an eye-opener as to how tenants can literally take over their complex for self-management and self-control. What they have done is they have expanded that I believe into Baltimore, that type of concept, and I believe in one other city, St. Louis or something. I cannot remember. It was another southern city where they had expanded this. They had used this blueprint and this model.

It is used quite extensively. They provided us with a fair amount of material and guidelines, their application forms, their house rules. These were all brought back by not only our staff but by the tenants at Lord Selkirk and Gilbert Park. They were quite enthusiastic about what was happening down there.

The one thing that did come about too that was quite noticeable is the condition of the units. The units were actually in very, very good shape. There was very little of any type of vandalism or graffiti. In fact, I do not think we saw any graffiti in the whole complex. The grounds were neat and tidy. Like I say, you would never associate that as a public housing complex or project in this particular area.

It was a very successful type of endeavour that they we were able to take advantage of. What we have done is we have issued an invitation to this lady that I mentioned earlier, the spearhead behind it all, this Kimmie Grey, to come up to Winnipeg. I think there are tentative plans to try to bring her into Winnipeg for a speaking engagement maybe sometime in the

late summer or early fall. This lady is in quite a demand to speak, to be available, to try to help other projects. Hopefully, we can arrange to have her come up here. It was a very interesting trip down to Washington.

\* (1700)

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, if this person indeed is our guest in Manitoba, I hope the minister will let our Housing critic and myself know when she is in Winnipeg.

My next question is whether it is up to the tenants or the tenants' associations here to decide which ideas are already in place in Washington, D.C. that they might want to replicate here, and then to ask Manitoba Housing Authority for permission to implement those ideas. How does the minister envision dealing with, say, requests that tenants' associations bring to replicate these ideas or practices here?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that what we would encourage the tenants' association to do—it was even suggested when we were down there in conversation with them that it is a slow process in a sense of biting off small chunks of decision making and authority and responsibilities. What they found there is, as the confidence level grew, as the involvement grew, as the results started to come forth with the small victories, if you want to call it, of administration or whatever the program that they decided to undertake, that was something that they built upon. They built upon the positive aspects of what they wanted to change. So this is what they recommended quite strongly is do not be overly aggressive as to wanting to change everything overnight. They told us that it takes years. It takes a mindset to develop within the complex, and they readily admitted that it took them quite awhile to get the momentum going and the enthusiasm and the ownership factor to come there into that particular area. They started, like I mentioned, I think it was in the late '80s, to get to where they are now.

I think what we are trying to do is—and we are along that route. I am certainly not saying that we are not going that route. I think that with what has been shown by the two tenants' associations, Lord Selkirk and Gilbert Park, that

they have taken that first step of wanting to make change and to be part of the change, and I think that is the biggest first step to wanting to be self-sustaining and to be able to control our own community and to be involved with the decision making.

So those are some of the steps that we can build upon. I think that we sense that type of optimism within both those tenants' associations, that they feel that they can be part of the change and that we will support them. We have said that we would dedicate funding towards, and the allocation of some of our budget programming to, these associations as they work forward. It is a matter of monitoring it fairly closely, working with them to try to get the best results. I think that is what they feel comfortable with, too. In fact, I know that is what they have recommended back to us, too, that they would rather work on a slow basis and see how they can proceed with it than try to just dump total responsibility right off the top.

It reinforces what we heard down in Washington, too. That was the recommended course of action, that they got the results to where they are now.

**Mr. Martindale:** Some of my colleagues and I have received complaints, and I am not referring to any particular public housing development here, but we have received complaints, or allegations, that people living in public housing are dealing in drugs. Now, it is my understanding that the way tenants are currently chosen to live in public housing is based on core need. I am wondering, first of all, if the minister can explain core need, and secondly, are there any checks done for references from previous, or even current, landlords at the time that people make an application to live in public housing?

**Mr. Reimer:** I guess there are two parts to the question the member asked me. In regard to the core need income thresholds, when a person does make application for public housing, they have to fall within these income thresholds for the various units, and they depend on the size of the unit, from a one-bedroom to a two-, to a three-, to a four-bedroom type of a unit. Each one has a different income threshold.

It amounts to if the rent that the person is paying is over 30 percent, they are in an income threshold that will allow them to move into public housing. The threshold level, for example here in Winnipeg, for a one-bedroom unit is \$18,500. For a two-bedroom unit it is \$23,500. For a three-bedroom unit it is \$29,000, and for a four-bedroom unit it is \$32,500.

So those are the core need income thresholds as of 1998, and those are reviewed, I believe, on an annual basis, too, so they may be changing in 1999.

\* (1710)

In regard to the comment made by the member in regard to people that are dealing in criminal activities or drugs or things like that, we do background checks of individuals to make sure that we try to screen out people of character that we would not want in our public housing. Also, I think the member is aware that we have instituted what we call a one-strike-you-are-out type of policy with public housing where, if a person is dealing with drugs—and we work very closely with the police. I should mention too that we do work very closely with the police in our application process in some of our public housing complexes, where the police are involved with knowing who is on the application list so that the police can be informed if there is somebody that may have a character that we do not want. They become aware of that, too, so the police are involved with some, I should not say some but most, of our monitoring in a lot of our complexes. So we work with them very closely, too, to try to eliminate any type of criminal activity in the units. If they are charged, they are automatically kicked out of our public housing.

We find that we have had very good response from the tenants' associations. They have told us that they want closer and tighter controls of their community and in their housing projects, and they actually applauded us for bringing forth this type of stricter controls because they feel that they do not want their areas to deteriorate. They want the safety and security that they feel they deserve, and so do we feel they deserve. So we have come down fairly hard on anybody that is threatening. I forget

exactly what are those house rules. We can get the member a copy of those house rules, if he likes them. There are various other activities that these people are not allowed to be involved with.

We have found that it has become very popular with the tenants' association. When people are moving in, they are given a set of the rules and say these are the rules, you have to abide by them or else you leave. So they are made aware of it right from the very top when they move in that these are the guidelines for their housing complex. It has worked out to be quite successful.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister for a copy of the house rules. I think I would find those interesting and helpful.

If someone was applying to live in a housing co-operative, they would be asked for their current landlord's name and address and one or two previous landlords. Is that also the case if someone is applying for Manitoba Housing, and do the staff check with current and previous landlords?

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, that is the procedure we subscribe to also.

**Mr. Martindale:** I would like to move on to a different topic or set of topics, beginning with asking the minister what his view is, or analysis is, of some of the housing problems in the inner city. I think I could name them quite readily, but I would like to hear, first of all, the minister's view of what he thinks are some of the current issues in the inner city.

**Mr. Reimer:** Yes, it is a topic, I think, that I can wear almost all three portfolio hats on and bring forth a bit of a discussion, whether I am the Minister of Housing or the Minister of Urban Affairs or the Minister responsible for Seniors, because Housing overlaps all three of those areas. So maybe as Minister of Housing, I can talk on that one first and say that the condition of housing in Winnipeg or in Manitoba is a concern to all of us. If we specifically talk about Winnipeg, I think in general public housing is in good shape. I think that our public housing is well maintained. I think that the staff and the

people involved with public housing with my portfolio not only in Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba have a dedication and a cause to be concerned about trying to do the best not only for the department but for the tenants and the people that live in our public housing.

