



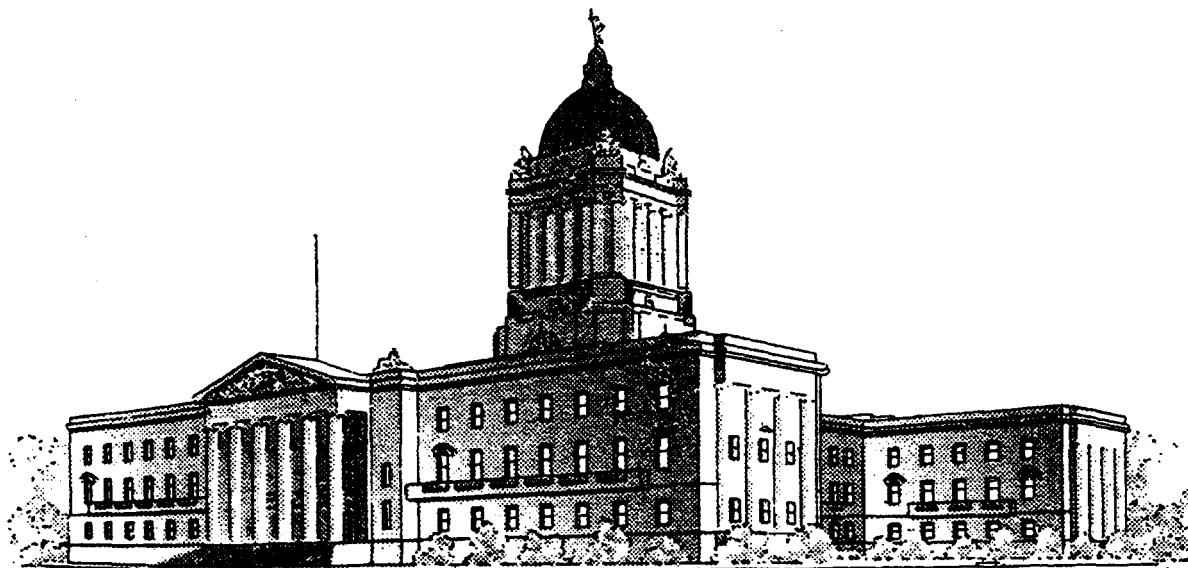
Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 22, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Home Care Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I am rising this afternoon at the first opportunity that I have on a matter of privilege and this matter will be followed, according to the rules, by a substantive motion which I will introduce at the end of my comments.

Recently we have been given information with respect to the Connie Curran APM contract which states in Schedule A, page 93, quote, a final report of the analytical findings will be presented to the home care steering committee.

On May 27, 1994, in this Chamber, in response to a question from myself, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) stated and I quote from Hansard again: "... the work of APM with our department on the home care project last year arrived at certain recommendations."

On April 15 of this year on CJOB radio, the minister changed his position and I quote: The work done by APM with my department with respect to home care was not something that resulted in any formal report.

On April 16 in the Winnipeg Free Press, the Minister of Health stated, "The Curran report, as I recall, may have made reference to contracting or allowing for some competition." . . . "I made a decision that there was not much to be gained by releasing it."

Again, Madam Speaker, on April 17 in this Chamber, the Minister of Health stated and I quote, "... the APM work with respect to home care was not the subject of a formal report. What the process involved and the arrangement involved was a process to facilitate the people who work for Manitoba Health in the provision of home care services in trying to identify areas where improvements could be made. That is what was arrived at. There was no formal APM report."

Madam Speaker, on April 18, the Minister of Health tabled the APM contract and tabled the, quote, final working group document presented to the steering committee.

This report was presented to the House and to the media and to the public of Manitoba as the final APM documents. This was later contradicted by the release of a report in Estimates on Friday—and this is my first opportunity to rise after having reviewed this document—by a document titled Home Care Demonstration Project: Advisory Committee Presentation, Manitoba Health, June 22, 1994.

Madam Speaker, the minister said there was no report, then the minister said there was a report, then there was not a report, then the minister released a so-called report, and then the minister released another report that was a so-called final report.

Madam Speaker, how can I, as a member of an elected constituency, do my job when the Minister of Health obstructs, when the Minister of Health does not tell the full story, when the Minister of Health says one thing in the Chamber, another thing outside of the Chamber, another thing in the Chamber, and then another thing outside of the Chamber?

Madam Speaker, this is not according to Beauchesne's Rule No. 30, a dispute over the facts. This is a dispute over the integrity of not just the minister, but the very government which he represents with respect to these documents, with respect to the entire issue of home care and with respect to the Connie Curran report.

Madam Speaker, it would be one thing if the minister, in dealing with a question from an elected representative—my job and our job is to represent our constituents. We make inquiries of the government of public documents and of public information. The minister fails to release it or if he does release it, he releases parts of it. Ultimately, when he does release it, we find that they are different documents that have been released, and the minister purports to show one document represents a situation, when in fact there is another document that he is holding, and he did not release it until Friday.

* (1335)

Madam Speaker, this would be bad enough. This, in itself, in my opinion, would be a breach of privilege in my rights as a member and our rights on this side of the House to obtain information from the government. But what is worse, the final document that was released Friday, the final document that came to our hands Friday, appeared to have been altered. It appeared to have been doctored. There are major inconsistencies in this document, and that is an insult to the public of Manitoba and to the elected representatives whom we serve.

Madam Speaker, this document misses page 33, page 35, page 36. There are two pages 38, there are two pages 39, and two pages 39 that are different from each other. There are references in this document to studies and information that do not appear in this document. What is worse, there are no numbers on the first 17 pages, and yet, there are not even 17 pages that go between No. 1 and No. 17.

Madam Speaker, this is an affront to members on this side of the bench. This is an affront to democracy; this is an affront to the intelligence of the people of Manitoba. In some jurisdictions there would be public inquiries based on the way that this minister has handled this issue. Now, with respect to the Connie Curran contract, we have seen one contradiction after another. We have seen documents not released; we have seen the minister stating there are reports and then there were no reports, and then there were reports. Then he finally tabled the report.

Last week, on CBC television, he said there was a report, then the minister said there was not a report. He said the same thing in the House and then in the hallway. On Thursday, they tabled documents that were purportedly the Connie Curran documents and they were not the final documents. Then on Friday, the final insult, we get a so-called Connie Curran report and final documents. There are pages missing, there are pages not in order, there is information missing.

Madam Speaker, this is not a dispute over the facts. This is clearly an inability or incapacity on the part of this minister and this government to deal with the very fundamental issues we have been discussing in this Chamber for two weeks now—the lack of information on

home care, the lack of studies, the lack of, frankly, competence.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to look at this situation and rule on it.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), that this house do censure the Minister of Health for a breach of the privileges of its members in the matter of information made available about the privatization of home care, a misrepresentation of reports and background documents on this issue, and that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): It is supposed to be somewhat rare, as Beauchesne's indicates, in terms of how often a matter of privilege does arise, and when it does arise, that this House take it in the most serious fashion in terms of the context in which it has been presented. Having said that, Madam Speaker, we have been in the Health Estimates for a number of days now and have attempted on numerous occasions to be able to get information from the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). The member for Kildonan raises an issue which, no doubt, does warrant the discussion of members of this Chamber and some sort of action needs to be taken.

I want to express to the House that over the last number of days we, representing the Liberal Party, have asked the Minister of Health to provide information to the members of this Chamber, and through us, to members of the public. We believe that the information is absolutely essential.

The Minister of Health responded to me once, saying that there are tons of information that are out there, a lot of it; all we have to do is go and look for it and we will find it. Madam Speaker, I do not question that fact that there are piles and piles of information, from one coast to the other coast, to the Americans, that deal with home care services. What we have been asking directly of the Minister of Health is to provide us information that specifically states to privatize home care services in the province of Manitoba is in the best interest of the client.

We have, day in and day out, Madam Speaker, put pressure on this government to materialize any sort of

information that specifically points to how the client will benefit with the privatization of health care. They have failed to do that. The critic for the New Democrats has asked for information, specifically with respect to the APM report, believing that there is information that condemns the privatization of health care.

Madam Speaker, if that is the case, that we have had a report that has been manipulated that will demonstrate that privatization is the wrong direction to go—and we have to keep in mind that this is a report that was commissioned by this government—that in itself does warrant full and immediate attention by all members of this Chamber, if a document has intentionally been doctored in any fashion in order to manipulate an issue as important as home care services.

* (1340)

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that this motion is in order and request, for the sake of the clients throughout the province, that we deal with this issue as soon as possible, and that we get whatever information that is there that is talking about the privatization of home care services, in its entirety, put onto the table.

You know, I had a constituent who had indicated to me, in the federal government they are doing a complete investigation with what has happened with the Somalia affair in terms of documents that are being hidden. Well, maybe what we need to do is to get the Ministry of Health to look for the documentation that might be there to indicate support for what this government is doing. We want to see the support the government is using or the information that it is specifically using to do what it is currently doing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has made some very serious allegations. I suggest, as I have suggested many times, that it is very irresponsible to make allegations without any basis in fact upon which to justify such allegations. Yet we seem to see the honourable member for Kildonan and his colleagues doing that on a daily basis in this House.

I dare say if every time honourable members opposite brought something specious or incorrect into this House, and if honourable members who were aggrieved by that

raised questions of privilege every time they did it, that would be all we would ever do in this place, is raise questions of privilege about the way honourable members opposite conduct themselves.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member has made some very troubling allegations with respect to documents that I tabled in the committee on Friday. It may be the honourable member was not listening at the time, but it would be good for the honourable member to know what it is he is talking about before he opens his mouth to condemn somebody else.

I have tabled so many documents related to home care that the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has readily admitted he has not come close to examining most of them. But the honourable member for Inkster, of course, has all the expertise he needs; he has not read any of the stuff, but he sure knows what is the right thing to do. That is not a very good approach.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I believe, was referring to a document I tabled on Friday entitled Home Care Demonstration Project: Advisory Committee Presentation and made suggestions that I had somehow altered this document. He cites the fact that pages are missing.

On Friday, when I tabled the document, I went out of my way to tell the committee that the pages were misnumbered. I said that the pagination is incorrect, but that I was assured by the people in the department that all the pages that were part of this are in the document that I tabled. Yes, indeed, the pagination was wrong, but there are no pages missing. This is the kind of stuff the honourable member brings forward under the guise of a question of privilege. It might be appropriate that that behaviour itself be the subject of a question of privilege.

He also made a suggestion that there were alterations. Let him be specific about that, because I can tell you, without any hesitation or worry about contradiction, I made no alteration whatsoever to any of the documents I tabled in this House.

The honourable member, in his question of privilege, forgot to mention a rather important little item because he keeps talking about the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care Program and its advice to the minister

on the whole subject of contracting out as if I am somehow in disagreement with the committee. Once you correct the transcription error in the report of the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care Program, it all becomes very clear that the case the honourable member is trying to make goes nowhere.

* (1345)

On page 25 of the report of the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care Program, it says the following, and I will need to quote this so you will be able to have a context here: This fact is supported by the department's own 1994 work-restructuring report—to which I referred a moment ago—in which the department, following a review of a number of other jurisdictions, asserted as follows—and then it quotes the report that the honourable member suggests has been altered and repaginated and so on—contracting out service delivery among multiple providers is not advisable due to difficulty ensuring quality of service and difficulty co-ordinating across multiple services.

Madam Speaker, let me go back to the advisory committee presentation and read to you what it really says as opposed to what is quoted in the report of the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care Program. It is on page 16, and it says: Contracting all service delivery among multiple providers is not advisable due to difficulty ensuring quality of service and difficulty co-ordinating across multiple services.

The difference between the words “all” and “out” is extremely significant. Honourable members like to gloss over that little part. In addition, I tabled on Friday a letter from two members of the Advisory Committee on Continuing Care, Myrna Fitchett and Joyce Rose. One line in that letter is: It is our understanding this committee did not advise against contracting out a portion of present services.

The honourable member wants reports. He has been given all the reports, including being reminded of the NDP report which pushes user fees and cuts in services, which is not my report and a report to which I do not attach any—were not any support. But the NDP report suggests user fees and cuts. Maybe that is what was in the honourable member's mind when he went out telling people in the public that what we were doing here in

Manitoba was bringing in user fees and cutting services, neither of which is true, but that does not stop the honourable member. I think his philosophy is, if the facts do not work for you, make something up.

Madam Speaker, prima facie, the honourable member certainly has no question of privilege, but it is part of his ongoing battle to support his friends and colleagues at the leadership levels of the union movement.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the matter of privilege, I would first of all like to just deal with the technical questions because I believe that the matter of privilege is in order. Under Beauchesne's Citations 114, 115, we should essentially now be dealing with whether you as Speaker, Madam Speaker, should determine that there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege.

I would like to stress what a matter of privilege really is because, as the member pointed out, we are not saying that this is in any way, shape or form merely a dispute over the facts. We believe that the minister's conduct in regard to these reports goes far beyond any mere disagreement between us—and there are many in this government, on home care or the recommendations of the many reports we are dealing with, none of which, by the way, support the privatization of home care.

That is not the issue, Madam Speaker. If we are to conduct ourselves in this Legislature and to make important policy decisions on behalf of the people we represent, we expect one basic thing, that is, that we be provided with accurate information.

Madam Speaker, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chorniak), our Health critic, probably I think established the matter of privilege most clearly in the words of the minister himself. Now the minister can try and explain the missing pages and the contradictory pages in the reports that he did finally table, but it was the minister who on May 27, 1994, said there was an APM report which made certain recommendations. It was the minister on April 15, 1996, who said there was no formal report. It was the minister on April 16, 1996, who referenced the Curran report, which is APM, having made reference to contracting or some form of competition. It was the minister on April 17, 1996, who said that the APM work with respect to home care was

not the subject of the former report, and the minister on April 18, who tabled the APM contract and the final working group document presented to the steering committee.

* (1350)

Madam Speaker, you do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure out there are some contradictions in the words that the minister himself has put on the public record. We are not just talking about statements that have been made to the media. We are talking about statements that have been made in this House, April 17, 1996—Connie Curran did not provide, did not make a report; it was never agreed that there would be a report—the words of the Minister of Health in Hansard in this session of the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, this is particularly important because we are seeing a situation where the government has made a major policy decision that is going to dislocate thousands of home care clients and dislocate thousands of home care workers.

Madam Speaker, if we are to have any proper debate on this issue, we have to find out the real reasons why the government is making these decisions. We have been trying since the beginning of this session to determine that. One of the key things we wanted was to find out if the government had any objective evidence to support the privatization of home care. We asked continuously in this Legislature, in Question Period, of this minister, we asked him to deal with the questions we had raised and we also asked him to table all the reports that he was dealing with.

Madam Speaker, how can you decide anything else other than the fact that in the desperation this government is facing now, to try and defend an indefensible position that the Minister of Health has made numerous statements on the public record and statements in this House which have misled the members of this Legislature and the general public. That is the issue. The minister has misled the public.

Madam Speaker, we are raising this today not out of any sense of bringing merely a technical matter. If this matter of privilege does nothing more than make the

minister himself and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and members of this government realize that they cannot keep on doing this—I think it is obvious to everyone else in this province right now that the government has made a serious mistake. They have no objective evidence. They are ripping apart a system that has served Manitobans well for more than two decades. When we get to receiving objective evidence, we find they have no evidence to support such a dramatic change. That is obvious to everyone in this province, and it should be obvious to the Minister of Health and the Premier, who is directing this in his role as Leader of this government.

We ask two things today: No. 1, we ask you to deal with this matter and clearly give us the opportunity as members of this Legislature to deal with what we believe is a clear case of a minister misleading this Legislature. We also ask, Madam Speaker, that in doing so, we have the opportunity to do what is probably the most important thing on the home care issue at all and that is have a real debate in this province that, hopefully, will make the government realize it has made a serious mistake in privatizing home care. Thank you.

* (1355)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has said, a question of privilege ought seldom, if ever, to arise in a parliamentary process. To allege the things that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has alleged against the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is a very, very serious matter and one that needs to be taken under great consideration.

Madam Speaker, if the member for Kildonan interprets certain documents provided by the Minister of Health in one way and the minister interprets those same documents in a different way—[interjection] And, in fact, the member for Thompson has just said, we have not provided any evidence at all. In his own words, he said, we have provided no evidence.

Apart from that, if they interpret information contained in a document in one way and the minister interprets that in a different way, that is not a breach of privilege. Our own rules say, on page 76: “But a dispute arising between two members as to allegations of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.”

Madam Speaker, upon looking and reading in Hansard all of the comments that have been made here this afternoon, you will easily determine, I think, that it is a dispute over the facts. It is not a question of privilege at all, and so I commend this ruling to you and no doubt we will hear back from you in due course.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Modesto B. Aguirre, Vivencia Aguirre, Bernice Gorre and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of L. Podheiser, P. Becker, M. Cardwell and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Rob Sandhu, Greg Manson, Peter Ahi and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Seasonal Camping Fees

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Angie Toner, Cara Kuzma, Linda Guerra and others urging the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount.

Home Care Services

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Brenda Taylor, Sherry Kippen, and Carol Buquing requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon)

and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1400)

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1410)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Public Accounts.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its First Report.

Your committee met on Friday, April 19, 1996, at 10 a.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building to consider the Public Accounts, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1994; the Public Accounts, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1995; the Provincial Auditor's Report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1994; and the Provincial Auditor's Report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1995, Volumes 1, 2 and 3.

Your committee received all information desired by any member at the meeting from the Minister of Finance and from Mr. Warren Johnson, Acting Provincial Auditor. Information was provided with respect to the receipts, expenditures and other matters pertaining to the business of the province.

Your committee finds that the receipts and expenditures of the monies have been carefully set forth and all monies properly accounted for.

Your committee has considered the Public Accounts, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1994, and the Provincial Auditor's Report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1994, and has adopted the same as presented.

Mr. Santos: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Disaster Assistance

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

As we know, flooding is taking place over wide areas of southern Manitoba. Earlier today, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon), the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) and I flew by helicopter over flood-stricken areas between St. Jean Baptiste and Selkirk. We landed in Selkirk and Morris. In both towns, we met with

officials from area municipalities and were briefed on the situations in their communities. On Friday, I also visited and toured flood-threatened sites in central Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, it is a very humbling experience to see the power of nature as evidenced by the immense flow of water through our province. At the same time, it is heartwarming to see how Manitobans are pitching in to help their neighbours and communities to prevent flooding of homes and to rescue precious possessions.

My colleagues and I have been particularly impressed by the dedicated efforts of volunteers in the municipalities in flood-threatened areas. From school children to retired people, we have seen and heard about the sandbagging and other vital work they have done to prepare for high water and defend their homes and their communities. On behalf of the government, I would like to commend and thank them for taking time off work and their leisure activities to help their communities and their neighbours.

I would also like to thank the municipalities for their swift, efficient mobilization of resources to prepare for flooding. Thanks to their efforts, communities are in a position to respond to forecasted flooding and take additional steps as are necessary. Madam Speaker, the government believes the flooding situation facing us in Manitoba is of sufficient gravity and potential effect to warrant federal assistance under disaster provisions and agreements.

I would like to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that on behalf of Manitoba I have written to the Minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness, the Honourable David Collenette, to request federal recognition that our situation warrants disaster funding to assist our provincial flood control efforts. We are hoping for and anticipating a positive federal response. In the meantime, we will continue to mount a co-ordinated response to the flood threat backed by the efforts of the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization, Manitoba Natural Resources and other government departments, affected municipalities and volunteers.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, I would just like to respond to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker, this past weekend, in the town of Selkirk, in the R.M. of St. Clements, in the R.M. of St.

Andrews, there was a very, very serious situation with the high water level, the flooding and much damage to property. Fortunately, there was no loss of life.

Madam Speaker, I received many calls over the weekend at my home and the area residents were concerned about a number of issues, or two in particular. One was they were encouraging me to encourage the government to blast the ice upstream from Selkirk, but I do agree with the government that this would have been both futile and dangerous. The other issue that was raised was the opening of the floodway in the Lockport area, where the floodway joins the Red in Lockport, and there was concern that this may have compounded the damage to our area. However, after talking with government officials and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) this morning, and the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister) and the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), I am convinced that their response was a correct one.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to encourage the government to keep the public informed on this issue, as well to work with the federal government in a very aggressive manner to resolve the outstanding disputes over the cost-sharing with the R.M.s. I know that was an issue that was raised this morning at their meeting, and I am pleased that the minister has written a letter. I encourage the minister to meet with the federal minister as soon as possible to get this issue solved.

Madam Speaker, finally, on behalf of all members here, I just hope and wish that the worst is behind us in this area. Thank you very much.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure to table the 1995 Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba and Appeal Commission, as well as the 1996-97 Manitoba Labour Estimates.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 3—The Surface Rights Amendment Act

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by

the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that leave be given to introduce Bill 3, The Surface Rights Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits de surface), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Horticultural Society Repeal Act

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), on behalf of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that leave be given to introduce Bill 5, The Horticultural Society Repeal Act (Loi abrogeant la Loi sur les associations horticoles), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 6—The Veterinary Science Scholarship Fund Amendment Act

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): On behalf of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), that leave be given to introduce Bill 6, The Veterinary Science Scholarship Fund Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Fonds des bourses d'études vétérinaires), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 7—The Medical Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 7, The Medical Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi médicale), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 8—The Chiropractors Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that leave be given

to introduce Bill 8, The Chiropractors Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les chiroprodistes), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 4—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 4, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba), 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 with us this afternoon twenty-two Grade 9 students from Linden Christian School under the direction of Mr. Rempel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Privatization—Public Hearings

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

People from across this province came before the Legislature today to talk about their desire for the government to put on hold their plans to privatize and have profit in the home care system here in Manitoba. They spoke very strongly about their beliefs in the existing home care system, the home care system that has been built in Manitoba by Manitobans. They talked about the dignity of home care, the independence in our community that home care provides and they talked

about the fact, Madam Speaker, that they were not involved in the original decision of the government opposite to proceed with the privatization plan. They very clearly want to be involved in a decision that affects them so directly, and clients from across this province want the government to put their plans of privatization on hold. In fact, they said that Jim McCrae and We Care is on one side and, to quote correctly, the rest of Manitobans are on the other side.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier to involve the clients of home care in the decisions that government is proceeding with, put on hold their plans to privatize and introduce profit in our home care system and call on public hearings as asked for by the many, many clients who were in front of the Legislature here today.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the issue here is that we must be able to assure that services will be provided when services are required and to the best possible standards that the people expect of us in home care. That is why we have more than doubled the budget for home care since we have been in office; that is why we continue to add funding so that we can provide for all of the needs of all of the people who depend upon home care.

We only need to look at the current circumstances to know that if we are in a position of having a monopoly deliverance of service, people who want to get into an argument over all sorts of issues will arbitrarily withdraw their services from the people who need them most, and we cannot tolerate that situation. We need a system that provides the services on an absolutely guaranteed basis, on an assurance for their needs, not in the way in which it is done today so that people who require the most, the people who are most vulnerable are put at risk, are made to feel vulnerable because some people for their own purposes, union bosses, will arbitrarily withdraw the services and put them at risk.

* (1420)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, for 22 years we had a system that had no disruptions until this government proceeded with profit and privatization. There is the person responsible for this dispute, right there, across the way. Those are not my words. Those were the clients that were speaking today at that rally at noon.

I want to table a letter from the Manitoba seniors organization, a letter sent to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) today. Again it amplifies the position that Manitoba seniors have taken all along, in their earlier letter where they asked this government to put on hold their plans and have public meetings. They have asked this government to put on hold plans that will affect their daily lives. They have said to the government, stop the betrayal of your election promises to the people who built this province. They go on to say in their letter, we need continuity of care in our system and the private profit system being proposed by the government would not give us that continuity of care.

Will this Premier now put on hold what speakers called today the revolving-door model of home care, as proposed by the Filmon government with this profit ideology? Put it on hold and have public hearings. Let the people speak out about what their vision is for profit or nonprofit in home care.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the preamble of that question was spoken like a true union boss, which is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is. He does not know that he has a responsibility to the people who are in need. He does not know that he has a responsibility to all Manitobans. He only has a responsibility to his union boss friends because he still thinks he is one. That is his problem.

Madam Speaker, we are with the people who need the services. We are with the people who want to get an essential services agreement, not with the members opposite who want to deny them their services, who want to use them as pawns in an ideological struggle where they stand shoulder to shoulder with their union boss friends.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

This letter came from the Manitoba seniors. This Premier had the gall to say in the election campaign that we must respect the people that built this province. Madam Speaker, some respect from some Premier who is breaking every promise he made.

Now the Manitoba seniors, one of four groups that use home care, clients that were there today—the Premier can foam at the mouth and try to create blame where blame

does not exist, but these are the people that use home care. The Manitoba seniors today said that they want the government to put their ideological privatization profit plans on hold and have public hearings. The seniors today said they want the government to stop the radical ideology and listen to the seniors.

I am just asking the Premier a very simple question: Will he put his ideology on hold, involve the clients and stop the privatization plan until we have had public hearings across this province? Listen to the people.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the only people who are being blinded by ideology are the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues and their union boss friends. They are the only ones who have said that this is pure ideology. From our perspective, it is pure service to the people who need it most, when they need it, how they need it, in the best possible delivery mechanism, with alternatives and with competition in the system to ensure that never again will they be held hostage to the Leader of the Opposition and his ideologically bound union boss friends to ensure that they have their needs met.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): From the Premier's comments, it is pretty evident what is wrong in this debate. This government and this Premier is not willing to listen to anybody and is prepared to blame everybody but himself with regard to this problem.

Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier, who talked about monopoly. Can the Premier explain how dividing up the city of Winnipeg into four areas and giving monopolies to four private companies is somehow going to improve the quality of care and home care delivery in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, this government has demonstrated its commitment to the people who need home care services in this province. Over the last eight years we have increased funding for that program by more than 100 percent, way, way more than anything the honourable member's colleagues ever dreamed that they would put into a home care program for the seniors and others in our province who need those services.

I will tell the honourable member, Madam Speaker, that what he and his Leader are doing today is reflecting the mentality of those union leaders who first conduct a strike vote and then do not even show up for good-faith negotiations on how to get services provided to the people who need it in this province.

Mr. Chomiak: My supplementary to the Minister of Health: Can the Minister of Health explain something that he has never been able to explain? He has talked about documents that say "all" or "out" and that there is confusion about the government's privatization. Why does the minister's plan, his Treasury Board document, the document he signed off, the document the Premier approved, say, divestiture of all service delivery? It does not say some. It does not say part. It says divestiture of all service delivery.

Why did you propose the proposal, privatization of all services?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member has to acknowledge that nothing that he has brought forward is at odds in any way with the position taken by his friends at the leadership levels of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union.

If there is one thing the honourable member is consistent about, it is his slavish support for the senior levels of the union movement in this province, Madam Speaker.

The honourable member refers to privatization, which has been in existence since the beginning of the government's involvement in the Home Care program.

Madam Speaker, the Victorian Order of Nurses is a private, non-profit organization that has been doing work under the Home Care program without tender for years. It is time for some competition, very simply, in order to make sure that we are getting the right price, the right effectiveness, the right efficiency, the right scheduling for home care services. The honourable member is against all that. He has made that clear.

In their approach, which is to say that they reject a report that they must have paid millions of dollars for, Madam Speaker, their position becomes very, very shallow indeed.

* (1430)

Mr. Chomiak: My final supplementary to the minister: Can the Minister of Health and the Premier, or perhaps the Premier, who are unable to respond to the seniors or anyone in Manitoba, can they finally answer for the people of Manitoba why they have proposed, not only for monopolies to be set up in the city of Winnipeg and that VON lose the contract, but that all the nursing service has to be privatized by this government, with respect to privatization policy? Why will you not defend your own policy?

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

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member has just defeated his own argument. He talks about four monopolies in the city of Winnipeg. Well, the last time I checked, when you have to tender and compete for the work, that is not a monopoly, and the honourable member wants to talk about four of them. It is outright nonsense what he is talking today and does not help his case one bit.

Home Care Program Canada Health Act

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Society of Seniors and the representatives of the network of retirees are not union bosses. They are retired citizens who have built this province. They met with the Minister of Health to express their concern about privatization, and they write, no evidence that the present home care system is not effective has been submitted. Quite to the contrary, they write, experts in the field have praised Manitoba's home care system as the best model in North America, and they say that privatization is the thin edge of the wedge in the destruction of medicare.

Madam Speaker, my question for the Minister of Health is, will the government acknowledge that home care, which is not covered under the Canada Health Act, can be completely deinsured, become a user-pay system without breaking that Canada Health Act? Will you acknowledge that?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if you look at the Price Waterhouse report,

which was commissioned by the NDP, it seems rather apparent that those things are possible. The NDP-commissioned report suggests user fees and cuts in services. Does the honourable member need anything else for an answer?

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the government acknowledge that it is privatizing home care precisely because they know that home care is outside the Canada Health Act? They can further offload costs on the consumers, on vulnerable senior Manitobans. Is that why they are privatizing?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, all you have to do is read the NDP-commissioned Price Waterhouse report to know that if they had not been thrown out of office in 1988, seniors would likely be paying user fees today and having their services cut.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister, who absolutely refuses to answer this question, then finally table legislation to bring home care under the Canada Health Act as a fully funded service, so that Manitobans can be sure that user-pay will not become the order of the day under his government?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, one of the reasons the New Democrats under Pawley and Doer were thrown out of government in this province was that they had no sense of the reality of that day, nor do they have any sense of the reality of today.

One of the realities is that under all of the difficult circumstances governments everywhere in this country are facing, in Manitoba the budget for home care has more than doubled in the last eight years. Honourable members opposite have not embraced one idea in the last eight years this government has been in office that we have brought forward.

They are opposed to living within our means. Madam Speaker, that says it all. That tells us the whole difference between the New Democrats and anybody else in existence today; most of the people in this world recognize that living within your means is something you might want to consider. We are committed to it, but at the same time, funding for home care doubles in eight years. Does that not say something about the priorities

of this government which far outshadow the priorities of the honourable members opposite?

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): This minister better not lecture us on being thrown out of office because that is exactly what will happen to this government if they do not stop their attacks on home care and health care.

I would like to ask a question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I am reminded of the fable about the emperor who has no clothes, because everybody in this province knows that the government is making a mistake by privatizing home care except the government itself.

I would like to ask the Premier one very simple question: Will he not listen to the people of Manitoba and particularly the clients of home care, admit he made a mistake and withdraw the disastrous plans to privatize home care?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that we will continually learn from their mistakes because they continue to make many, many mistakes by backing people who will not provide essential services for the most vulnerable in society who need their assistance, who need their service through home care. They of course will not see those services provided. In fact, they cheer them on in keeping the services away from them because they do not believe in serving the needs of the people. All of their rhetoric—we will continue to learn from their mistakes.