A lot of them do an awful lot of extracurricular or above and beyond the call of duty in regard to dealing with people, because a lot of the people in public housing are, to a degree, a fair amount of the population, I believe it is almost 65 percent or more are seniors within our Housing portfolio. Like I say, I can overlap with trying to address the problem in regard to seniors. I think staff in general terms with our public housing are very, very concerned about the well-being and the safety and security of all tenants in our complex.

In general, public housing in Manitoba is in good shape of occupancy. There is a bit of a vacancy. We would like to see more people in public housing so that our vacancy rate goes down. I think our vacancy rate right now is around 10 percent overall. It depends on the area naturally. It could be higher or it could be lower, but overall it is about 10 percent.

Our maintenance program is very aggressive. Last year we spent over \$10 million in maintenance. This year we will spend over \$11 million. Our commitment to keeping the stock in good condition is continuing. We are looking at that aspect of housing in a very critical manner.

If I talk about the City of Winnipeg with my Urban Affairs hat, I can say that housing is a concern in a sense that we look at certain areas of the city where there are absentee landlords. There is boarded-up housing. There is housing that is in bad disarray and repair that should be done. In general, I can point to either private ownership or landlord conditions on those because our public housing, we try to maintain that in a higher quality.

If we do have vacancies, what we have done in some of our areas of Winnipeg have made some interesting partnerships with some of the nonprofit associations. A good example is New Life Ministries, under the direction of a Mr.

Harry Lehotsky, who we have been able to delegate. I believe it is two buildings that they have renovated and taken over and used them as a revenue source to possibly take on extra buildings to renovate for people to live in. It has proven to be quite successful.

We just very recently were involved with a financing program and supplied some funding to the Westminster Housing Society, where they renovated a threeplex on Langside, I believe it was. That is now being rented out. What they are doing with that funding is renovating another home across the street of a similar nature with the idea of renovating it and renting it out.

I am fairly optimistic. I think that there is a tremendous amount of willingness with various groups within the city to want to take back the streets and take back their communities, to get more of a change in their communities. I think that these are some of the things that we as a government can support, because we have found that when you start to utilize the assets of the community, if you start to build community capacity, these are the things where changes can come about. It is usually government's role on these, and I am a believer that government's role should be in a catalyst form or a complementary funding or supplementary funding of some sort to try to help these groups to take hold of their communities, to renovate their communities, to bring back housing of some nature back into the communities. I think Winnipeg in the core area, in the downtown area, is starting to change that way. More people are recognizing that there is a value out there and that they can make differences and they can make things change. As much as there are a lot of people running around with the city of Winnipeg and the downtown areas decaying, I think there is room for a fair amount of optimism that things are going to change.

They are starting to change. I think there is a change of attitude. I have noticed it in a lot of the, like I say, associations and the partnerships that we are dealing with some of these groups. I believe we have done one with the Lions Club, too, somewhere. I am trying to remember what street that was. They renovated some homes there, also with the Real Estate Board. They have renovated some homes. It is these types of

things that make a change and can make things change in Winnipeg.

\* (1720)

**Mr. Martindale:** Would the minister agree that declining property values in the inner city is a serious problem?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that is one of the areas where there is a problem. I think, as pointed out in some areas, the value of homes have gone down and that has added to some of the problems. But I think that just as that has added to the problem, I think there are possibly opportunities there for people to come in and buy some of these homes, renovate them, live in them or look at them for housing for themselves because in a lot of the cases some of these homes just need a little bit of upgrading and building up and occupancy. If you have people moving back into the communities, some of these homes can represent a fairly significant bargain to get into. The member is right, in certain areas there has been a declining value rate in some of these neighbourhoods and it is a problem.

**Mr. Martindale:** I think the minister is putting a much more positive spin on declining property values than is realistic. What is actually happening is that people who can afford to are fleeing to the suburbs or exurban communities and property values are continuing to decline and more and more of the stock is becoming rental instead of home ownership.

Would the minister agree that arson is a serious problem in the inner city?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that we always have to be very cognizant of the fact that some of these things are happening in regard to vandalism and arson. One of the ways to combat that is to look at some of the community patrols. I know through the Minister of Justice, through his COP program which is Citizens on Patrol, there have been some positive results. There have been some positive turnarounds in some of these areas where the citizens have taken upon themselves to be part of a patrol system. I had the opportunity to literally walk the beat, if you want to call it, with one of the citizens patrol in and

around the Selkirk Avenue and the Lord Selkirk Park complex with about I think there had to have been at least half a dozen of us, and we did the beat, if you want to call it, one night. It is surprising how many people recognized the participants, stopped to talk to them, stopped to say hello to them, and not only people who were doing the walk knew a lot of the areas and pointed out areas where there were possibly problems or troubles or where they were watching, a closer scrutiny.

I think that has helped in the area. I know in a particular area, at the Lord Selkirk Park, since this has come about the so-called pimps and prostitution have—I am not saying that it has vanished, but it certainly has become a less significant part of the neighbourhood than it was two or three years ago mainly because of people being on patrol. One of the things that would be a positive aspect in regard to people on patrol is the fact of arson and young people not having that free time on their hands to get into problems. That brings in the other aspect of trying to get some sort of programming for young people in various areas of the city so they have something to take their mind off of criminal activity.

I give all kinds of compliments to Rossbrook House, to the Turtle Island Community Centre, the Freight House area, and some of the programs that they come up with. They get strong support, and a lot of it is just keeping young people off the streets and keeping them occupied, whether it is a midnight basketball hoops program or some sort of tai kwondo classes or things like that that are put on. These things keep young people active. They keep them out of the criminal activity areas where they become bored and feel that arson is a way to relieve some sort of frustration or areas where they feel that they can get some sort of satisfaction. I think the combination of keeping young people busy, Citizens on Patrol, an awareness program, will make a difference as to arson and some of the problems that we have with that type of element.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, would the minister agree that vacant lots and a declining population are a serious problem in the inner city?

**Mr. Reimer:** In a lot of areas where they have vacant lots, in fact, when we tear down buildings, what we try to do is we try to put them back into some sort of condition where they can be utilized as a green space or an area that can be utilized for some sort of children's activities or gathering places for communities. A lot of those places can be utilized that way so there is a use for them. So they do not just become a derelict area.

I know that what has happened in some of the areas with the Green Team, which a fair amount of nonprofit organizations take advantage of and I give them full credit for it, is they will take some of these vacant lots and they will actually convert them into some sort of—I have seen small gardens being put in there. I have seen small theme parks put in some of these vacant lots in and around the downtown area. I see a lot of use of some of these areas on an innovative basis. They become a problem, but if they can be converted or changed over to some sort of green activity area, it makes it a place to be for some of the community residents.