Madam Speaker, we are here to provide the assurance to the people who need home care that they will always get it, that they will never have that home care withdrawn arbitrarily because they have put some people in a monopoly position who will use it for their own political purposes. We will assure people that they will always be served when they need it, how they need it and to the standards that they expect.

Mr. Ashton: I will try once again. Will the First Minister admit today that there are no objective studies, no objective reports, no recommendations pointing to any advantages for the privatization of home care?

Will he not, in the face of all the response that we are getting from the people of Manitoba, admit this government made a mistake and stop the privatization of home care?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, when I see the tactics to which honourable members opposite will stoop to in a situation like this, I am more than convinced that there is absolutely nothing in any argument they make. They have absolutely no case to make for the patients and the clients of the home care system in Manitoba when they turn their backs on people who have Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, severe arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and refuse to agree that they should get essential services. These honourable members have nothing to say about home care.

* (1440)

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier or the Minister of Health, whomever chooses to answer the question, I guess. The question quite simply is that over the last number of days as an opposition party we have attempted to get specific information from the government. The question put quite simply is: In thinking of the clients, could either the Minister of Health or the Premier indicate to us what specific recommendation or specific report suggests or hints that the privatization of home care services is going to be in the best interests of the client?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, last year when the best interests of the client required that there be some backup service available when regular staff were on vacation or when regular staff called in sick, it was felt that to let a contract for that backup service would be the thing to do, and I did not hear anything from the honourable member for Inkster at that time. Tenders were let and a private company was the successful bidder, and now we are able to provide better services for our clients.

An Honourable Member: They botched it the first few weeks.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talks about something having been botched. He should go and have a little head to head with Peter Olfert, who is the head of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union who spoke very highly of that particular program.

Even though it is contracted out—it is a private for-profit company that got the contract—Peter Olfert, as reported in the pages of the Winnipeg Free Press, spoke very highly of that particular program. Later on, it was felt that intravenous therapy, expansion of that service at St. Boniface Hospital, would be appropriate. That was tendered out and, in this case, the Victorian Order of Nurses won that particular contract.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would appeal to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to answer this question: Specifically, what recommendation did this government, did this Premier and cabinet, take into consideration in deciding to privatize home care services?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, there are numerous recommendations, numerous studies, reports, most of which, if not all, have now been made available to honourable members. The honourable member for Inkster has acknowledged himself that he has not read them all. There is so much information for the honourable member, he has only to read it.

The issue is not who delivers the service but that the services are delivered, and that there are quality issues properly dealt with, that standards are observed or met or exceeded. Those are the kinds of things that all the studies talk about. In fact, all of the reports do not really come out specifically one way or another in terms of service delivery, because as honourable members know, including the honourable member for Inkster, without tender, the Victorian Order of Nurses has been providing on a contracted basis for a long, long time nursing services under the Home Care program.

So the honourable member for Inkster who is a Liberal—usually Liberals can go one way or the other and on this one they have chosen to throw in their lot with the NDP. They will regret that one, I can tell you.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health is wrong. We are behind the clients, not the New Democrats, quite frankly.

Will the Minister of Health then indicate to the Chamber, is the Minister of Health in his full-speed-ahead privatization of home care services prepared to give consideration to establishing in the criteria a minimum salary wage for home care service workers?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, it is one thing to say you are behind the clients, and it is another thing to be behind the clients. If the honourable member is behind the clients, why has he not stood to his feet to demand that if the union bosses and their NDP friends insist on being on strike, why will they not provide essential services to certain Manitobans who desperately need them?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, Beauchesne's is fairly clear and indicates that answers to the questions should be somewhat relevant. If the minister does not want to answer the question, he does not have to answer the question. He could follow the lead that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) took in refusing to answer a question that I posed.

Madam Speaker, I would request the Minister of Health to answer the specific question that was posed to him, and if he did not want to answer the question, then do not bother standing up.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, the honourable member for Inkster does have a point of order. I would remind the honourable minister that his response should be relevant to the question.

Business Advisory Board Appointments

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, recently the Minister of Education established a business advisory group to, quote: play a pivotal role in forging dynamic partnerships between education and business.

Could the minister explain the reasons for the selection of Bev McMaster of We Care home care for a committee whose role is to ensure that, I quote: business interests are reflected in the implementation of educational renewal in Manitoba?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, we are attempting, in establishing a business advisory committee, to make sure that as we look at emerging sectors in society, we look at the areas of society that are requiring increased emphasis because society is moving in a certain way.

We know the home care field, for example, as we move from high-cost, acute-care hospital institutional care to personal care or to home care, that we require advice on the types of situations people are facing and the type of training then that educational institutions will have to put in place to provide workers trained in those areas in a wide variety of sectors.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain why this committee has no representation from strategic economic sectors such as agribusiness, telecommunications, the energy sector, mining, and transport, and yet the minister points to this as an emerging sector of Manitoba education?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, we do have on that committee a wide variety of organizations and groups that represent skills and talents that are transferable or that have expertise in certain kinds of businesses. We have, for example, the Manitoba Federation of Independent Business. We also have people who are involved in working in very large complex businesses that use certain kinds of technology and computerization that are applicable not just in one industry but many.

We also seek to ensure that we have high-quality people and good gender representation. The person she spoke of earlier, Bev McMaster, is recognized right across the country. She is an award-winning entrepreneur who, after a few years in business, has been recognized and given awards of distinction for quality care, one business award that she won. Entrepreneur of the Year is another award that she won. She was nominated for the Women of Distinction Award and a wide variety of other things. So she has a very high reputation for credibility with the YWCA, YMCA, those

types of people who recognize and applaud publicly her distinctions in the marketplace.

Lottery Revenues Child Daycare Centres

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Lotteries.

The minister should know that Manitoba nonprofit community daycares have been excluded from receiving any lottery funds, including activities such as fundraising bingos. Daycares received lottery funding starting in '88 under the NDP government and continued up to '92, reaching as high as \$1.1 million in 1990 and averaging \$750,000 during that time. Since then, daycares have received just \$16,000 in the past three years, two years with no grant at all.

My question to the Minister responsible for Lotteries: Will the minister tell Manitobans if his government will reinstate funding for the nonprofit, community-run daycares from his ever-increasing lottery revenues?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the preamble, I know there are opportunities for daycare associations through our community council program, through our Community Places Program and other vehicles that do provide funding. There is a process that all organizations go through in terms of requesting whether it is bingo events or other licences in terms of charitable undertakings, and certainly they have the opportunity to go through that process as well with the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation.

* (1450)

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I would be glad to provide the annual statement—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James was recognized to pose a supplementary question.

Ms. Mihychuk: Will the minister review the practice of excluding nonprofit daycares from fundraising opportunities like bingos, in the name of fairness?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I believe our support for daycares here in Manitoba is literally second to none right across Canada. We have already outlined very clearly for the member that there is a series of vehicles and avenues available for daycare organizations and there are opportunities to apply through the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation.

Gambling Facilities Local Entertainment

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, rumour has it that the Minister responsible for Lotteries—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. McGifford: I will rephrase my question. It has been reported that the Minister responsible for Lotteries, not satisfied with the stupefying effects of VLTs, now plans to import robotic music into casinos. Decisions like these insult Manitoba culture and local musicians and deprive local Manitoba musicians of gainful employment. This idea is bad cultural policy and crazy economics.

I would like to ask the Minister for Lotteries to explain to the House and to local musicians his preference for prepackaged mechanical mindlessness over real music and real jobs for real Manitobans.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the member for Osborne may be an expert in terms of marketing of what is required at our entertainment facilities. I certainly am not. I think she is fully aware that there is an independent board of our various Crown corporations as there is with the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. There is a management structure that makes decisions on an ongoing basis in terms of what they need to do to continue to attract individuals and make the facilities an entertaining place for individuals to attend at.

But I do want to assure her that we do share the concern about live entertainment and opportunities for Manitoban musicians. I think if the NDP looked back at

the nine budgets that they have now voted against, they would find that our support for the arts and cultural community and the entertainment industry, again, has been second to none, Madam Speaker. There are continuing opportunities, and there will be continuing opportunities for Manitoba artists, musicians and entertainment at these facilities.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship if he will intercede with his colleague the Minister of Lotteries (Mr. Stefanson) and work to reverse this doubly damaging decision which would favour robotic music over real music and would deprive local musicians of employment opportunities.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I truly look forward to getting into the Estimates process so we can go into a lot of detail about how our cultural budget supports individuals in this province. In fact, I was on the same platform as the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) on Saturday, and he knows full well that the Brandon community applauded the government for the amount of money spent on the juried art show. I did note, though, that the member for Brandon East said, we should spend more, but that particular group was quite happy.

I would refer honourable members to an item in the Toronto Globe and Mail that said, Manitoba should have a standing ovation for its tremendous support of the arts community.

Domtar Site Cleanup Proposal

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Environment.

This government has yet another proposal from Domtar to clean up its contaminated site in Transcona. It has come full circle, and they are again proposing on-site capping and storage. A Department of Environment contaminated sites expert, in response to the company's proposal, has written: All of the highly impacted soils must be excavated and removed from the Transcona site to remove all of the future concerns of potential risks and liabilities.

He goes on to recommend that they not provide a level of support for this proposal.

I want to ask the minister how the government is responding to this proposal, given the recommendation of its own contaminated sites expert.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, obviously the member would like to negotiate in this Chamber how remediation of this long-contaminated site should be handled.

We are taking all information and using it to the best advantage of the cleanup of the site, and we want to make sure that we involve the local community in the decision-making process. I hope that her objective is to proceed in that manner because it is my understanding that the local citizens may have, or should in fact have, a great deal to say about the type of remediation that is put in place.

Ms. Cerilli: I would like to ask a supplementary question, get in with the innuendo in a moment.

Is it the opinion or the position of the government that this on-site remediation would trigger legislation on hazardous waste disposal grounds which would disqualify this proposal only on the grounds of the proximity to housing—not only on those grounds but on many others?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, the member says she wants to avoid the innuendo. Perhaps she should respond directly to the question then, in her next question, about what her thoughts are about whether or not the people in the community should have something to do, or does she want to make this settled politically?

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, my third question for the minister is: What is his position, what is the government's position, with regard to this proposal and legislation and regulation on hazardous waste disposal? This facility will be too close—

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

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, this speaks volumes to how it is so difficult in this House to provide

information to genuinely concerned members and then have it stuffed back in your ear in Question Period.

Madam Speaker, I want to indicate very clearly that it is my intention to do everything possible to make sure that that community is adequately protected.

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: On a point of order, I would ask you to call the minister to order, Madam Speaker. If he is making reference to the material or the information or the questions I ask in the House, I am doing my job in representing the constituents of Radisson who have elected me.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* (1500)

Manitoba Junior Hockey League Championships

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): I have a question for the Minister of Environment. Madam Speaker, I know the Minister of Environment has no control over the weather which we have been having over the last little while, but I do recognize on this side of the House how popular and how proud we are of the constituencies and the communities that we represent.

I would like to ask the Minister of Environment for what reason he wears the sweater in the Chamber today and how he came by achieving that sweater and why he wears it so proudly in the House today. I would like to have the minister share that with the House today.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, in my enthusiasm for the support of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League, I said that I would wear the sweater of the winning team and that team is proudly supported by my colleague from Sturgeon Creek. I would like to add my congratulations to the St. James Canadians in their outstanding victory and wish them well in the competition where they are presently engaging the champions to the west.

**BFI Landfill Site
Minister's Position**

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Last week the city began a campaign to have Winnipeg residents call the government urging the Minister of Environment not to give Browning Ferris Industries a licence to build an environmentally unfriendly, economically unnecessary landfill site in Rosser.

Will the Minister of Environment please explain his comments in the Free Press several days ago, how the city and its residents are "inviting political interference" by sharing their legitimate concerns with the minister.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, any member of the House should not be called upon to answer questions on their statements made outside the House or statements referred to in a newspaper report, of all things. That question is clearly out of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, it is quite common for members of the House to use a variety of sources, including media reports, but the question was, in itself, most definitely in order in asking about the question of political interference, and I suggest that you not only rule in order but ask the minister to respond to it.

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

Mr. Ernst: When I was on my feet earlier, I did not have the direct quote from Beachesne, but I could provide it to you now: Beachesne's Citation 409.(10): "A question ought not to refer to a statement made outside the House by a Minister." Quite clear, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, I would draw to the attention of the honourable government House leader that Beachesne Citation 410.(2) supersedes Citation 409. (10). It reads, "While some previous guidelines remain valid, others have fallen into disuse, e.g. that it is out of order to ask about

matters reported in the media or statements by Ministers outside the House or 'certain questions regarding government policy.'"

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Environment, to respond to the question.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, very clearly, any licence that this organization is seeking as a director's licence, as Minister of Environment I am the appeal to that licence. It is certainly my intention not to be defending in advance of the director having made a decision of what that decision might be.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Home Care Services

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, I am concerned about the attempts to scare Manitobans with regard to home care. There are no changes to home care in rural Manitoba, and we are looking at introducing competition for 25 percent of services in Winnipeg. In spite of that, I hold in my hand some propaganda that was being distributed in Ste. Anne over the weekend which I now table.

I am shocked and dismayed at the tactics being used. This is fearmongering propaganda at its worst, and it must be stopped. Listen to what rural Manitobans are being told. I quote: Your government's documents show that all hands-on care including nursing care is to be contracted out to private for-profit agencies. Further, all care is to be contracted out.

This is absolutely untrue. In addition to the fact that rural Manitoba is unaffected and 25 percent of Winnipeg's service is affected, but you would never know that from these documents which are misleading and do a disservice to recipients of home care by not providing the facts. There are no changes to home care in rural Manitoba and yet these papers handed out in Ste. Anne have clearly shown there is nothing sacred to those who want to scare Manitobans into believing untruths.

A petition was attached which said that plans to privatize home care services calls for, and I quote again, the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations of a user-pay system of home care.

No matter who delivers the home care service, the government will fully fund it as it does today. The government believes in home care and are seeking to make it as efficient as we can. Since we came to office in 1988-89, the number of persons we served has risen by 11 percent. The amount of money we have allocated for home care has risen by 111 percent, an increase of \$43 million. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Flooding—Constituency of St. Johns

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I want to make a statement regarding the flooding on Scotia Street in the constituency of St. Johns. I want to pay tribute to particular individuals and organizations.

First of all, to all the businesses that contributed foodstuffs for the workers and the volunteers, I want to acknowledge the contributions of the IGA on Main Street, and Mr. Hamel in particular, McDonald's on Main Street, Extra Foods and Safeway, as well, Tim Horton at Sheppard and Inkster and Robin's Donuts on McPhillips.

Second of all, I want to pay tribute to the City of Winnipeg workers and, in particular, Mr. Tommy Lamboo, who seemed to be everywhere all at once coordinating matters with an even hand.

As well, to the people who were working on contract. I am aware of bobcat operators, for example, who worked from seven in the morning until midnight on Friday. As well, the many friends who came out and other people in the community, but most important of all, at a time when the youth in Manitoba seem to be getting a bum rap and are being generalized—

* (1510)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for St. Johns. I wonder if those members having private meetings would do so either in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Mr. Mackintosh: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

At a time when the youth in this province, and I think particularly in the north end of Winnipeg, are getting a bum rap and there are generalizations being made about youth, it was the youth of the schools of St. John's High School, Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate, West Kildonan Collegiate and Garden City Collegiate that came out and worked tirelessly for the good of the community. In fact, many of these individuals came back on Friday night and again on Saturday. It speaks very highly of Manitoba youth.