**Mr. Martindale:** Would the minister agree that there is a lack of private sector investment in housing in declining neighbourhoods and that that is a serious problem as well?

**Mr. Reimer:** I am sorry, I got a message. Would you repeat that question. I am sorry.

**Mr. Martindale:** I will repeat the question. Would the minister agree that the lack of private sector investment in housing in declining neighbourhoods is a serious problem as well?

**Mr. Reimer:** I think that there should be more private investment into some of these areas. This is one of the reasons why I think that we, under the Winnipeg Development Agreement, which is part of my Urban Affairs portfolio, just entered into agreement with the City of Winnipeg for a residential component study regarding market analysis for residential housing in the downtown and in the Winnipeg area, because we felt that there should be some sort of collection of data or collection of information as to where and how certain types of housing should transpire in the downtown area and where

there is an opportunity for downtown housing to flourish or to be innovative.

\* (1730)

I have noticed just recently that the City of Winnipeg has started to talk of various zoning variance and regulations in zoning that will allow for innovative housing to take place in regard to say, warehouse buildings or buildings that have a designated commercial zoning application that can be converted to some sort of a resident component.

I think it is those type of things that make the downtown area maybe an attractive area to live or to work or to relocate to if there is that type of availability. If the private sector sees an opportunity to get involved with some sort of housing developments in regard to apartments or condos or townhouses or even private individual homes, I would think that there should be the encouragement of sorts by various innovative availabilities for zoning or for variances and things of that nature to let that transpire, because a lot of that can help the city of Winnipeg. It can help the neighbourhoods to grow. It can help other areas to be involved with things that we feel should be happening in the downtown area. There are lots of ways to make the downtown area more attractive, but it is a matter of being more innovative.

Like I say, I think the City of Winnipeg is changing to a degree to look at some of these things in a more innovative manner. The private sector should be encouraged and given the opportunity to come forth with possibly different types of development programs or plans in there. I think that we as a provincial government would encourage that type of approach.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if we could take a one minute recess so I can discuss House business with the House leader's assistant.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes.

**Mr. Martindale:** I think the minister has either agreed directly or indirectly that boarded up houses are a serious problem in the inner city. Declining property values are a serious problem

in the inner city. Certainly, that is one that affects me because I live in the north end. We have considered moving, so we have talked to a real estate agent. Our house is assessed at \$56,000. We were told by the real estate agent that we should realistically expect \$35,000 to \$45,000. This is very typical of thousands of homeowners in the north end whose property values have declined up to a third and in some cases more. In fact, there are a lot of houses that are for sale now for \$20,000 which is what really only the lot is worth. People are very concerned that they are losing their equity. They are losing their investment or losing their retirement income because their house is worth far less than what it was 10 years ago or, in many cases, far less than what it is assessed at.

Arson is certainly a serious problem in the inner city. People expressed concerns to me that they do not really care about a vacant house being torched so much as concern about their house next door that is occupied that might burn as a result of a vacant house burning down.

The declining population in the inner city is partly due to apartments being torn down and not being replaced, houses being torn down and not being replaced, and we certainly saw this with the maps that Elections Manitoba produced showing the percent population changes by constituency. Almost all of the inner city had population declines. For example, in Burrows I think the population declined by 17 percent in 10 years.

There is certainly a lack of private sector investment in housing in the inner city in the declining neighbourhoods. There certainly is no construction going on, that I can think of, anywhere. Those are only some of the problems, some of the major problems which leads to my question, what is your government doing about these problems? You have mentioned that you are working in partnership with New Life Ministries and a number of other organizations, but they are buying and renovating or renovating a very small number of homes. They are building a very small number of homes. I guess it begs the question of what is the government doing on its own initiative. Is there a social housing program? Not that I am aware of. Is there an infill housing program?

Not that I am aware of. Is there a renovation program? I think of all the renovation programs, maybe there is one left, the Emergency Home Repair Program. Is there a co-op housing program?

Perhaps the minister could tell us what your government is doing about all these serious problems in the inner city.

**Mr. Reimer:** Some of the programs that the member mentioned regarding inner city housing and some of the things that are happening, I know that we do not have, per se, a new housing program here in Manitoba. One of the reasons for that is that at one time we were in partnership not only with the federal government but the municipal governments in regard to the building of new stock and new buildings throughout Manitoba. In fact, we just have to look back into the '70s and '80s. There was an awful lot of activity, but one of the reasons for that is the fact that the federal government and, like I say, to a degree, the municipal governments, were partners with the provincial government in housing.

The federal government decided that they did not want to be part of social housing anymore or public housing. In looking back over the last few years, they originally decided that they would get out of public housing, I believe it was in the early '90s, that they would not build anymore. They, then, '92 I believe it was, '93, yes, somewhere around there, I think it was a couple years later the federal government decided they would cap the amount of money that they would give the provinces, based on I believe it was the '95-96 expenditures. We were given that as our working base for any type of flow of funding from the federal government.

Then, just a few years ago, or 18 months or so, or just over a year ago, they decided that they would get out of public housing totally. They told the provincial government that they would get out totally from public housing, so it meant that we had to, if we wanted, we had the opportunity to negotiate the takeover, what they called the devolution agreement, with the federal government. With that, we got involved with negotiations and we tried to make the best deal for Manitobans looking at taking over their total

federal portfolio. In essence what we were doing is we were doubling our portfolio from about 17,000 units to well over 36,000 units.

With that, one of the biggest things, selling points if you want to call it, for us as a provincial government to look at is the fact that we now became the sole decision makers as regards the public housing in Manitoba. Any fundings or monies that were realized as a savings we could reinvest into housing. That was a very definite stipulation of the takeover agreement or the devolution agreement, the fact that the federal government is saying, okay, we will let you manage it, we are going to give you X amount of dollars, it is on a declining basis, it peters out in about the year 2032. I think it is from a high of around \$75 million or \$76 million right now, moving downwards. We figured that that is a good way to try to capitalize and to make the best use of the dollars. What they said is if you save any money, you can reinvest it into public housing.

\*(1740)

So it gives us an opportunity to look at innovative ways to utilize any monies that we get from the public housing if we get into possibly selling off programs or devolving ourselves of units or things like that. Those are some of the things that make it attractive. So we have got an opportunity there with the devolution agreement to be innovative in redirection of some of the funding. One of the positives is to try to look at possibly looking at where we can utilize a better resource for the fundings that we do get, like I say, as I mentioned, but it has to go back into housing. That is one of the areas where we feel that there may be some availability for a different type of housing concept or utilization of housing dollars.

What we have announced very recently too, though, is an increase in funding to what we call the RRAP program, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. We announced an additional \$616,000 as a provincial contribution towards this program. What it does is it ties into the federal program of the RRAP program. What it brings up to is a total contribution for Manitoba of just over \$2.4 million that is available for, like I say, this

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. That is a program that is available. What that does is it gives people the ability to get loans of up to, the maximum loan, for example, here in southern Manitoba, is \$18,000, of which \$12,000 may be forgivable. It is quite an incentive in regard to upgrading substandard housing or to changing things. In fact, the loan limit in northern Manitoba is even a little bit higher. I do not know exactly what those figures are, but I believe they are just a bit higher than that.