Finally, I want to pay tribute and acknowledge the stress that the residents have been under on Scotia Street. We recognize how difficult the rising floodwaters have been for the residents and their families, for the threat that it causes to their major investment and to their property.

I think that the flood situation demonstrates throughout all of Manitoba that this is the ultimate we-are-all-in-it-together situation; we have to pull together.

I also want to pay tribute, of course, to the individuals and the residents in places elsewhere in the city of Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba. For example, in south Transcona where the Scouts and other youth came out and worked tirelessly for the good of the community as whole.

St. James Canadians

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, I would like to extend congratulations today to the players and coaches of the St. James Canadians who defeated the Neepawa Natives to win the Ollie Turnbull Memorial Trophy. This outstanding victory means that the St. James Canadians will now go on to play the Saskatchewan winners, a team from Melfort.

For games three, four and five of the Anavet Cup, the St. James Canadians will be playing at the Civic Centre in Sturgeon Creek starting tomorrow, April 23, and playing until Thursday, April 25. I would like to extend an invitation to all members of the House to come and watch the fine hockey which will be on display this week and especially would like to invite the member for Ste. Rose, the Honourable Glen Cummings, wearing No. 21

today of the St. James Canadians, to the games, and judging by this beautiful St. James Canadians jersey, he must be quite a fan of this superb hockey team.

Finally, I would like to wish the players and coaches of the St. James Canadians the best of luck during the Anavet Cup. I am sure all members will join with me in congratulating coach Wayne Chernicki, Glen Harris and Brian Gaziuk, manager Gunter Leuger and trainer Joanne Hanson and all the players of the St. James Canadians in a great season and wish them well in the series against Melfort. A special thanks to Gary Bachinski of the Canadians for arranging to get the Canadians sweater for the honourable member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) to wear in the Chamber today. Thank you.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I would like to add my congratulations to the many residents of St. James who take great pride and joy at the performance and ultimately winning season achieved by the St. James Canadians hockey club as they won the Manitoba Junior Hockey League Championship for the first time in over 28 years.

Madam Speaker, this House is filled with members who understand that it is much more satisfying to win than to lose, and I am sure that we can all agree on that. While I am happy that the St. James club was able to fight its way back from a three to one deficit in games to win the championship series four to three, I also want to commend the Neepawa Natives hockey club as a spirited and worthy contender for the Turnbull Memorial Trophy. I am sure we can all wish Coach Wayne Chernicki and all the players of the St. James Canadians luck and best wishes as they advance to face their next opponents, the Melfort Mustangs from Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rural Forum

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, I want to rise today and recognize the importance of the rural forum that was held in Brandon, Manitoba, at the end of last week on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and congratulate the many participants who displayed their wares and the immensely well-received program that was put on. I also want to congratulate all the Junior Achievers who were presented awards at the forum.

However, one of the most important things for some of us in this Chamber, as the rural value-added task force, of which Frank Pitura, MLA for Morris, and Merv Tweed, MLA for Turtle Mountain, and myself are members of, was the ability to present our interim report to the forum. In that interim report, we indicate clearly that we were impressed by the participants of the 1,200 to 1,300-some-odd rural people who came forward with ideas on how they wanted to add value to their products in rural Manitoba and therefore increase our capacity to export finished products out of this province by \$1 billion.

There was a tremendous enthusiasm and receptiveness toward the provincial government for having initiated the task force, and we were very pleased to have been given the opportunity to listen and dialogue with Manitobans about what should be done to enhance their ability to prove that they could, in fact, provide jobs for young people in many of the towns in rural Manitoba.

We were extremely fortunate to have been participants in that venture, and we thank the rural forum for allowing us the time to present our report to that forum.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): I move, Madam Speaker, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Education; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Health.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy 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 Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b)(1) on page 34 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chair, I think we had indicated before we left last time that there were a number of other issues that could be discussed on this line. They also fall under another line on policy, as well, but if we ask them here, we will not be asking them there. So these are related to the policy functions of the department, which I notice are seeing an increase in both expenditures and also in salaries.

I wanted to ask the minister about the Enhancing Accountability document that came from the government. The minister, in questioning last time, said that this was only in part written by the Department of Education, and I wanted to pursue that a little bit, to ask the minister, first of all, if she and her staff had read this document before it was released.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): When we stopped on Friday, I was in the middle of answering a question, and I wonder if before we get going on today's I could complete that answer.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee? [agreed] The honourable minister, to complete her answer.

Mrs. McIntosh: I did not have too much left to say. It is just that the member had been asking about whether or not it was politicizing the deputy minister to place him on a panel that was out receiving information for the ministry. I would just indicate that I do not believe putting the deputy on a panel to receive submissions from the public politicizes a deputy because every day of the year—and the opposition when it was a government did the same thing, as well—everyday, we have our deputies go on camera, explain positions, take public phone calls, attend meetings, go on the radio, listen to presentations and so on.

Indeed, the member may recall, because it was the subject of some controversy in the newspaper, when her

government, when it was in power, when the Manitoba Association of School Trustees specifically asked if they could have access to the minister to come to a particular meeting to explain a political position of MAST, that the NDP government declined to send the minister and sent instead the deputy, Mr. Ron Duhamel, who appeared on behalf of the government to answer a political question of the government.

That was the way the NDP government utilized its deputies. We do not go to that extent. We do not put deputies in the position of having to actually appear at a public forum to answer a political decision question, but we do do some of the things the NDP used to do, which is to allow deputies to represent the department, to hear information, to receive presentations, to answer questions on the radio as to various pieces of information. I just wanted to clarify that if indeed we are politicizing the deputy by asking him to appear in public to receive information, we are certainly not going nearly as far as the previous NDP government used to go. I think if she was not concerned about them, and I understand she was not, then she need have no concern whatsoever about this government's conduct in that matter.

In regard to the question she asked, did we read the paper before it went out? Yes. Did I say that our department only wrote a part of it? No. Again, I would urge the member to review Hansard. What I did indicate, and I may be paraphrasing the words somewhat now, is that any document issued with the approval of government is a government document and that there would be many sources that would collaborate on providing information to certain documents because certain areas of government have knowledge and expertise in certain areas that is deemed appropriate for inputting into the final government documents.

She misinterpreted my words, which I thought were rather clear, but perhaps they were not, and interpreted my words to mean that the department only wrote a portion of the paper when what I really said was there were many people having input into the production of the paper. A collaborative effort is just as logical a conclusion to draw as that the department only wrote one portion of it. In the final result, Mr. Chairman, the point I would like to make is that it is a government document, and a government document will certainly have more

than one author and certainly will have more than one source of input. There is no one person who sat down and authored that document from beginning to end.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: The minister says that her government does not put deputies at public forums to answer political questions, but I was at a meeting in Gimli very recently, I think it was last week, where an assistant deputy minister was sent out for precisely that purpose, and put in a rather difficult position because those kinds of questions were being asked and the purpose of the meeting was to talk about the government's recent policy.

The assistant deputy minister was quite proper in saying that she could not answer those questions, but of the 31 MLAs in the Tory caucus, not one could be found to go and speak to a meeting in Gimli which had been called to discuss the political proposals of the government in many areas of education.

I think perhaps the minister is drawing too broad a sweep there when she said her government never does that. If we want to look in my previous critic areas in Culture, Heritage, for example, when the government was cutting the role of the Manitoba Heritage council, I remember one very heated meeting where it was deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers who were sent to answer for the political judgements of the government.

Over the last few years, I think the government has certainly done this, and I draw it to the minister's attention, particularly because the document she claims to be nonpolitical was certainly perceived as a very political document by the people to whom it was directed and who were asked to respond to it.

It was in that context that I thought it was unwise for the minister to put a deputy minister on that committee and to be exposed in that public a fashion to the, indeed, hostility. One would have to say that it was outright hostility in many areas. I felt that in the long term this would diminish the deputy minister, whomever it was. It is not a question of reflection on any individual, but it diminishes the prospects for a deputy minister in maintaining that open communication that we talked about last time.

The minister has said that this is a collaborative document. Most documents have an author attached to them. For example, if we were looking at the research documents that the government has many times talked about in the context of hog marketing, there are three authors mentioned on that one. This one has no authors, and the question comes up because so many people in the hearings questioned the information that was being presented in that document, and so the question of authorship does become significant. Secondly, because the proposals were, in the view of those many people who went to the hearings, of such a limited nature as to be perceived as extremely political, hence again the question of authorship becomes significant.

So that is the context in which I am asking the question. The minister has said the document was a collaborative one. Could she tell us who collaborated in the production of this document?

Mrs. McIntosh: Before I begin the answer to the main question, I believe it is critically important that I correct the wrong information put forward in her lengthy preamble. I hope the people who are reading Hansard will flip back to the questions she made. I can only pray that if they read her questions, that they take the time to read the response because the information she put on the record about the assistant deputy minister is absolutely, totally and categorically wrong.

I received an invitation in my office about a week and a couple of days before an event that was to take place in Gimli. I understand that the member herself was quite critical of the fact that I did not appear at that meeting in Gimli. [interjection] Then maybe my sources are wrong. The member then made no reference to the fact that I was not there, although I will check with my source after who quoted to me that the member had said she thought it was really unfortunate that I had not cared to come. The member may wish to put on the record that she never said that to any of the witnesses who reported to me that she did say that.

As it turned out, when I got that invitation about nine days before the event was to take place—my calendar, as the member is probably aware, is booked five, six weeks ahead, and I had committed myself to be the keynote speaker at an annual general meeting of parents and teachers at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Collegiate and was not

about to break that promise. They had made that request many, many weeks before the event, the usual lead time that most people will give a minister of the Crown, so when a last minute invitation came in, I knew I could not go. The invitation had said that there were two topics to be discussed. One was they wanted to discuss the programming surrounding New Directions. The other was the arbitration paper Enhancing Accountability.

We contacted the Gimli people, and I am very sorry if they did not do this, but we said we are all committed in terms of time. The minister has a previous engagement. She would love to come and clarify a lot of the misinformation that we are pretty sure the opposition will be trying to put on the record, but the minister is unavailable. However, in terms of a resource person to provide information on New Directions, we could send a senior civil servant who has expertise in that area who could answer questions on the programming.

But if we send her, we want to make it clear that she can be there as a resource and participate to answer any questions on the programming or on New Directions, since she is one of the top experts in the government on that, but she cannot be coming as a political person because she is not an elected person. So she will not be able to answer any political questions, but if you need someone there to tell you what New Directions is all really about in terms of the implementation, in terms of the requirements, in terms of the thrust and the procedures and intent, we have a person in the person of Carolyn Loeppky, our assistant deputy minister, who knows more about this topic than anyone in government.

We would be pleased to provide her as the expert on that for your panel, and because I cannot appear in person, I did write a letter outlining the true intent of the Enhancing Accountability document which we asked to have read.

Now, I am really concerned if the member did not hear that letter read, because we did ask to have it read, which would indicate that a lot of the innuendo going around about the document was, in fact, inaccurate. Like, for example, there would be no wage rollback in wages and those things. So the ADM was sent as a resource person only, because she had the knowledge that the people putting the panel together said they wanted. The people putting the panel together accepted that as quite in

keeping with their desires. They were sorry that I was not free to attend, but they were quite willing to have a senior civil servant come to address the factual aspects of New Directions, and I believe they made that clear at the meeting.

I would ask the member for Wolseley if it was not made clear at the meeting that the ADM was there as a resource person, not to answer political questions, because I have been told that was made clear. Maybe the member just did not hear that being made clear, because if she did not hear it being made clear then I can understand why she would say she was concerned that I sent a deputy to do political things. If she did hear it made, if she heard that statement made, then she is putting false information deliberately on the record, and I would ask her to tell me whether or not she heard that being said, that the ADM was not there to answer political questions but was provided as a courtesy to be a resource for the technical and factual things.

* (1540)

That had been agreed to by the panel who apologized for giving me such short notice and who did not expect me to break another commitment with other parents in another community. So I would appreciate the member telling me whether or not she was basing her first premise on the assumption that I did not know what had gone on at the meeting and allowed deliberately false information to go on the record that I had sent the ADM to answer political questions. If she heard that clarified, that I had not sent her for that reason, then could she please withdraw the inherent criticism in her statement and apologize to me for putting false information deliberately on the record.

If she did not hear it—I know it was said; perhaps she did not hear it even though she was there—then I would like her to explain that she did not hear it, and I will apologize to her for assuming that she heard all that was said at the meeting she attended.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I think the member, if she checks the record, will hear that, in fact, I said the deputy minister acted quite correctly and was not there to answer political questions. Secondly, I also said that this was not a criticism of the minister, that there were 31 Tory MLAs who I had hoped would be able to come to that

meeting, and I think I said here exactly what I said at the meeting.

I notice that the minister has digressed for quite awhile and has not yet answered the question I put last time, which was, could she tell us something more about the authorship of this document? I gave her two reasons for the questions, the context of that document and, of course, the question of the accuracy of the information.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the clarification the member made. I think if she checks Hansard she will see that in her question she implied that the deputy minister was sent, and to her credit did not answer political questions even though, and this is definitely implied, the minister sent her into a political forum expecting her to do that.

The way you worded your question left the impression—and you are very good at this, Madam—clearly left the impression that the minister had consciously sent the ADM out to answer political questions and that the ADM, because of her high integrity, correctly did not fall into the trap the minister had laid for her. That is the implication that I read into your question. That is the implication that most readers would read into your question. I think you know it, and I know it. We did say before that if you kept the tone of your questions as high, the tone of my answers would be high, but when I see the subtle way in which you are trying to do these things, I will call a spade a spade every time, so we can carry on courteously or not.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I hate to interrupt, Madam Minister, however, I would ask all members, both the member for Wolseley and the honourable minister, to address their comments to the Chair. Thank you.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, who wrote the budget? Who wrote the throne speech? Who wrote the Accountability document? Who wrote any number of things issued by the government? I am puzzled and perplexed by why, with this particular document, unlike any other, the opposition suddenly seems to be concerned with authorship. You never ran around and asked who authored the throne speech. The opposition never asks who writes the throne speech or the budget document, and the reason they do not is because it is quite clear. Once government issues a document with the

name Government of Manitoba on it, the government itself becomes the author, the government claims authorship, the government acknowledges authorship, the government takes responsibility for the document once it has the Government of Manitoba's signature on it.

As minister, I take responsibility. All the members of government take ownership of documents which are labelled Government of Manitoba official documents, so I think the number of people involved in putting input into the document, the variety of departments, the levels of expertise, do they change the content of the document? Does it change the level of debate over the contents of the document if you find out, for example, that so-and-so had input into it versus so-and-so? I believe the document deserves and requires debate on its own merit without worrying whether it was 22 people or 23 people or whether it was Civil Service or Department of Labour, Department of Finance or Department of Education or any of those other departments who played any particular lead role in the establishing of it.

What is important is that the member has indicated she believed that there were some pieces of information in that document that were incorrect, and I would be very grateful if the member could indicate which areas of the document she believes are inaccurate. Where are the so-called errors? Where are the so-called mistakes?

Could she indicate to us what she thinks is not accurate in that document, so that we can, for the record, clarify for her and correct any misunderstandings she may have? We have had one brought to our attention already which we checked and verified that we were correct. Unfortunately, it was one that the Teachers' Society had published wide and far as a mistake when it was not a mistake.