It also gives people on disabilities the ability to take advantage of financial assistance that is of the same nature. In fact, people that have rental homes or rooming houses can also get loans under the RRAP program. Those loans can be up to \$18,000 per unit for rental properties and up to \$12,000 per bed, if you want to call it, in a rooming house. The RRAP program has been increased, like I say. We have just announced \$616,000 as our contribution in that program.

We also just recently announced an additional \$74,000 for what we call the HASI program, which is the Home Adaptation for Seniors' Independence program. What that means is it is a program to give funding to seniors that can live independently. They can use some of that money for upgrades of some of their homes in that way.

Under the HASI program, it is also in the form of a forgivable loan for expenses that are incurred by seniors for expanding his or her home to meet their physical needs. That maximum loan on that one is \$2,500. It is limited to only one application per household.

So those two programs there do have an avenue of availability for some people who are looking at trying to upgrade their program here in Manitoba. Those are some of the things that we feel can help that.

The contribution that I mentioned under the HASI program, our contribution of \$74,000, is on top for a total contribution, combined with the federal government, of just under \$300,000. I believe it is \$296,000 for a total amount of money that is available here in Manitoba for



seniors to upgrade their homes. So we feel that there are avenues, there is recourse for some people to try to upgrade their homes, to bring them up to codes, if you want to call it, for some of things that they feel they have to do in their homes. So those two programs are available.

The emergency home loan program, under the emergency one, there is an allocation of \$250,000 with a maximum of \$3,000, which is an interest-free loan. So there are three programs that people can take advantage of here in Manitoba for upgrades and improvements in their homes.

**Mr. Martindale:** Mr. Chairperson, I would like to quote from a very interesting document called *Solutions that Work: Fighting Poverty in Winnipeg's Inner City* by Jim Silver, who is the author and is published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Mr. Silver talks about the importance of housing as a way of combating poverty. He recommends that an inner city fund be set up to address housing needs and recommends that some of the existing organizations could make use of this inner city housing fund to develop nonprofit housing, including Just Housing, which was started by the Community Education Development Association and member groups of the West Broadway Alliance and the inner city Housing Coalition.

The reason that he thinks that this is a good idea is that we already have these mostly very small, nonprofit organizations building or mostly renovating houses in severely declining neighbourhoods in the inner city. However, there is no real economy of scale. They are renovating such a small number of units that, first of all, they are not making very much of an impact on the housing market and, secondly, it is very hard to justify or even pay for overhead for administrative expenses if you are only doing one or two houses a year.

What we really need, and I would like to hear the minister's view on this, is some kind of housing fund that would direct money to these nonprofit community organizations so that they could build 10 houses a year or renovate 10 houses a year or 20 houses a year so that it would have a significant impact on neighbourhoods.

I would just like to quote here from the document on page 23. It says: The cost of achieving a more significant scale is not exorbitant and is certainly less than the benefits it would generate. These benefits would include, among others, job creation, the rehabilitation of valuable housing stock, and a serious attempt at halting rapidly declining inner city property values and thus the rapidly eroding inner city property tax base.

Of course, if you could employ people who are currently on social assistance, that has a whole bunch of benefits, including reducing the cost to government of having these people on social assistance and actually increasing revenue because they would be paying taxes, to say nothing of the fact that there would be personal benefits to them as individuals.

\* (1750)

I am wondering what the minister thinks of either an inner city housing fund or providing more assistance to some of these existing groups. They are getting a lot of publicity. The minister talks about some of the existing groups, but their impact is very small and limited because of the problem, the difficulty that they have getting mortgage financing or getting enough capital to buy houses to renovate and in some cases employing people because, in many cases, they have had houses donated to them. Their acquisition costs have been zero or very low, but they still need money to buy materials to renovate the houses and to pay workers to do the renovations.

**Mr. Reimer:** This is not necessarily a new concept that the member is referring to, because I can recall a delegation coming to me, I guess it has to have been about six months ago, four months ago, the inner city Housing Coalition. I believe at that time we met with Tom Simms and Mary Richard, and I believe there were some other people. I just cannot remember the rest of the other names.

They had come forth with a similar type of suggestion of setting up a pool fund of various, I think at that time they were looking for the three levels of government to kick in \$7 million apiece into a pool that could be utilized for a similar

type of renovation program, new home development programs, and building in some of the inner city areas.

What came out of that meeting was that an interdepartmental group was established to work with the inner city Housing Coalition to look at the ideas and explore new ideas and see whether there could be some sort of meaningful direction coming out of it. There have been discussions along those lines in regard to trying to come up with innovative ways to get housing back into the inner city.

I think it should be pointed out too right now that with new home purchases right now, people can get into some homes with a very, very minimum down payment. In fact, I believe in some areas the down payment can be as low as 5 percent and, of that 5 percent, 2.5 percent of that can be taken back in a form of sweat equity that can go towards the purchase of that house. In essence, the person is coming down with 2.5 percent of the purchase price as a down payment on some of these homes. That becomes very attractive, I would think, for some home buyers in that this type of financing can be arranged and is available. If you are looking at a home that is, for example, \$50,000, with a 2.5 percent down payment you are looking at only about \$1,250. So that can make it quite attractive for someone to move into a new home.

I think that there are ways of looking at getting into the market. As I mentioned before, I do recall meeting with the inner city Housing Coalition in exploring some of these ideas. I believe one of the directions that came out of that was that the group was going to be doing some talking with the city and with the federal government. I believe that they are going to be developing a business plan and looking at bank financing and what type of arrangements they can make in regard to that.

They were looking at whether there was a foundation that could be involved with some of the funding in the government, like I say, to look at the three levels, what type of participation level they can look at. There is a direction or a movement to try to look at some of these availabilities for trying to generate inner city housing.

**Mr. Martindale:** I would like to wind up today by asking the minister if he could expand on his statement earlier on, when he was talking about devolution from the federal government to the provincial government, regarding selling off units, which I believe was what he said. Do you have any plans to sell off public housing units?

**Mr. Reimer:** When I say selling off public housing units, one of the things that we look at is our surplus stock. We have, in the rural area, a fair amount of homes that are stand-alone entities in the rural area where we have had overtures of people wanting to buy these, people that have been long-time residents, people that are in the communities that have lived there for quite a while, and they have shown an interest in buying these homes.

When we were involved previously with the federal government as our partner, there was very little latitude or very little room for us to make innovative arrangements for the so-called selling off, if you want to call it, of some of these places in the rural areas. What has happened is since communities become aware that we now are the sole decision makers, they have come forth with suggestions and saying, can we entertain with you the idea of taking over or buying some of these houses or row houses or complexes within our town so that we can retain a sense of ownership for our people that want to stay within our own towns and within our own communities. We have said to them, certainly we are willing to sit down and talk with you, we are willing to try to work out some sort of arrangement for ownership or for sponsorship with you.

Those are the type of things that I think make it quite exciting for us to get involved with some of the communities that are looking at wanting to have ownership. We find that a lot of the communities want to keep their, a lot of it is seniors again, that want to stay within the community. They feel that they have been raised in that community, they have lived in that community, and they do not want to move. The townspeople are saying, well, let us see whether we can utilize some of this public housing that is there and either buy it or make some sort of arrangement with Manitoba Housing so that we can utilize it so that the seniors can stay in there.

It is surprising how there is a fair amount of single-family homes and, like I say, the majority of them are in small towns throughout all of Manitoba. We have had overtures from various communities where they have said that they are willing to look at some sort of arrangement, and we entertain those.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for Burrows, with a very, very short comment.

**Mr. Martindale:** Does the minister have any plans to sell off public housing units in Winnipeg? Yes or no.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The time being six o'clock, committee rise.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

\* (1650)

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Just following up on some requests for some information, I am tabling three copies of the Manitoba Drug Benefits and Interchangeability Formulary. As well, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asked for a summary of the community contribution policy, so again I have three copies of that. I could almost read these into the record. He asked about health care aides, the nurses' aides.

As well, Mr. Chairman, he asked for the listing of the positions and individuals in the minister's office and deputy minister's office. As well, he asked for information on the Canadian Blood Services Centre. The last one, the member for Kildonan had asked for information on the systems applications products and data processing, the SAP system. That is what this represents.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I thank the honourable minister for that. We were dealing with line (f)

Human Resource Planning and Labour Relations.

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Mr. Chairperson, I have a question for the minister. Perhaps if we are not on the appropriate line he could advise and then take the question as notice for the more appropriate section of Health Estimates.

I had a call from a constituent who unfortunately has encountered or has had breast cancer diagnosed. She has been going through some treatments in an effort to arrest or control the spread of the disease. There has been also some medication that has been prescribed for her in the course of treatment. Tamoxifen, I think, is the name of the drug. What my constituent has asked is that, she references the fact that the Province of Saskatchewan covers or pays for the cost of the medication, Tamoxifen, for patients or women who are suffering with breast cancer, and pays for 100 percent of the cost. In her case, she finds that Tamoxifen is a part of the listed drugs in the province of Manitoba but she has to pay for that according to the deductible for herself and her family. She would have to pay 100 percent of those costs until that deductible is reached and then, of course, the lower level would be achieved.

I guess I should ask the question: is Tamoxifen considered to be a life-preserving drug? Should it be on the list that would be required to preserve life more so than enhance a condition in these situations? It would be more appropriate for Tamoxifen to be on another list that would be covered 100 percent, similar to what the Province of Saskatchewan does versus the regular drug listing here that has it that you would have to reach your deductible before the province would cover any of those costs. Perhaps the minister can advise or staff can advise on that so that I might let my constituent know as well.

**Mr. Stefanson:** I really do not have the most appropriate staff here for that today. I think rather than try to speculate on some aspects of this, we will return early next week with the details and bring them back to this Chamber and make sure that copies are provided for the member for Transcona.

\* (1700)

**Mr. Reid:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. I look forward to the information. Just by way of further information for him and his staff, it is my understanding that if women suffering with breast cancer do not have the benefit of having Tamoxifen supplied for them as part of the lifesaving drug program, if my constituent was on a clinical trial, those drugs would be paid for. So I am wondering why the cancer treatment centre would not be able to provide that drug to cancer patients, in this particular case, for women suffering with breast cancer, so that we do not have a discriminatory practice, if I can use that term guardedly, against women who are on clinical trials versus those who are not, one group having Tamoxifen costs paid for while another group does not. I leave that with the minister by way of information and perhaps he can search out an explanation for us. Then I can advise my constituent on that matter.

**Mr. Stefanson:** That is fine. That was one of the reasons, the additional comments the member made, I wanted to return with all the details early next week.

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions today. I hope I am in the proper area. I would like to ask some general and specific questions, first about nursing and the numbers of nurses and the mix of nurses that the government foresees, particularly in the hospital settings.

I know that over the life of this government and the four Health ministers, my understanding is that there has been a major shift in the mix, if you will, of nurses and nursing functions in the hospital setting in the province of Manitoba. I am open to correction by the minister on the percentages and the proportions, but my understanding is that there used to be a mix of nursing functions, not nursing occupations necessarily, but nursing occupations that provided the bedside functions in hospitals in Manitoba. They included, I believe, a few bachelor of nurses, although I believe that that degree program is fairly new and certainly the emphasis that is currently being placed on the B.N. is fairly new, a number of registered

nurses, licensed practical nurses, nurses' aides and orderlies, et cetera.

So there was a range of at least three different staffing components providing the nursing function. It appears now, and I may be overgeneralizing this, that today, as a result of government actions and as a result of, I would suggest, a fair degree of implementation of Connie Curran's recommendations, that we have far less of a mix of nursing occupations in hospitals and we have more of a reliance on the B.N. program, the B.N. level, and then the orderly, nursing aide and a narrowing, a reduction in the registered nurse and the licensed practical nurse in the general mix in the hospitals. I am wondering if the minister could tell us what the general mix of nursing occupations is in hospitals and how that has been determined. Is there a specific kind of recommendation?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Maybe just before I respond, I have always introduced the staff. We have two staff who have not been with us here until today this year: Barbara Hague, the director of workforce planning; and Linda West, the Executive Director of Human Resource Planning and Labour Relations.

In terms of response to the question, I am sure the member knows, I know she knows that our health care system today really has four nursing types, nursing professions based on the historical educational patterns in Manitoba, the baccalaureate nursing, registered nurse, registered psychiatric nurse, and the licensed practical nurse. I think she is also aware, on a go-forward basis, we really have three programs now. We have the bachelor program, which is normally a four-year program, but they have introduced an accelerated program where, under certain circumstances, situation, you can do it in three years. There is still the registered psychiatric nurse program, and then there is also the LPN program, which is, I believe, a 14-week-14-month program. Fourteen weeks, yes, I am sure some wish-14 months, that we have discussed at some length. [interjection] That could deal with our nursing shortage issue fairly quickly.

It is run by Assiniboine Community College. It has six intakes now under the new program going forward, two of them at

Misericordia, two at Brandon, and two are going to be rotating sites.

In terms of the current mix, actually, I cannot recall if it was the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) or the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who asked for a breakdown by RHAs of the nursing type position. We have undertaken to provide that to give a snapshot of what our current mix is.

There is no doubt that during the last few years there has been a shift in our acute care facilities, with some reductions in LPNs over the last few years. I think we are going to see a change in that going forward. Again, as members in this House know, the last year's class for LPNs had an intake of about 90 students. We have more than doubled that to 190 going forward. So we believe that all three nurses will have important and vital roles to play in our health care system, whether it is our acute care facilities or our long-term care facilities or our Home Care program.

So I will be returning with a breakdown on a regional basis showing B.N.s, R.N.s, LPNs, and registered psychiatric nurses, which I think would give the member a sense of the distribution across our system. Now, whether I could break that down further and show the breakdown between acute care facilities, personal care homes, home care, I would have to check with staff as to how feasible that is, but we certainly are going to be returning with more information on the overall breakdown as it currently exists in Manitoba.