We did correct it, but I doubt very much that they informed their same readership that they had, in fact, been wrong in saying that our document was wrong. I think they let their statement stand and we did not have the time or the money or the energy to chase down all the hundreds of people they may have written to saying that there was an error where there was none. So if you have any information about an error that you think is in there, could you please do us the honour of telling us what it is, and we will look into it for you.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, some of the ones that have been brought to my attention deal particularly with the pupil-educator ratio. As I understand it, there are three different versions of this number. In 1994-95, I believe that the document itself proposes that the pupil-educator ratio in Manitoba is 14.9 and it gives reference to that. The footnote for that is the British Columbia Ministry of Education. The FRAME document of the government itself offers for the same pupil-educator ratio 18.9, or it offers another figure of 16.4 as well for the lower one if you include administrators.

Statistics Canada in its most recent edition of education statistics, which I think the library received a few weeks ago, lists 15.2. So there are three different ones there, I think all of them relating to, if I take that 18.9 one, the ratio between pupils and educators in the classroom, that is excluding the administrators and the clinicians, et cetera. So that is one of the areas where there has been certainly comment and some clarification would be required.

* (1550)

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, but could the member tell me where the error is? I mean, she has quoted some statistics. I presume she knows the difference between a pupil-teacher and pupil-educator ratio.

But I had asked if you could show us where there were some errors, and I am wondering if you could show us where the errors were in those.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, could the minister tell us why the pupil-teacher ratio—and I was using educator, you are quite right; I should have said pupil-teacher—from Statistics Canada is giving us 15.2?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, as the member knows, the Stats Canada figure, there is a new one out now. The latest one, aside from the one that has just come out, was done in July '92, and if the member has that, she can look on page 35, where clearly it shows it is a statistical portrait of elementary and secondary education in Canada. It is a graph that shows the ratio of enrollment to educators in public schools by province and territory across Canada, and it clearly shows Manitoba on the bar graph as just under the 15, around 14.9.

That was the latest one that we were working on. There is a new one that may show us slightly up, but the one for the document which we are working in—I believe, sourced—would indicate that.

The other one that we have to collaborate that is a more recent statistic from British Columbia in the fall of 1995, which polled every province and territory in Canada, and the 1994 figure was indeed 14.9 from that source.

So there are two sources, Mr. Chairman, one from 1992 and one from 1995, two different sources on student-educator ratios, both showing 14.9 for Manitoba, well below the national average. If you use our own FRAME Report for the total student-educator ratios, the total figure for '94-95 also shows 14.9, also again amongst the lowest in Canada.

There are three sources there, and if you want the number that you were talking about in terms of class size, which, again, is a differing comparison—the three I have just given you have been pupil-educator ratios. Pupil-educator ratios involve the number of students to the number of professionals in the school who work with students as resource teachers, classroom teachers, et cetera, and it includes all educators in the school.

The other figure that you may be interested in, which is the regular instruction class size, is 18.7, and that is the average number of pupils per classroom teacher, which is different from the number of pupils per educator, because you may have educators in the school who do not teach a class. Teaching librarians, for example, may not register a home class, so the average number of pupils per teacher is 18.7. That is the '94-95 figure from FRAME accounting.

The key is to try to be consistent in your comparisons. So when you talk about pupil-educator, which is basically what you have to talk about when you compare with the rest of Canada, because that is the only true comparison, where you are comparing apples with apples—when you say pupil-educator in every province, they are measuring the same thing you are; they are comparing apples with apples instead of apples with oranges. Those comparisons are valid, and they are compared by three different sources.

The class size at 18.7 is our own indication from our own statistical analysis, and the FRAME financial reporting shows 18.7 pupils per classroom teacher in Manitoba. Those are correct figures.

Ms. Friesen: The British Columbia source is, in fact, the government of Manitoba.

Mrs. McIntosh: As is every province. When British Columbia does its comparisons, it goes province by province, takes all the information from each of the provinces, and does the comparative study. They gave us the definitions with which we were to provide them the information. They set the parameters. They indicated their definition of pupil-educator, which was the valid comparison that finally came out.

When they said to us, please provide us with this information based upon the number of this and that and the other thing, we complied with their request for the pieces of information they asked for, and they came out in the final analysis with the same figures that Stats Canada showed, that our own figures show, et cetera.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, are there any differences in the criteria that British Columbia establishes as it looks at this Blue Cross provincial comparison? Are there any differences between it and the Stats Canada criteria?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not take ownership for British Columbia's decision making. However, they define educators the same way that all provinces and Canada now does, so we now have a common definition so that we can compare apples to apples, as I said before.

British Columbia and Stats Canada and us and other provinces now, when we talk about pupil-teacher ratios, all use the same definition. We mean those educators who are in schools versus the number of students, and we include in those the special needs teachers, clinicians and counsellors, those kinds of people who are in the schools full time and work with the students in the schools but do not have their own classroom, and we also include classroom teachers. That is standard now.

All areas use that as a definition, so there is no more comparing of apples to oranges and no more saying, well, pupil-teacher versus pupil-educator, which are not the same things. So we have two statistics we put forward

then. We put forward the pupil-educators statistic which is 14.9 for Manitoba, and we also put forward the pupil-teacher statistic which is the number of pupils per classroom teacher which is 18.7 for Manitoba. We know those are two different things we are talking about, and in both of those instances Manitoba fares very well indeed compared to other provinces.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, did this particular document, Enhancing Accountability, talk about the pupil-teacher ratio, the 18.7?

Mrs. McIntosh: No, Mr. Chairman, it does not, because the other provinces—we did not want to put anything in here unless we could absolutely guarantee we were talking, as I said before, apples to apples. We know with the pupil-educator it was absolutely straight comparison apples to apples. Although we know informally pupil-teacher ratios from other provinces, we know what they are, we did not have statistical charts that could verify that. Therefore we did not include that in the document.

It has been subject of many, many conversations, it is well known by the organizations, the stakeholder groups, and we know, as I say, from informal contacts with other provinces and territories that our pupil-teacher ratio is a very favourable one here in Manitoba, but we did not include it specifically in the document because we did not have the documentation that we can absolutely verify from every province; we did not have all the provinces statistics on that in written form that we could verify to include in the document. We did not want to put anything in the document that could not be verified the way this pupil-educator ratio can.

If she is aware of any document that has all 10 provinces and both territories with that particular statistic verified from each province formally, we would be very pleased to be able to put that in. We know informally what our figures are, but formal presentation in a codified format would be very much appreciated if she has access to it.

* (1600)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the desire for comparability and for equality of definitions, but what I want to ask the minister is, is she aware that that particular element in the preparation of this document

caused a great deal of anxiety, concern, hostility? I would say many people who presented to that committee pointed to that particular table as, I think in their minds, first of all, conveying an unrealistic scenario in Manitoba.

The minister asks why, Mr. Chairman, and I think it is because without a good deal of explanation, what that portrays to members of the general public who are not versed in the educational statistical language is that the actual classroom participation of teachers and students is at that level, and many people obviously said, no, it is not, and my classes are much larger than that.

I think it was one of the things which contributed to that sense of the undermining of the teaching profession and of the people in the classroom. Had there been a broader discussion—and that is really again why I am getting at authorship. If this had been a broader discussion paper which would have been much more research-based in the sense of, all right, here is the full discussion of teacher-educator relationships across the country. Here to the best of our knowledge is where Manitoba stands in teacher-pupil relationship. Here is the difference between the two. We know that some classes in Manitoba are larger. We know that some classes are smaller.

If that kind of general discussion could have been included, if this had been a research paper, I think it would have helped considerably to conduct this discussion in public on a much different basis than it has been.

So that is why I started with that and again started with the authorship and the relationship of this to the Department of Education, because so many people that I have heard, who have talked about this document, have said, look, surely the department knows. We know the department knows the difference.

The minister has just put it on the record, but that sense of conveying that to the general public is not there in this document, and I wonder if in the minister's response to this document—and I assume at some point there is going to be a formal response to the committee's presentation—those kinds of issues can be discussed, and, in particular, that one.

Mrs. McIntosh: I am reading page 7 of the accountability document where it indicates that the pupil-

educator ratio is the number of teachers employed in relation to the number of pupils enrolled in the schools. It quite clearly indicates that it would include all teachers employed versus classroom teachers.

I find it interesting that no representative for the Manitoba Teachers' Society asked or posed a question concerning the accuracy of that figure. They knew. They said that you are talking pupil-educator, not pupil-teacher, and we said that is correct, so they knew the difference quite clearly.

Is the member saying—I am going back to my original question. You indicated in your opening today that there were a lot of mistakes in this document, a lot of inaccurate figures and a lot of errors, and I asked if you could give us some, but, so far, all you have done is indicate that there is a figure in here that is correct.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

So I am just wondering if I could, with respect, ask you again where are all these errors, where are all these mistakes, and where are all the factual inaccuracies in this document, because you have named one, and it is a correct figure. It is not wrong and it is not being questioned as wrong.

People seem to know because they have said, why do you not have pupil-teacher in there, as well, and I think we have explained that. At least the MTS seems to know the difference between pupil-educator and pupil-teacher, and it says in the document that pupil-educator is the total number of teachers employed in relation to the number of pupils enrolled in the schools.

To me, that seems clear as a definition. Perhaps it could have been expanded and enlarged upon and made more clear or be more detailed. That would be a good point, but it is not inaccurate as you indicated in the beginning, so could you tell us where the mistakes are, so we can look into them?

Ms. Friesen: One of the contrasts that seems to me to be there is in the comparison with Statistics Canada, the most recent production, which from my notes does say 15.2 for pupil-teacher relationships. Now, I have just sent for a copy of that book to make sure that, in fact, I did read it correctly. I may not have read it correctly, so

I have sent for the actual copy, so we can all have the same copy in front of us.

My basic point is that the minister and the department were aware that there were other numbers, 18.7, which were closer to teachers' experiences, and I think the concerns of many people whom I heard discuss this at the hearings was that this was a document which was being sent out, and, of course, we have to remember that it was accompanied by that friendly fax from other sources.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order, this was not accompanied by anything. The government of Manitoba put out this document, and it was not accompanied by any other document that the member is referring to. I think maybe that is a dispute over the facts.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Thank you, Madam Minister. I think you have labelled this correctly as a dispute over the facts. I thank you for that information, and I would invite the honourable member for Wolseley to continue with her question.

* * *

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, my concern is, again, to put this document into context of the government sending out a document which had very narrow definitions of the relationship between teachers and their responsibilities in the education system, and, in this case, for example, did not talk about the 18.7, which, although, as the minister has said, she does not have comparable data across Canada, it certainly would have given people who are not familiar with educational statistics, and there are, I would say, many thousands of those in Manitoba, some sense that there are other ways of examining this particular position.

Really, what I am saying to the minister is that in her response to this commission, she has the opportunity to put these things into broader context, that she has the opportunity to talk to parents, teachers, superintendents and trustees, all the people who presented to this commission, perhaps to give a broader context.

So it is an issue of timing. There is another step to be made. I am flagging this for the minister as one of the areas of concern, and I am sure members on that committee will tell her the same thing, that this was one

of the areas of concern, and I am asking and suggesting to the minister that she take that opportunity to expand upon this area.

* (1610)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member has indicated that in terms of actual experience, that 18.7 students is closer to what most teachers experience, and, with due respect, I do not know any classroom teacher who has not had some experience utilizing resource teachers, special needs teachers, clinicians, counsellors, teacher-librarians. I do not know any. If she could produce for me a Manitoba teacher who has only had experience with the number of students in their own class and no other teacher working with those children, if she could produce for me the teacher in Manitoba who has never utilized the extra educators in the school—the principal, the resource teacher—then I would concede that there might be a point in one or two instances. But most classroom teachers that I know, in fact, all the classroom teachers that I know, have from time to time utilized reading recovery teachers, resource teachers, clinicians, counsellors.

So for her to say that most teachers have an isolated experience, in which they never are aware of the other educators in the school, by saying that 18.7 is what most teachers experience and completely negate the worth of the other educators in the school who lift, in some cases, a very heavy burden indeed from the backs of the classroom teachers, I think maybe it would be good if the member could come into some of the K to 8 schools and watch what happens there because there is interaction. If what she is saying by implication is that putting resource teachers and special needs teachers in the school makes no difference whatsoever to the classroom teacher, then I would like to know what teacher she has been talking to who gained no benefit whatsoever in terms of lightening their load or assisting with the teaching of their students from other specialists, other educators in the school. Maybe she could tell me which teachers receive no benefit from other educators in the school.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

I thought we had progressed to the point where other educators in the school were seen as an integral part of the school staff, as an integral part of lessening the load of those classroom teachers who experience, on average,

18.7 students in their classroom and do receive help from the other educators in the school with those children who require attention over and above what the classroom teacher is able to provide. So to completely negate, as she has by implication, the impact of the other educators in the school by saying that the formula using educator-teacher formula is not a good thing to do because 18.7 students is what most teachers experience is to indicate those other educators have no impact whatsoever, I do not think that is correct. I think they do have an impact and I think it is a very beneficial positive impact. I am sorry the member does not feel that way. I am sorry the classroom teachers she has talked to do not feel that way, but I feel that they do help in the schools, they do help the regular teachers.

We would have included other statistics such as class size, such as the 18.7 to show that Manitoba's position vis-à-vis the other provinces is good, but we did not have certifiable verification the way we do on the pupil-educator. I think if we had put it in without being able to verify it absolutely, we would then be criticized for putting it in without being able to verify it absolutely and probably by the same member who is now saying we should have included it, but to include it out of context—and I suppose we could have put it in verifying it against one or two provinces, but we would prefer to have a nationwide look when we are doing a comparison to this study.

You may feel there should have been other data in; you may feel there should have been some data left out. Whether you agree with the data that was included, or disagree with the data that was not included, the fact is the teachers and the teachers' union were invited to comment or propose anything they wished, whether it was in the document or not in the document, but they chose not to provide other alternatives, except to say that they did not like the document.

I think that was unfortunate because the Manitoba Teachers' Society has an extremely good research staff, very, very capable people. They do know the issues and they do know the definitions and could have presented some alternatives that might have been very helpful to the committee, rather than just to simply say that they did not want to deviate from the status quo. So an opportunity, in my opinion, was lost, although as I did indicate, I have had many teachers informally indicate to me some other

ideas and directions that we could take. They prefer not to get into a wrangle with the union over it, but there are some—well, there are many educators, in fact, who had some good ideas to bring forward, although the official position publicly was simply to say the document is not well-written, the document is not accurate, the document is not worthy of discussion, we want the status quo.

I would like to know, and maybe I can ask the member if she has any figures—again, this is about the fourth time of asking, could you show me where the errors are, please? You started off, as I indicated before, saying this document had many errors, many incorrect figures, and I think this is about the fourth time that I have asked, could you please tell me what those errors are, because to date, to this moment, I have not been informed of any. I have simply been told that the member wished there could have been additional information provided or that certain kinds of information should not have been provided or the document did not give enough explanation or maybe it was written by somebody that the NDP do not like. I do not know, but to date, they have not told us where there are any mistakes in the document, which is what I believe we were going to be discussing today.

I would be interested to know, too, what about the issues in the paper? I think this is an interesting tactic of diversion. Let us not talk about the issues raised in the paper. Let us not talk about the ability of school boards to pay. Let us not talk about a myriad of important matters. Let us talk about who wrote it, how they wrote it, who read it, how they interpreted it, who felt badly about it, who felt good about it, but let us not talk about the issues contained in the document itself. That, to me, I think would be something I hope we do get to eventually in these Estimates because that is what is at the heart, or should be at the heart, of these questions.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): On a point of order, I am still relatively new here, but I understood the purpose of this process was to examine the Estimates of Expenditure, okay, and for the minister to be asking the opposition questions—the minister is the one who has the staff here, the minister is the one who is putting forward this budget, and it is up to the opposition to ask questions or the members of the government who do not understand it.