**Ms. Barrett:** I appreciate the answer of the minister and again apologize if I am repeating questions that others have asked. Maybe my question is unanswerable, but my question is not so much what is the current breakdown of the categories per RHA or however detailed you can break it down, which would be very helpful, but what is the ideal mix?

There has been some sense, particularly on the part of R.N.s in the last while, that R.N.s were in a sense, and certainly LPNs have had this feeling, maybe not so much anymore, that they were being pushed out and let go. I think that was actually what happened with many

LPNs as the programs were cut, the positions were reduced or eliminated and the mix changed.

\* (1710)

Far more emphasis on the B.N. as the nurse, I do not even know how to say it, but where the R.N. used to be the linchpin of the process, the B.N. was now becoming or looking to become more of the basic nursing component around which the rest of the staff would be based. I guess I am asking a policy question here. Is it the policy now to have more B.N.s than there used to be, to have a reduction in R.N.s maybe starting now again, it appears, an increase in LPNs and then the registered psych nurses? When a hospital administrator looks at the mix that is in their hospital or in their personal care home, what is it that they are looking to achieve? If they had an ideal mix, what would it look like?

**Mr. Stefanson:** It is a good question but not an easy one to answer, because there is no ideal mix. Obviously the combination of nursing services will vary depending on the facility. It will vary at our acute care facilities and even within our acute care facilities. It will vary at our tertiary hospitals versus our community hospitals. It will obviously vary again at our personal care homes and it will vary again on our Home Care program. There is no doubt there is a need for all of the nursing categories or skills, the R.N.s, the LPNs and, of course, the registered psychiatric nurses right throughout the entire system.

The ultimate decision in terms of what that mix should be is really made by each individual facility in terms of the programs they are providing. Really the issue becomes focusing on the level of care. If you look at our personal care home system, it is funded today to levels of need based on the people in our personal care homes. Even more so, going forward it is going to be funded towards levels of care, towards personal care plans, and so on. What the appropriate mix is to meet those needs or those levels of care is really decided by the individual facility.

Right across the system, in each of those different settings you will see an entirely

different mix. I think I am stating the obvious in terms of the kinds of mix you will see in a personal care home versus a tertiary hospital. We do not have, as I say, a model or a plan that says if you are a tertiary hospital, here is the mix of nursing types you should have, or if you are a personal care home. It really comes down to the individual facilities meeting the needs of the types of people and patients that they are serving.

**Ms. Barrett:** The minister said, and I think he was talking about personal care homes, but saying, funded towards the levels of care. I guess maybe another way to get at this is to ask a funding question. Hospitals are funded now, my understanding is—let us use Winnipeg—through the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. The Winnipeg Hospital Authority gets its funding from the government. Ultimately the government funds the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and then the hospital authority puts the money into the various facilities.

Nursing staffing is, I would imagine, a very large component of each of the hospitals budgets. There is a differential between the various categories of nurses, as far as funding goes, as far as salary levels go, starting from the B.N. at the highest level. Generally speaking, if you talked about an entry level B.N. versus an entry level R.N., entry level LPN, et cetera, the ranking would go B.N., R.N., LPN. There has to be an assumption made by the hospital in putting forward its budget and by the hospital authority in sending that budget or the request for funding based on those budgets to the province and back down again of what kind of nursing salaries are going to be paid. Hospitals must be making those kinds of assumptions. I am just wondering if there is now an increased reliance in budgeting on the B.N. nursing component as compared to, say, past years or the last decade.

\* (1720)

*Mrs. Myrna Driedger, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Chair, how the member outlined that is basically correct. The hospitals are funded—we will use Winnipeg as an example—through the Winnipeg Hospital

Authority. The Winnipeg Hospital Authority receives their funding from the provincial government. As we discussed earlier, the facilities make the decisions around the kind of staffing complements they need to meet the levels of care and the levels of service that they are anticipating.

You are right that obviously salaries on a combined basis at our hospitals would be 70 percent to 80 percent, that is nurses, other salaries, and so on. Wages and salaries would be 70 percent to 80 percent. How you outlined everything is basically correct. I think the final question was the issue of whether or not there has been an increased reliance on the B.N./R.N., and within our tertiary hospitals, definitely in the last few years as a proportion, they would be a higher proportion today and to a lesser extent probably in our community hospitals as well.

Now, on a go-forward basis, I think we are going to start to see some shifts again. We discussed that briefly here this afternoon that we certainly view the LPNs as having a role to play in our acute care facilities. I think that is recognized now by the majority, if not all, of the facilities, so I think we will see some shifts in that mix again on a go-forward basis.

**Ms. Barrett:** Madam Chair, I understand the minister's statement is that in the tertiary hospitals there is now a heavier reliance on B.N.s than in the past, or did he say B.N./R.N.s?

**Mr. Stefanson:** I said B.N./R.N., lumping the two of them together, and as the member knows, there is a difference in salaries for those two distinctions.

**Ms. Barrett:** Madam Chair, there is not only a difference in salary. My understanding is there is a very large difference in training and focus and the way you look at where traditionally those nurses have found positions, so I will leave that part of it. I guess I have some concerns. I have had for a long time about the increasing reliance on B.N.s. What I need to do, I think, for myself is to find out more about—I understand that the university training for B.N.s has changed now to reflect more of the clinical elements that perhaps there was in the past, but I know situations, and maybe this is "older" B.N.s, but

that there have been some challenges in the past between B.N.s and R.N.s, for example, on the hospital floor as to what the particular role was for the two nursing fields there.

The minister is talking about heavier reliance on the B.N./R.N. component of the nursing staffing in hospitals in particular. That is some concern because I have some information here, actually from MARN last year, I believe, that says that the four-year B.N. program has room for over 300 students per graduating class, but there were only 150 first-year students in 1998, which means that even if 100 percent of them graduated, half of the space would be empty, and we know that not 100 percent graduate.

The estimate is that in this year, only 99 will complete the degree. Next year only 114 will complete it. In 2001, 131 will complete the degree, and in 2002 only 160 will complete the degree.

I will give the minister the fact that these are estimates and they could be out by a proportion, but we are looking at maximum of one-half of the spaces in the program actually graduating. So one-half of the allowable spaces or the available spaces in the B.N. program, at maximum, are graduating in each of the next four or five years, or four years, and actually far fewer than that in the last couple of years. So if there is a heavier reliance on B.N. and R.N., and I would suggest that there is an even heavier reliance on the B.N. than the R.N. in the current mix, particularly in tertiary hospitals, if there is a heavier reliance in the planning and the staffing scheme and we are not graduating even half of what we could be in the B.N. program—and of course we all know that not all of those people who do graduate are going to stay in Manitoba—how is the government planning to address this what would appear to be increasingly critical shortage of nurses?