My understanding was this was not a place for debate generally about education. It was to examine the expenditures of the Department of Education, and I do not understand the minister asking questions of the questioners.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister, on the same point of order?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chair, I was inviting questions on meaningful topics. I was getting questions on topics that did not really get to the heart of the issue, and I was inviting the opposition to put forward questions of meaning and substance so that we could get discussing the heart of the matter rather than the things that go around the edge of it.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I am going to rule that, in fact, the member does not have a point of order, but it is a dispute over the facts, and simply in this way, that, in fact, members from all sides of the table, if you will, make comments and questions. I do believe that the minister, in asking for verification of certain questions, can pose questions in her comments.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister, to finish her comments. I believe there is about a minute and a half.

* (1620)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I believe I have concluded. At that, I will let them get on with their questioning.

Ms. Friesen: The minister has digressed quite a bit from the context of my comments last time, which was to invite her to make that fuller response at the next stage. I thought it was offered in a spirit of constructive advice. This is an area where there was a lot of discussion. I think people felt, the people whom I heard speak to the commission certainly saw this as a—although it may not have been inaccurate in itself, it certainly did not portray the conditions in the classroom which they saw themselves experiencing, and I was offering the minister the opportunity in her next stage of this paper to, in fact, reflect on that.

I did say that I had examined the most recent Statistics Canada material, which goes up to 1993-94, and on page 171 of that document I think the minister and her staff will find that Manitoba is listed of having increased its pupil-teacher ratio in public elementary, secondary schools this is across Canada—from 14.8 in 1989-90 to 15.2, so that in 1993-94 Statistics Canada definition of pupil-teacher ratio is 15.2.

Presumably, Statistics Canada's material comes from Manitoba. So, again, we have British Columbia's statistic, whose source is Manitoba, saying 14.9; we have a Statistics Canada one saying 15.2. The minister had earlier said that Statistics Canada and British Columbia were asking for the same kind of criteria. So I am asking the minister what the reason is for this.

Mrs. McIntosh: If that is the latest StatsCan, I do not know from whence they drew those statistics because they are not the same as our statistics for the same year. They are very close, but I do not know how they sourced that particular information. I do not have the document here. Maybe the member could indicate what source they used. They usually will list their source for how they gained the information.

Relatively speaking, however, I believe if you look at the relative comparison, which, I am sure, must be in that document she has, that relative comparison would still show Manitoba as it does in the 1992—I do not have it here—as it does in the year previous, which is the year that we were using. Pupil-educator ratios by province, '94-95, from British Columbia shows Manitoba the second lowest pupil-educator ratio in Canada from last year. I wager that, if you look at that StatsCan statistic, albeit I do not know how they sourced it, you would see Manitoba's position vis-à-vis the rest of Canada still is in that highly favourable percentage of being either second lowest, lowest or third lowest—in the bottom three.

But I would be interested to know what the relative positions are from that particular document. I am quite sure they verify these because the trend has not changed, and you may wish to read that into the record, if you have it there.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, yes, it shows Manitoba as about in the middle. There are lower pupil-teacher ratios in schools in—[interjection]

Mrs. McIntosh Are they pupil-educator or pupil-teacher?

Ms. Friesen Mr. Chairman, the minister asked, is it pupil-educator or pupil-teacher. I am using the StatsCan language, which says pupil-teacher ratio in public elementary, secondary schools. I wonder if that is not one of the issues, in fact. Is Manitoba including private schools in its overall statistics?

Mrs. McIntosh No, and it may be that particular thing, if they are using pupil-teacher as opposed to pupil-educator, may be talking about a different comparison. They may not be talking about this same one that gives us 14.9, which is the educators in the school versus the pupils. The FRAME budget is for public schools.

Ms. Friesen Mr. Chair, there are, obviously, some different elements there in comparison as well, but what it does show for 1993-94 is that there are five jurisdictions in Canada that have lower per pupil-teacher ratio in public schools. So I do not know whether Manitoba has changed in that position or not, but it puts us about in the middle under StatsCan's numbers.

Mrs. McIntosh I do not know what the range you have there is, if it is a wide range or if those four that are under Manitoba are just minimally under or way under. The pupil-educator ratios for '94-95, the range is quite dramatic Saskatchewan at 17.3, for example, versus Manitoba at 14.9, and the only one lower is Quebec at 14.3. Alberta is at 17.9; Prince Edward Island, at 17.1; Nova Scotia, at 17.2; New Brunswick, at 17.0. So they are all considerably higher, and the one that is lower is only lower by a portion of a percentage. I do not know if in that document you have the ones that are under Manitoba are under Manitoba by more than a percentage point or not or if they are all in that range.

But, be that as it may, if they are talking pupil-teacher and we are talking pupil-educator, you can still see that Manitoba fares very well either at the bottom or in the middle. It is certainly not in the high range.

Ms. Friesen Just for the minister's staff, that is page 171 of the 1995 Statistics Canada document, if you wanted to follow it up. The interesting thing, of course, also, is it shows which jurisdictions are increasing their class size and which are decreasing. More or less half of

them are increasing, half of them are decreasing. Manitoba unfortunately is on the increasing side.

Mrs. McIntosh We will take the page down and look into that. What year is that again, Jean?

Ms. Friesen 1995.

Mrs. McIntosh Thank you.

Ms. Friesen I wanted to ask the minister again about some of the issues that have been raised, again, on the research angle of this particular document. There are a number of people who looked at this document and looked at the representation that this document makes of the increase in teachers and the decrease in students. One of the comments which I think was frequently made to the committee was that the document does not acknowledge that many teachers have become part-time teachers and that had there been specifically a look at that issue of full-time versus part-time teachers, there would have been a very different conclusion reached, or a somewhat different conclusion reached.

* (1630)

Mrs. McIntosh The member unfortunately is incorrect. These figures are full-time equivalents. They are not part-time teachers, or if they are part time, they are only counted as part time. For example, if a principal is a teaching principal, he only teaches .35 percent of the time, then he is only counted .35 percent of the time. I know that rumour has been floating around, and I know that some people have actually put it out as if this figure were incorrect. It is not incorrect, these are full-time equivalent teachers. They do incorporate part-time teachers, but a half-time teacher is only counted as a half-time teacher, and you have to have two half-time teachers before you can count one on this figure.

That was raised at the principals' conference, in fact. We went back and had it all verified, checked and rechecked, and it came back that this figure stands as correct. The member has been misinformed, and I am glad that she raised it so it could be noted that the figure in the document has been verified by officials as indeed being correct. The source for that in terms of accuracy were two sources, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees—and they do have some knowledge of which people are working full time and part time because they

are the employers and the hiring agency— and the Schools Finance Branch, as well.

Ms. Friesen So that on pages 8 and 9 of this document—that is where the relationship between teachers and students is spoken of—the minister maintains that all the references to teachers take into account the 14 percent increase, I think it is, in Manitoba in part-time teacher positions.

Mrs. McIntosh Under where it says number of teachers on page 9, those are full-time equivalents. It could be that they have 12,000 full-time teachers or 24,000 half-time teachers, but they are to the equivalent of 12,000, actually 12,331 full-time teachers.

Ms. Friesen Another issue that was raised in this same area of the document is that the government chose to take the numbers from '88-89 and hence show a percentage change in the number of teachers by 2.5 percent.

One argument that has been made is that, had the government taken it from other dates, from later dates, you would show the decrease that most people have experienced, a decrease of about 0.8, I think.

Mrs. McIntosh: I think the member is probably fully aware that whenever we make comparisons, maybe not in every instance but primarily in most instances, we always start from the date that we took office. I have done that innumerable times; the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has done it innumerable times; the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) has done it; the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has done it. We will stand up and say, in 1988 when we took office the figures were this, and today they are that, and you will see that repeated over and over as a theme. We always start with the year that we took office to make comparisons.

Now, I suppose we could have started at a different year. The teachers generally start, when they are talking to us, I think it was 1993, the first year we had a 2 percent cut in funding. That is where the union likes to start, and I suppose that unfortunately is also where the official opposition likes to start, so I can probably throw the same accusation back, although I will not, that, well, we always start with the year we took office. You always start with the year that the revenues from Ottawa began to decline. I think it just easier to start with when we

took office and we have always got sort of a benchmark against which we can measure. It may have been that the year before or the year after certain things changed in any given comparison, but our common pattern is to start with 1988, because that is when we started.

Ms. Friesen: What I am trying to do is to reflect back to the minister some of the anger about this document. One of them is that people presented, believed that it did not reflect the reality that they were seeing in the classroom or in their school divisions.

The minister is right, of course, that people who have been in the education system in the last few years certainly have seen a change as a result of the cuts to Education. One of the changes they believe they have seen is an increase in the number of students in many of the classes across Manitoba.

That is why I am raising it. It is a sense of reflecting on the general intent of the document and trying to explain or represent to the minister why it has aroused so much anger and so much hostility at public meetings across the province, because indeed it has. Again, it seems to me that if a research paper had been done, one which presented pros and cons, both sides of an issue, in this case the issue of staffing and the issue of changes in teachers ratios, whether it is educator ratios or whether it is classroom-teacher ratios, I think the teaching profession, the trustees, indeed, and the general public would have had a greater confidence in a document that was setting out to deal with an issue in a fair way. What has concerned me and what I am reflecting back to the minister is that I am very concerned that that opportunity has been lost.

Now, I hope it has not. I think the minister has an opportunity to reflect on the report she gets and to take account of these kinds of questions, and although I am dealing with them, as did many other people deal with them in terms of the statistics, the issue is the nature of the document itself and the way in which it was presented as narrowing into five options with a range of numbers which people felt did not reflect the whole picture.

I am wondering again, if I can just focus it on the future, what does the minister see as the next stage of this? In other times the government has, for example, responded to the Boundaries Commission. Is the

minister going to have a formal response to the collective voice that she gets from her committee?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am interested, as the member indicates, that the document proposed five options, and they were very narrow, and I heard inherent in the question that that was not good, but I stress that there were five proposals in the document and a request for others. It was very clearly worded in the document. It could not be more clear. In fact, I will read to you what it says. [interjection] A member says, page 24. Yes, I am looking for a particular quote, but I will indicate that—well, I will just read the last line which says—there is another quote in here that is better, but it says: A major purpose of this paper is to initiate open discussion regarding these issues.

It goes on and invites people to a public meeting, and then it says: In addition, written comments and alternative suggestions are invited and should be sent to address and so on.

I indicated, as well, very clearly, in a letter that I sent to the editor and in the press release, that we were hoping that those five proposals would be a springboard for discussion that would lead to discussion and feedback and might spark some ideas that could be presented to government as a way to try to resolve the dilemma that trustees found themselves in.

* (1640)

So it was very, very clear, no ifs, ands or buts about it, that those five proposals were hoped to be the basis of a discussion that would spark wider perspective and other ideas. Unfortunately, and again I say it is very unfortunate, but perhaps there is opportunity still, the members of the union who made presentation did not have any other suggestions or ideas. They did not put forward any other options or alternatives. They indicated that they did not like the paper, they did not like the way it was written, they did not like the statistics that were put forward in the document. They questioned the validity of the statistics. They questioned the validity of the comparisons. They indicated that Manitoba teachers were far worse off, in most cases, than other provinces, even though information was there that indicated, on a comparison-by-profession basis and a comparison-by-province basis, they were doing all right, but they did not put forward any other options or alternatives.

It is very hard to consider other ideas if they are not presented, but the trustees and some of the other groups, by contrast, did use the opportunity to present alternatives to the current system. I have reams of letters from citizenry with other suggestions, some of them, I am sure, are ones that the union would not want to see invoked because they are quite clear and plain and colourfully worded. I got the bulk of those scribbled on the back of little pink folders.

I understand there was one Saturday or something that the union went out to the shopping malls, and they handed out quite a few of these pink folders with information and asked people to contact the minister and they did. They were usually scribbled all over with yes, I am contacting the minister to tell her that, and they were very, very supportive of the minister and I do not think that the union realized that would be the end result of their little pink pamphlets, because I have got them all over my office, I am with you, Minister, kind of statements. I do not appreciate being accosted at the mall by the union, et cetera, but I am sure they never sold out the teachers.

I have a whole scrapbook full of them which I am reading and taking seriously, because underneath the way in which the comments were sent back in are some suggestions. I wish that the teachers had taken opportunity, when they were given it, to do more than stand there and say we are really hard done by, and you are not nice, and we want the status quo, and we will not give you any other ideas. I think that was not helpful to us, but we still are willing to hear from teachers. As I say, there have been some who have come quietly forward to say have you ever thought of doing this, have you ever thought of doing that, it might work, it might help.

There are some teachers who are close to and friends with many trustees and understand the dilemma that trustees face, and have some empathy and sympathy for the dilemma that trustees find themselves in. There are, indeed, a lot of teachers who have indicated to me that they, too, are taxpayers and they have said that we pay taxes, too, and we understand the dilemma; it seems sort of strange to raise our salaries by a certain amount, only to take that same amount back in taxes because taxes have had to rise to accommodate my salary. There are I think a lot more teachers like that around than the union

realizes. I think I have been contacted by almost all of them in that who feel that way.

I wonder if the document had been worded any differently, if the response would have been any different, and I guess that was something that has been stated to me by an awful lot of people that raising this topic, even if encouched in the most user-friendly language possible would have raised the ire of the union, and the union would have seen in its duty to inflame the membership. Now if the wording of the document was terse and blunt, perhaps it was easier for those methodologies to succeed, but I wonder aloud if the response would have been that different, perhaps by degree, because we know in years past, this is a subject that just simply could not be raised. It could not be raised because the feelings on the issue were so sensitive.

Trustees have been afraid to raise it over the years. Parents have been afraid to raise it. Teachers have been afraid to raise it. Ministers of Education have ducked the issue for the better part of a decade. I know as president of MAST, we appeared before Minister Storrie. He ducked the issue. Ministers of Education do not want to touch this one; it is a hot potato. Trustees have been reluctant to take it to the floor of the convention in the last two years they have. I think that had the government spent another year to phrase this in user-friendly language and made sure that all the statistics were fully explained, I think that the teachers would still have been incredibly angry that we would raise this issue and question the method by which compensation is made to those employed in the field, because they have never been questioned this way before.

Ms. Friesen: I think the dilemma that the trustees find themselves in is a constant cutting of funds from the provincial government and an off loading onto the local tax base, particularly onto a local tax base which is increasingly bearing the bulk of taxation in Canada, the two changes which have been going on. So it is not an abstract issue, the dilemma of trustees, it is a series of political choices that Conservative governments have made.

I think what I am suggesting to the minister is that the document was perceived, widely seen by many teachers, as an unfair document and that it did not recognize the conditions that teachers face in the schools today and that

is really all I am pointing out to the minister at this stage that—well, we will move on.

I wanted to ask the minister, she mentioned a scrapbook that she has of pink slips, and I wondered what the pink slips from people who signed these when they were approached in malls and then sent them to the minister. Could the minister—yes, pink slips has another term, so I wanted to specify that. Would the minister be sending that to her commission? What is the disposition of those documents?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have them in a scrapbook. I said I could fill a scrapbook, probably several scrapbooks. The pink slips that I am referring to are not the dismissal slips or telephone slips. They were little pink brochures that the teachers' union put together and they were about the accountability document. I forget how they were worded. It had something about, look what your government is doing to education or something, and they went to the mall on a Saturday—it must have been a Saturday because these things all came flooding in on the Monday and Tuesday—and handed them out.