**Mr. Stefanson:** We did discuss this somewhat earlier, but again I certainly welcome the opportunity to do it again. I am sure the member is well aware that there is a nursing shortage everywhere, including the province of Quebec, west all across Canada, and that is why we are seeing all of those provinces taking various steps

to be able to bring more nurses into the health care systems in their provinces.

Obviously education is one key way of doing just that, and I will bring back the most current information. The information I have on the Bachelor of Nursing program at U. of M. is in 1999 they are expecting to graduate about 115 nurses, and the enrollment in the program is obviously increasing.

In fact, this last year alone it increased by 23 percent, and it is estimated by the year 2001 it will be at 190 graduates. Some of this information is also information provided through MARN, but it does have the capacity and it has set a target of admitting 400 students. Those numbers are really provided in advance of a number of initiatives that the Faculty of Nursing is undertaking and has been undertaking.

Just to cite a few examples of their recently aggressive recruitment campaign, I am sure the member has seen some examples. They have developed videos regarding nursing education and distributed them, I believe, to every high school. They are obviously encouraging faculty and students to attend nursing functions, job fairs, to promote interest in the nursing program. They have established a website. They have developed print ads appearing in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Flin Flon, The Pas, developed radio advertisements to be aired in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Flin Flon, and The Pas. They have created Winnipeg Transit ads to appear on buses here in the city of Winnipeg. They have recruited students from a new potential student pool, such as first-year students at St. Boniface College and the Mennonite College. They continue to develop and implement jointly strategies to recruit students to all nursing programs.

\* (1730)

So that gives the member a sense of some of the things that the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba is doing. They do have the capacity to deal with 400. That is certainly the target that they are working towards. Obviously that will go a long way to meeting the nursing needs here in the province of Manitoba.

We referred earlier to the fact that our licensed practical nursing program had an intake of 90 students last year. That has now been increased this year to 190 students, with additional funding being provided to Assiniboine Community College.

Outside of using education as an initiative to bring more nurses into our health care system, again the member I think is well aware of the \$7-million nurse retention and recruitment fund that has been established. It is administered by six nurses, two of them appointed by the Manitoba Nurses' Union, two appointed by the employers, and two who are appointed by the government of Manitoba. Their mandate is to do a number of things, both to keep nurses in the system here in Manitoba, to bring nurses back into the system here in Manitoba who may have left for various reasons, and to bring nurses back to Manitoba.

That fund can be used for a number of initiatives, from various recertification, retraining, upgrading. It could also be used for moving expenses to bring nurses into Manitoba, and so on. So there are a number of steps being taken on various fronts to address that very important issue of bringing more nurses into the system. That is why this budget, the 1999 budget, includes some \$32.5 million for 650 nursing positions that have to be filled. Through a combination of education, retention, and recruitment, immigration to a limited extent, all of these factors will contribute to bringing more nurses into the health care system in Manitoba.

**Ms. Barrett:** Of the 650 nursing positions, is there a breakdown of the types of nurses, B.N., R.N., LPN, registered psych nurse, that are being looked at, or is it just a global figure of 650 without any planning as to where those nurses would come from, which level of training?

**Mr. Stefanson:** I do not have that information here. In fact, I have discussed that as well with I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). We will be returning with more information on that. We have had breakdowns based on requests from the regions, from the RHAs, the WHA, WCA, and the majority of this information is coming from them, but I believe we are also able to produce it along the lines that

the member is referring to in terms of B.N.s, LPNs, and so on. We will certainly be returning with that information.

**Ms. Barrett:** Finally on this, I think finally, in the graduating class of this year for the B.N. program, how many B.N.s are anticipated to stay in Manitoba?

**Mr. Stefanson:** I am told that all efforts are being made by the employers, by the RHAs, that all of the graduating class have had contact made with them in terms of encouragement to look at specific jobs here in Manitoba and to pursue their careers here in Manitoba.

The way the process works, I am told, is that there is one more exam to write in August, the final Registered Nurse exam. So it cannot be determined until they do that whether or not they pass the exam, whether or not they then are able to accept employment. Based on everything we are hearing, we fully expect a very significant number of the graduating class to stay in Manitoba, but that information is not available yet until they write that exam in August and make their own individual decisions as to where they are going to stay. But as information like that becomes available, we will certainly provide it because I think we can disagree on lots of things in this house, but I think we probably all agree on the objective of keeping as many of our graduates here in the province of Manitoba as we possibly can whether it is from nursing, medicine or any other educational programs that we have in our province.

**Ms. Barrett:** I guess this may be a crystal ball question as well, but let us assume that all of the graduates that are currently in their fourth year will graduate and that they all decide to stay here in Manitoba, the best of all possible worlds, I am assuming there because there is such a critical shortage of nurses that there would be jobs for every single one of those B.N.s, the question is would they be full time or part time or a mix? It would appear to me that one of the major deterrents for people entering the nursing profession and staying in the nursing profession today is the fact that so much of the positions that are available are casual and part time.

So I am wondering if it is being made clear to these graduates that any one who wants to



work full time in Manitoba will be able to work full time at their chosen profession.

**Mr. Stefanson:** The member raises an issue that has certainly been brought to my attention on many occasions. It is the whole issue that many nurses in the profession today and, obviously, new grads really want the stability of a permanent position. That position can be permanent part time or permanent full time depending on the individual's needs, wants, but the key is the permanency. Again, we have been working with the employers. The stats I saw recently showed that more and more of the positions are permanent positions and more and more of them are permanent full-time positions as well.

We fully expect that from the combination of permanent part-time and full-time positions, we can certainly address the job aspirations of the graduating class here in Manitoba. We would not want to be in a position where somebody who graduated from the Faculty of Nursing in the province of Manitoba and wanted to stay in Manitoba was not able to get the kind of job that they want. So collectively from the employers, from the RHAs, throughout the entire system, the focus is on permanent positions, and it certainly is on continuing to create as many permanent full-time positions as can be done in the system.

\* (1740)

So I fully expect that if all 115 decided to stay in Manitoba, which I think we all would like to see happen, that we—when I say we, the collective we of the RHAs, WHAs, and facilities—recognizing the need for 650 nurses in our system today would be able to accommodate that and be able to hopefully address all of their individual preferences in terms of jobs. When it comes to the permanency, in some cases initially it might be a permanent job even at two locations, but if the issue is permanency, which I believe it is in many cases, that certainly can be addressed.

**Ms. Barrett:** I have just one final question, and then my colleague from Transcona has a couple of questions. Could the minister, and again the minister may have been asked and may have already provided this information, so if so I apologize, but could the minister provide,

probably at some later date, a breakdown of the categories of nurses and within that category, full time and part time, and if possible permanent casual? I would like a sense of what the full-time, part-time staff mix is currently.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Chair, I was just looking at some preliminary information on that, and, yes, I will be able to return with that kind of information.

**Mr. Reid:** I have a question continuing along the lines of nursing and their employment prospects. If you look at the latest annual report coming out of Red River Community College, the 1997-98 graduate employment report, it references the latest information with respect to the diploma nursing program at Red River. In the graph there it references employed training-related, full-time employment of the nurses that graduated. There were 54 graduates for that particular year, but the full-time employment was only 44.7 percent. If you look at the employed, training-related, part-time jobs it is 47.4 percent, so it is almost a dead-even split between full and part time.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

Is it the fact that there were no full-time jobs that were available, or is there something that I am missing here that could explain why only half of those people that graduated, half of the 54, found full-time employment when it is quite apparent that we have and have had a shortage of nurses within the health care system of the province? I am not sure how the minister would be able to explain that.

**Mr. Stefanson:** I think that would be the '97-98 report probably, because that would be the last year of the old R.N. program which does not exist anymore today, but having said that, the point is still the one that the member makes, that of that graduating class, I think the stats were 44.7 percent full time and 47.4 percent part time, and that is exactly the issue we are talking about. Nurses who are currently in the system and also recent graduates are saying they certainly want permanent positions. We have heard that time and time again, and there is more and more request and demand for more full-time positions, so that is exactly what we are now addressing in the system. I will be returning with more information for the request from the member for

Wellington (Ms. Barrett), but there are continually more permanent positions being created in these last couple of years. There are more full-time positions, and it continues to address that. But there is definitely more to be done there in terms of what we are hearing from nurses both in the system and graduating.

I guess the only other point, it would be interesting—it is always difficult to do—to update that and see what those individuals are doing today, even the part-time ones. I do not know how they would survey that. I guess it is possible that you might call yourself part time, but you still might work part time in more than one facility and you might have the equivalent of full-time hours. Now, for many individuals, they would still prefer to have the full-time job in one facility as opposed to at more than one facility and not have to travel and so on. But the issue is, that summary illustrates the issue we are talking about, that they are going back to that point in time, forward to today and still going forward, there continues to be more and more of a need to convert more of these positions to both permanent and full-time positions, and that is being done but it is not complete yet.

**Mr. Reid:** I agree with the minister. It would be nice to know or to have an update on the survey that was done, because Red River does try to track, and they do a three-year comparison of the employed respondents and the people that were graduates of the program. It would be nice to know that information.

I do not know if there has been any contact with Red River in an ongoing survey to make sure that the graduates of that program, and in subsequent years are looking for full-time employment, whether or not they have been contacted or if there is some way to communicate with them that those opportunities are available. Or do we just leave them to kind of float free will within the system and seek out their own opportunities without making any contact with them? I am not sure of the process or the procedures that are in place for the department. Perhaps if the minister has some information he can share with us on that, I would appreciate some update on that part.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Mr. Chairman, maybe just before I respond to that question, on May 25 the

honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) raised some serious concerns where he had received some information suggesting that there was some unauthorized dental surgeries possibly being performed on Saturdays using hospital supplies and that during an audit, an individual reported this fact and has since been laid off, I believe.

\* (1750)

Manitoba Health did contact Dr. Brock Wright, the vice-president of HSC, and Dr. Wright reports that the physician heads of adult and pediatric dentistry at the HSC, Health Sciences Centre, are unaware of any dental clinics or dental surgery on Saturday. There are occasional emergency dental procedures performed on Saturday. So that is just some preliminary information, but I think what would be helpful, again, without breaking confidence is if the member has any additional information he could provide us. Then obviously we will pursue the matter further, but that is just the first response that I have received from information that was just brought to our attention a couple of days ago.

**An Honourable Member:** I will get back to you on that. I appreciate it, thank you.

**Mr. Stefanson:** As the member indicated he will get back to me on it, so that is helpful.

In terms of the question from the member for Transcona, we actually have a nurse resource task force, I think is what it has been called, and one of the functions of that group has been to update the database of all nurses in Manitoba in terms of the type of education they have, whether they are working permanent, whether they are working part time and so on, and that is scheduled to be completed very, very shortly. Not as early as I had expected, but we will have that available in January of next year.

That certainly will be a great resource to do exactly what the member is talking about: to have ongoing contact with nurses determining if they are working part time is exactly what they want and a chance for us to go after them and have discussions with them and see whether there is an opportunity for them to work more, if they want to work more, and address some of their needs. Again, it just becomes another vehicle to help us with our nursing needs in

Manitoba. So that is just one of many steps that is being done that will make it much easier to contact nurses to know what their status is and to be able to address this issue we are talking about.

**Mr. Reid:** Well, I look forward to that information being made available when you finish collecting the data on it.

I have another question dealing with LPNs. I know when your government went about changes in your restructuring of the health care system, there were a number of LPNs. In fact, I think most of them were purged from the system. Of course, I had a number of them who were living in my community and are now, after a number of years later having gone for a period of time without any employment, occasionally finding jobs within their field. For the most part, they have been part time and not at the level of care or the type of care that their first preference would be.

In one particular case, the LPN who had called me just this week is asking me the question now and, to put it quite bluntly, is quite furious at the government after terminating her position after some 20 or 25 years of working at St. Boniface Hospital. She then had to as a single parent go out and try and find work and has been unable to find full-time work in her field.

The question she has now, because there was no severance that was given to the LPNs when they were eliminated from the system because apparently there was a long or extended notice period that was in effect at the time, not only did she lose her 20-25 years of service, there was a loss of benefits, a loss of seniority as a result of termination of the employment.

I guess the question that she is asking me to ask is: what is going to happen now for the LPNs? Because if you are encouraging LPNs to come back into the hospital and health care system and perhaps training others to become LPNs, will they be able to move into those jobs at St. Boniface Hospital, for example, where this individual had lost her employment? What is the plan with respect to the restoration of LPNs into St. Boniface Hospital with respect to levels of pay? Is it going to be at the same levels of pay? Is it going to be different than before when they lost their employment? Higher or lower?

Are there benefit changes, benefit package changes that are going to occur? Will these LPNs who were laid off or terminated as a result of the government's plan be given some preference into hiring back into those facilities, into hospitals like St. Boniface? Can you tell me some background on what your overall plan is with respect to reintegration of the LPNs back into the hospital system?

**Mr. Stefanson:** I see we are running out of time. We have discussed this somewhat earlier in the process, but a couple of key points the member raises are, first of all, for any of the LPNs that left the health care system in the early '90s as a result of the changes that were taking place, the change in structures at the hospital, the change in focus on types of nurses and so on, I am told that today the numbers that would be affected by that would be about a little over 100-125. But whatever that number is, for those individuals, if you have a name of an individual, if they want to come back, take a refresher course or whatever needs to be done to come back into the system, that nursing fund is there to do just that, that \$7-million fund I referred to.

If you want to give us some names, or we can certainly give you the names of the individuals on that task force—in fact, Sue Hicks, the associate deputy minister, is one of the members on that—that is a vehicle to get a refresher course, to get any retraining or upgrading to come back into the system.

There is a need for, as we have already talked about, a significant number of LPNs in the system right throughout the system. So we can use them. The specific question about St. Boniface Hospital and what opportunities there might be there, I would have to contact that individual facility. There is no doubt whatsoever, we need more LPNs, whether it is through our educational or people prepared to come back into the health care system.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The hour being six o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau):** The hour being six o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 27, 1999

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