Many of them are, indeed, signed. People put their names on the bottom and one person attached a piece of paper saying, no, no, I shall not write the government and then proceeded to write the government with his views on what he thought about being given this piece of paper. Some of the wording on those were pretty colourful and some of them were fairly intense and, like, I am a retired teacher and I used to teach with 34 kids in the classroom and no prep time and no assistance and no resource teacher and no librarian and had to supervise lunch hour and did my homework at night and taught from nine to four and all of these things and I think teachers have got it pretty good these days. Those kinds of comments were there and as I indicated to the member, things that were written to be submissions and were intended for public consumption will all be referred to the commission to study.

* (1650)

Letters that were sent to me privately or that I consider were sent to me by someone who thought they were writing me a personal note and not a submission would be kept as private correspondence to me. Those

particular ones I have set aside as personal correspondence because they were not sparked by the commission. They were not written submissions to the commission, they were not even in response to the commission. They were in response to a piece of paper they were given that had information on it that really did not have anything to do with presentations to the commission. They are given a piece of paper that said the government of Manitoba has cut back on funding, and the government of Manitoba is hurting education, and the government of Manitoba is no good where education is concerned, and they are going to roll teachers' wages back and all of these things. I cannot remember what was on it exactly, but it was along that line.

So they were responding to that pink brochure. They were not responding to Enhancing Accountability. They were not responding to the Enhancing Accountability document at all. They were responding to a pink brochure that they were handed in the mall by a union member and they disagreed with what they had read or, in some cases, they just simply disagreed with the fact that somebody had given them this and told them to write me. So I do not really consider them submissions although I will go through them if there are any that I think could be considered that. I will phone the people who sent them and ask if they want them forwarded. They were not all signed, but the majority of them were signed.

You indicated that trustees are facing this dilemma now because of all the cuts in Education, but I assure you absolutely that trustees were facing this dilemma in 1985 and 1986 and 1987, and you can check the record, but I believe that there were no cuts to Education in those days, and trustees were making those requests of government. I know because I was in those years the past president, the president and the vice-president of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. It was a huge agenda item. It was debated hotly at many of our table officers' meetings. There were two presentations that I am aware of and that I was part of to ministers of Education asking for relief from the confines of binding arbitration in 1985, 1986, and 1987.

In 1986, the school trustees of Manitoba banded together to try to get a wage freeze. They wanted a wage freeze, that was 10 years ago, officially wanted a wage freeze. They were not successful, but there was no cutting then.

To say, well, trustees are now finally asking for a change in binding arbitration because of government cuts makes it very difficult to explain why they wanted the same thing 10, 11 years ago. Maybe the member could explain why 10 or 11 years ago, when we were getting money from the government in increases every year, maybe she can tell me why trustees, 10 and 11 years ago, wanted changes to binding arbitration, and why it was such a big issue, and why it was a topic of complaint every year, and why the ministers of Education of that day were asked to do something about it, officially, on behalf of trustees.

We can debate on the budget line school division funding, and the member has indicated that teachers have differing conditions today than they used to have before, and indeed they do, and, in fact, ironically enough, just a few moments ago I mentioned a retired teacher who pointed out how different the conditions are today than they used to be.

I know the other side of the coin. Conditions are different because, by and large, children today, unfortunately, do not have the same kinds of respectful attitudes in the classroom that they used to have 20, 30 years ago.

There are a lot of children who survive birth now and enter the school system who never used to, fetal alcohol syndrome children, for example. If there is a fetal alcohol syndrome child in a classroom without an aide, I would like the member to tell me where that child is, because every fetal alcohol syndrome student that I am aware of does have an aide or an assistant assigned to that student or assigned to the classroom teacher to help her or him in the classroom with that student.

Teachers are increasingly having to be social workers, nurses, parents, as well as teachers. Sometimes they have to be representatives of the justice system, and they do face pressures that teachers did not have to face 40, 50 years ago in terms of student contact. It is very difficult to hug a child these days. Teachers face a lot of pressures and we understand that, and we have great empathy for the teachers who work in the schools under these changed circumstances. They are different.

Even when I was a young teacher, 30 some-odd years ago—[interjection] Thank you, you say 20. In the early

'60s, when I was a young teacher, there were not the same problems in the classroom that there are today. At the same time, to try and assist the teachers, we have also introduced as a system things like preparation time, things like teacher assistants in the school, money for special needs and resource teachers.

We have tried to get those kinds of things into the school to try to help teachers with the very difficult job they have, and not for a minute should anyone ever think, when we start to talk about wages and the increasing costs to school systems of their teacher compensation package, that we are saying that teachers do not do a good job and are not worth being paid.

I know that equation has been made, very clearly made, and I think maybe made quite clearly by members of the official opposition. If you do not give the teachers a raise every year, even if you cannot afford one, that means that you do not value teachers and think they are doing a terrible job, and that is not an equation that is true.

We value teachers. A really good teacher is priceless. You cannot put a price tag on a top-notch teacher, and for a parent who has had a child in distress whose life is turned around by a good, caring, competent teacher, that parent would give almost anything to that teacher in gratitude. But the world does not work that way.

The union itself has put levels that say in terms of competence there is a level, and we see that in all areas of government and in big, wide systems where a teacher is a teacher is teacher, and if you are a Class IV, Step 1 you will get a certain wage. There is no way to honour those who are superb, and unfortunately that is part of the downside of the great equalizer that is built into the compensation packages.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, my question was, what will happen to those pink cards, and the minister said she is treating them as submissions to herself, some of which she might send on to the commission if she believes that would be appropriate.

Perhaps I can ask the minister, since she is saying that the vast majority of these—or perhaps I should ask, what proportion of these does the minister believe are—how would she classify them? The vast proportion are supporting the minister's position, or there is a 50-50

balance, or where does it add up to, or has she not had the chance to look at it yet?

* (1700)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I think there are four or five that support the teachers' position, and the rest are all—to be blunt, the rest say things like I got this crummy thing shoved in my face in the mail. They told me to send it to you. I am sending it to you to say if anybody sends you this saying they support them, then I think they are right out to lunch. That kind of comment, and they were sort of scribbled across it. It actually evoked a fair deal of hostility.

I was quite surprised, because the very first one I received was supportive. The very first one I received had the little pink thing with a little note saying please do not be so cruel to the teachers, and I thought, oh, okay, I am going to start receiving a lot of these and they are going to have that sort of message, like please do not be so cruel to the teachers. Then they just dumped all in a couple of days or the Tuesday, Wednesday. They just sort of dumped. Some of them were stuffed in my mail box at home, a few things like that.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, would the minister tell us approximately how many she received? Would it be more or less than 100, say?

Mrs. McIntosh: I did not count them up, but say between 70 and 110, something like that, a pile about that high, however many that would be.

Ms. Friesen: But, effectively, Mr. Chairman, we will have to take the minister's word for the variations of expression on those cards, because they will not become part of the public record in this first instance.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, you do not have to take my word for it if you choose not to. If I do not submit them, they will not be counted as part of the submission to the panel, and if I do submit them, then they will be counted. I may call some of the people who have been good enough to put their names and addresses on them and see if they want them in, but you know, some of them that just had three or four words across, I got the message pretty clearly, but I am not sure that they are the kind that you would want to have tabled publicly.

Be that as it may, I do not mean to have the panel consider things that were sent to me that were obviously not addressed to the panel and that were not in response to the written submission. They were not in response to Enhancing Accountability, and, I guess, like any other private correspondence, the member is quite right, I have no objection to those entire comments of mine being discounted, because if I do not submit them, then there is no documentation that they even exist. So, if you do not want to count them, do not count them. It does not bother me. I figure they were sent to me, for me.

Ms. Friesen: One of the other areas that people have great concern about in this document is its discussion of teacher education and rewards for education, incentives for further education, and hence the encouragement of further education. Clearly, that is one of the options that the document talks about, quite forcefully in some areas, that further education does not necessarily make a better teacher. I believe there were some concerns generally expressed around this same time about the whole area of teacher education and the various policy changes that seem to be being considered, both in this document and as a result of the Shapiro first report.

So I am asking again, in the issue of policy, where does the minister see the proposals in this document fitting into teacher education overall?

Mrs. McIntosh: For clarification, Mr. Chairman, could the member please read the specific proposals that she says we have regarding extra education for teachers? I am not aware of any proposals in the document. I know it was raised for discussion, asking what was the merit, but she has indicated that we have policy proposals here, and could she read them into the record please and tell me what pages they are on so I can respond properly?

Ms. Friesen: What this document does—for example, on page 20, this government document raises the question, and one assumes this is the minister speaking, of whether or not the educational system in Manitoba derives sufficient benefit from paying teachers for acquiring additional years of education, particularly in the absence of any measurement to indicate a particular teacher's performance is improved as a result of this education.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that is where the question is raised. I wonder if the member could tell me now where

the policy proposal she says we have in the document is printed, because I do not see it.

Ms. Friesen: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, it is not a dispute over the facts, but a dispute over the wording. This is a government document. This is a government discussion paper. One of the issues that the government has proposed for discussion is the question of whether or not teachers should benefit financially from additional years of education. I am looking at this, as teachers were and other people were at those hearings, in the context of other changes that are being considered in other areas of teacher education.

I suppose, first of all, I would like to ask the minister, since this is her paper, why she raised that issue, and does she herself believe, or not believe, that additional years of education should be rewarded and/or encouraged?

Mrs. McIntosh: I think it is well known that I support lifelong learning and that I support, as do most people, people in any profession acquiring additional skills that will assist them in enhancing and developing in that profession. I still do not see the policy—she says that we had a proposal in here.

We have raised a question. It is a question that has been raised by trustees for over a decade. Most everybody in the education system knows what is meant by this question. The question was raised for discussion. It is a discussion document. There are only five proposals in the document. They all relate to the collective bargaining dispute resolution mechanism with the request for us to receive more if there are more.

We then have a series of questions for discussion. This question does not propose a policy. It raises the question. It essentially says, do you think there is sufficient benefit from paying teachers for acquiring additional years of education? The answer could be yes, but the member chooses not to see that as a logical answer. The member assumes, as does the union, that the answer will be no. I do not know why they would make that assumption. I do not know why the member makes that assumption when we say, does Manitoba derive sufficient benefit from paying teachers for acquiring additional years of education? The rest of the sentence is, particularly the absence of any measurement to indicate

a particular teacher's performance has improved as a result of this education.

The member assumes the answer will be no. I first of all wonder why she makes that assumption and does not also assume the answer could just as easily be yes. Or, if the answer should be we would derive more benefit if there were some way of evaluating teachers to do just what I said in my earlier answer, how do you reward those superlative teachers who go over and above the call of duty? We know there are many, and there is no ability to reward them.

I can recall in our school division when I was a trustee wanting to hold an appreciation night for teachers who did extracurricular activities. In our naivete we said, gee, you have all these teachers that coach basketball; they do dramas; they do wonderful things; they stay after school; they do it on their own time, they are just wonderful, wonderful people. Let us have a banquet, bring them all in, give them a nice dinner and thank them publicly for their efforts.

We ended up doing it over the protestations of the Manitoba Teachers' Society which told us, and we got into quite a heated debate, you are honouring teachers for doing extracurricular activities, and by doing that you are implying to all the others that they are not deserving of appreciation and recognition. All teachers are equal, they are all paid the same, they are all treated the same, and for you to single out people for special recognition the way you are doing is to make the rest of them feel bad.

I can remember standing there with my mouth hanging open and talking to the local association and saying I cannot believe I hear you saying this. We had well over 100 teachers that we wanted to honour, we had not just picked out a couple. When I said that we have like a room full of people here that we wish to honour, they said that is the point. If you had only picked out the one or two top-notch ones, that would have been maybe all right but by singling out so many you are implying that the rest are not doing a good job. I said we are not implying any such thing. He was really remarkable. I could not believe it.

* (1710)

But that is off topic. How do you? We did, we had an annual banquet. To heck with them. We had the annual

banquet. We honoured those people. They were wonderful people. The plays and the dramas and the teams and the choirs and the things that they did just made the division wonderful. I will always be grateful to them, and I will hold a banquet for them any day of the week as long as I have enough money to do it.

The member knows, or ought to know if she has been at all following education over the last decade in the kindergarten to Grade 12 sense, that there are a lot of teachers who go out and get educational degrees for special interests of their own that do not really apply to the classroom. I will give an example. It is not a Manitoba example, so I am safe to do it, and the person involved has retired. But a phys ed department head, a very good phys ed teacher, one of the best, terrific phys ed teacher, no concerns there, went out and got a degree. I forget what the degree was in, but it had something to do with business accounting.

He got that degree because he owned a sporting goods store which he ran at the lake in the summer and needed that acumen, that expertise, to be able to better run his store. Do you think that his school board should have had to bump him up to another pay level because he got that degree when (a) he did not get it for the school and (b) it had nothing to do with physical education? There are some who enter into that category who feel they should get the extra money.

Now, maybe the opposition members feel they should, but I think it is a legitimate question to raise, and you know that most people who have been asking this question over the years know that it relates to that kind of situation, not to a kindergarten teacher who goes out and gets extra learning experience in early childhood development. Extra learning experience in early childhood development for a kindergarten teacher would be absolutely applicable, appropriate and worth spending some extra money on. That is the situation around which the question is being asked.

Most people who were aware of the issue as not an uncommon issue—it has been discussed for, as I say, a decade—understand that is why it is being asked. One of the presenters at the hearings—and the member may not have been there—who was a professor at the university, asked the very same question. It is one that has been asked by countless people over the years. It is not a new

question. It is not a question that attacks the importance of furthering education. It, in fact, asks the people who see the question to provide an answer. It invites a good reason in support of financial and rewarding further education. It is all in how you read it.

I suppose the member's point that she is trying to make is that people who feel threatened or angry by the document are going to read it in the negative as she does and assume the answer should be no. People who feel positive will read it and assume the answer should be yes. There is no proposal or policy being put forward in this paper. The member is highly literate, is highly knowledgeable about the use of words, extremely skilled in the use of words and should realize that this is a question that invites an answer and not a proposal. I mean, even I can see that, and the member does not credit me with a great deal of native intelligence, but I can understand the difference between a question and a proposal.

I think that inherent in there is, do you get sufficient benefit from paying teachers for additional years? If you do, then the answer, of course, will be yes. If you do not, why do you not? Would you if there were sufficient ways to indicate the performance that is enhanced by those extra years of education? What kinds of education would be appropriate? What ones should automatically result in a raise? What other ones should result in an examination of the issue? What other ones should automatically be denied? Are those questions that have applicability? Are people afraid to discuss this issue, or is this one of those issues that you cannot ask this question because, when you ask this question, people get upset?

I personally support lifelong learning. I think teachers who get education that is applicable to their area of expertise should have that recognized. I think the example I gave, though, of someone who gets an extra degree to run a summer business, it has nothing to do with the subject he teaches, should not get credit for teaching on that particular example. That is a real example, by the way. It is not a made up one.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I am interested by the minister's real example, and I expect that she and I would actually agree that a school division with imagination, a parent council group might be very interested in the

ability of that particular phys ed teacher to deal in business administration. Skills for independent living, for example, the entrepreneurship that he is suggesting, may, in fact, be very useful if the school chose to use them.

Sport has become a business, whether it is the Jets or whether it is people who are dealing at the community level. I would have thought there was an opportunity there for curriculum linkages and for the use of a quite unusual combination of skills.

The minister is indicating really just that particular person's intent. I think the result of it is something which could be very valuable for the schools, but that is if it was used appropriately, and I am sure that I would have thought that the minister would have seen that as an opportunity for schools to relate to.

My question, then, perhaps should be more pointed. The minister said she is raising this in this paper simply for discussion. Can the minister tell us whether she believes that the educational system in Manitoba derives sufficient benefit from paying teachers for acquiring additional years of education?

Mrs. McIntosh: I have to indicate that I was not just talking about the intent. I was not just indicating intent. I was saying, do we get sufficient benefit from taking a course—and the key word there is “sufficient,” because anything you learn will obviously be of some benefit. The key word in there is “sufficient.” Do you get sufficient benefit in the phys ed class to warrant an extra some thousand dollars per year to have a phys ed teacher who knows how to balance an accounting book? The member feels that there would be many parent councils who would feel they would get sufficient benefit to spend thousands of dollars to have a phys ed teacher who knows how to balance accounting books.

I am not so sure that I would be able to find very many parent councils who would agree, but, then, we do differ, because you could take that to great extremes, and, when you are counting dollars as school boards are, as the member has indicated—school boards are concerned, in her opinion, because of the cuts, even though they were concerned about these very issues 10 years ago when there were no cuts. School boards, I believe, watch for value wherever they go. I am not sure that a lot of school

councils, or parent councils, or school boards would feel that there would be sufficient benefit. If the member wants to read this sentence again, it does say sufficient in it. That is a key word because, obviously, obviously, there will always be some benefit. There will always be some benefit. Those that directly apply, the benefit is obvious, and, in my opinion, would be sufficient.

I was hoping that I might get some feedback from teachers on how they felt about this issue so that we could talk about it. I was hoping that teachers would say, well, I got a degree in anthropology, and I teach English, but I found it very useful because, when Hamlet stood with Yorick's skull—I do not know, you know, but they could maybe draw some parallel. I was hoping teachers would answer that question for us, but they chose to ignore it and simply say that we should not have asked the question, and that is unfortunate.

* (1720)

I understand the union's strategy, but I think it was not helpful. Perhaps, and there is still time, and as I indicated before, I am always in contact with the union executive and with the trustees' executive, and I think there may be some willingness to discuss answers to the questions as opposed to just saying, you must not ask the question; the question makes me uncomfortable; the question, if answered a certain way, will not be an answer I like, and, therefore, we will not answer it at all.

Well, after 10 years of the question being asked, in days of financial constraint and ever-growing costs and new technologies, why should we be afraid to discuss questions that are put forward in a discussion paper? This is a discussion paper. I believe it even says on the front, discussion paper, does it not? A discussion document. It clearly says it is for discussion. It does not say proposals. It does not say white paper. It does not say green paper. It does not say proposals for consideration. It says, this is a discussion document.

Hopefully, we still have opportunity for a discussion because I think teachers could be tremendously helpful in discussing these questions to let us know what benefits they do perceive from their extra education, what they feel is sufficient. Discuss it with trustees. Tell trustees how they benefit from this extra education. Let trustees tell

teachers what they observe to be true benefits of extra education.

We have seen many. We have seen teachers who have gone off and got degrees in educational administration, extremely helpful to them in the system particularly for moving into principalships or vice-principalships, very applicable, very appropriate, very worthy of monetary recompense.

I know we are running out of time, Mr. Chairman. Yesterday, if I may, we had indicated we would table some documents today, and I am fearful I will run out of time. I forgot yesterday to table them. If I may table them now so that the committee has them.

Mr. Chairman, I have the form for merit increments that was asked for that we use in the Department of Education and Training, and I have the Manitoba Education and Training performance management program. It is rather thick, but I have several copies there which I will leave with you. Then we have the executive office salaries, the increment gross pay less reduced workweek and the annual salary, and again several copies for you there.

For information, we had a question posed by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) about We Care and what kind of funding they might have received from government. We have checked through. We Care did receive support from Workforce 2000 in 1991-92. They received approximately \$7,000. It was one of about 750 small businesses that had training contracts that were approved that year. We have had about 2,800 training contracts with other small businesses up till last year, and of course we now have discontinued that portion of the program and are now into sectoral training.

There are no other programs that we have been able to discover that have provided any funding to the We Care company. We looked at the Employment Development Programs branch, et cetera, and, Mr. Chair, I do not have any documentation on it, but those are the figures the member for Inkster had asked and I did promise that I would table or read into the record the amount. So it was one of 750 small businesses that received a training contract in 1991-92. The amount was just a little over \$7,000. It was \$7,100 and something.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, can I repeat the question I asked the minister last time, and that was whether or not she believes the educational system in Manitoba derives sufficient benefit from paying teachers for acquiring additional years of education.

Mrs. McIntosh: For certain forms of education, absolutely. I say for certain forms of education, absolutely, but I do not think you can answer that totally in isolation from other related matters. I think you have to look at the nature of the education, the context in which it is being pursued. In other words, is the additional education the only means for increasing the salary? You know, there are a wide range of things of that nature, but I think any education acquired should be looked at to see if there is sufficient benefit in the classroom to warrant providing extra money for the acquiring of that education. You will always get some benefit.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, whom does the minister think should be making that determination?

Mrs. McIntosh: Again, Mr. Chairman, I had really hoped that teachers would have provided us with some insight into this, and I regret very deeply that they chose not to offer any thoughts on the topic. I would really like to yet have a chance. I do dialogue with, as I said, the union executive and other teachers who are friends of mine because having been a teacher by background, the majority of the circle of friends I move in still happen to be teachers. You do not lose those bonds. But I still hope to receive some feeling from teachers as to that very question so that I can answer it and be able to, in my answer, reflect some of how they feel.

Right now, to be quite blunt with you, no teacher has told me the details of how they feel about that question. They have indicated that we should not have asked the question, and some teachers in the panel presentations have expressed great insult that the question was asked and have indicated that all education is useful. I concur that all education is useful, and I concur you never lose when you learn something.

I have a daughter who has a degree in music performance. She is not a music performer, but that degree is extremely beneficial to her. She happens to be a schoolteacher. That degree, to me, I think is probably

very useful to her in teaching music in school. Is that sufficient benefit to the employer?

I had hoped we could have had a discussion with teachers and trustees on that topic, and I am hoping we still can because I intend to continue meeting with them free from the cameras and the glare and the adversarial sensationalism that surrounds public things. I am not going to commit my final answer to that question prior to having had those discussions or prior to hearing feedback from the panel that circulated around the province getting information for me on that very topic.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour now being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

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

The item before the committee is 1.(b)(1) and the motion of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to speak in support of our Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), in fact, both of our ministers of Health, our government which has been working hard to bring in health reform. It is absolutely necessary to bring in health care reform because that is the only way we are going to maintain a good health care system for us, for our children, for our grandchildren and for future generations.

Our Minister of Health is working hard to bring this about, but it is human nature to resist change, and that probably, Mr. Chairman, is the biggest problem that we have—fear of change.

From the other side also we see fear of a service being delivered by other than government. I think the other side forgets that government is here to provide a service. We are not here to provide jobs. We are here to provide a service. Probably this is the most important point that can be made, and it is one that is relevant to all

departments. It does not matter whether we are talking about Health or Education, Family Services, Highways, Justice, you name it, government is here to provide a service.

Now all governments at all levels in all provinces are struggling to cut costs to maintain services. We all need to live within our means, to bring down interest payments. We have all heard criticisms over the past decade about government, and it does not matter whether we are talking federal, provincial, municipal governments.

We have all heard that all government employees are fat cats, overpaid. We have got too much bureaucracy. Well, you know, there is a grain of truth. One of the main things that all of us have heard, if we are all honest enough to admit it, is that government does not provide enough service.

Now one of the ways to keep a handle on expenditures is to contract out, to introduce some form of competition, in other words, to go to the private sector. I take great offence to those particularly on the other side that going to the private section, or going to a private company, is somehow or other going to be providing a lesser kind of a service, a poor quality of service.

Are members on the other side saying that health care workers that work for a private nursing home are somehow or other providing a lesser quality of service? Are members on the other side saying that carpenters who do not work for government are somehow providing a shoddy kind of service? Are members on the other side saying that engineers who work for a private company are providing a lesser service? Museum workers, ministers who do not work for government, are they because they are in a private sector somehow providing a lesser quality? A poorer quality?

I take great offence that anybody who is working for the private sector is somehow or other providing a lesser kind of service. If you are a person of integrity, you will give good value regardless of who you work for. A person of integrity will give—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. If the members who want to carry on this conversation across the way want to do so, I would appreciate they do so in the hall. The

honourable member from St. Vital (Mrs. Render) has the floor at this time.

An Honourable Member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We will maintain decorum in the Chamber today, or we will not be carrying on for too long.

Mrs. Render: Let me just repeat again. If you are a person of integrity, you will give good value regardless of whom you work for, whether you work for the private sector, whether you work for government.

Now let me just give you a wee bit of history on home care here in Manitoba. It was started not by the government in the mid-'70s; it was started by a private organization in the late 1960s. I know, because I was part of that private organization. I worked for the Victorian Order of Nurses, and I helped along with one other individual establish what was then known as the Home Help Service. That was the service that provided the non-nursing service to patients.

Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition said today that privatizing home care would mean a revolving kind of service. He is absolutely wrong. The VON, the service that I worked for, provided consistent good care. And yes, there were times when a homemaker did not provide good service, but that homemaker was released. It is like any profession. There is always the good and the not-so-good, the average and the not-so-good. But we in the private sector were able to do something about it.

* (1540)

One of the things that we did in the private sector was we tried very hard to match the patient with the homemaker. Before the patient was discharged from hospital, I went out to the hospital, met the patient, tried to get a sense of that person's personality so I could try to match the homemaker to the needs of that patient. I met with the home care worker, the home care co-ordinator at the hospital. There was only one individual at that particular time. I talked to the doctor, I talked to the family, to see what kind of care was needed.

We worked very hard to match the needs of the patient to the homemakers that we had available. The VON

provided a very flexible service and that is the kind of thing that can be provided in the private sector. We were able to be flexible, we were able to adapt quickly to the needs. Regretfully, since then our home health has been sort of swallowed up by government, I guess you could say, and sometimes, regretfully I have to say, government moves very slowly, and we cannot move as quickly as we want to. We cannot be quite as adaptable or as flexible as we want to.

I understand that some of the services that we are providing now, some of the after-hour services, so to speak, some of those seven-day-a-week services, some of the home intravenous services are already being provided by a private company, not by a government worker. We have already proved that a private company does work, and I find it very hypocritical that members opposite have forgotten about all of the complaints that they brought to this legislature in 1993, all of the literature that they put out across the city during the 1993 by-election, all of the complaints about home care that they said.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we have worked hard to try to deal with those complaints. We have solved some of the problems, but we have not been able to solve all of them. One of the ways that we have been able to solve the problem of flexibility, of adapting quickly to the needs of the client by being able to provide more service than what we are able to give within government itself, is by contracting out, is by going out to a private company.

So, as I say, I find it very hypocritical that members opposite a few years ago were complaining about the home care service and now all of a sudden it is absolutely perfect. Now, I just think it is rather coincidental in today's Free Press, Monday, April 22, there is letter to the editor and it is called: Private care has quality. This is written by a nurse, and I want to quote: "I have been wanting to write this letter for sometime and hesitated because I don't want mudslinging between government home care and private agencies.

"I'm a registered nurse working for two private agencies, Olsten Kimberly Quality Care and Drake Medox. I take offence at the premise that people will die if not looked after by government home-care services. I empathize with compromised clients and realize how difficult it will be for them and their families to change workers.

"I provide quality care," says this writer, "to our clients and had to be experienced to be hired by either company. I graduated from the same nursing school, have the same code of ethics and have to have my nursing licence fee paid yearly.

"As a pediatric nurse, I work with many home-care clients and feel equally qualified, although I do not have the privilege of having mostly daytime hours.

"All home-care workers, government or private, are initially new to clients. The only reason government home care has case consistency is that private companies provide relief hours when government home-care workers cannot fill the hours needed by a client. I know that when Olsten Quality Care has a new client, they try very hard to maintain consistency of care by having the same nurses attend the same case.

"I am proud to work for Olsten Kimberly Quality Care as a pediatric nurse and equally proud to work for Drake Medox, providing relief for staff in hospitals and nursing services."

This is signed, Mr. Chairman, by Irene Shead.

Again, I just want to reiterate that a privately run home care can be just as good, because it depends upon the individual, it depends upon the standards that we as government are setting. And we do have standards; we will be monitoring them. Again, the bottom line is that we must continue to provide the service. We are here to ensure that service will continue into the future. Thank you.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I, too, would like to rise to speak to the motion and more specifically to the support of our Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and our government for the hard work and the commitment and the service that this government has given to the people of Manitoba. Mr. Chairperson, I think we only need go back a year ago, I guess it was April 25, to the last election, where we received support from Manitobans for us to continue to govern.

Mr. Chairperson, we have governed and, I believe, governed well since 1988 under very difficult times, times when governments have not had the revenues

coming in that they had in the '60s and the '70s, times when people of Manitoba and all Canadians have been saying it is time that government started to live within their means and it is time that governments started to get a handle on where the money was going. We all know that in our own personal lives we have to budget, we have to balance that budget, and we cannot continue to overspend. Otherwise we lose everything we have.

Mr. Chairperson, governments are no different. We have to learn to spend the money that we generate and that we bring in in a very wise and reasonable way. Our government, I think, has demonstrated our ability to cope and to make the right decisions when we placed the highest priority on Health, on Education and on Family Services continually since 1988. That is where the majority of the money is spent, and that is where we have placed the emphasis and the priority.

Every other department within government has had to sacrifice and take less, because we have made a commitment as a government to health, to education and to family services. It is clear that no other province across the country spends as much of its budget on health care. Some 33.8 percent of our budget this year is allocated to health care. Mr. Chairperson, we know that within that health care budget a considerable amount of money and an increasing amount of money has gone to home care. The budget for home care has over doubled since 1988. There is more money in the budget this year for home care. I think it is some \$8 million more for home care.

* (1550)

I do not know how much is enough, and I am not sure. We have said many times before as a government more money does not necessarily mean better care, but we are looking to try to find the best way possible to serve the needs of Manitobans as our population ages. That is a reality, Mr. Chairperson. More people are going to need home care into the future, not less. We see also as people are moving out of hospitals and into the community, and the move towards decentralization, we are in fact having to provide more care out of the institutions.

Mr. Chairperson, how do we possibly come to grips with that reality and try to spend and manage our dollars wisely? I do not believe that any one group in society

should have a monopoly. We have the MGEU and the union for home care workers that has, in essence—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having great difficulty—if the members want to carry on the conversation, I would appreciate that they do so in the loge. The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you. As I said, we have had the MGEU that has, in essence, had a monopoly over the work in the home care field for a long period of time now, and I know that there are certain components of home care that have been contracted out, some without a competitive process and, I think, more recently, some with a competitive process. The competition is a healthy thing. I believe that anyone that works in the health care field and the home care field is committed to the job that they do, and I do not think it matters whom they work for.

I have a background in the health care field, and it did not matter which hospital I worked in or where I worked. My first and foremost commitment and responsibility was to the patient that I looked after, and I tried to do that to the best of my ability. I believe that there are those that work for government in the home care field that are committed and dedicated; I believe there are those that work for the private companies that are committed and dedicated. I do not think it matters whom you work for, I think it matters how committed you are to the people that you serve. I believe it can happen with any person working for any agency. If the commitment and the dedication are there, they will ensure that their patients get good service.

I argue that there is absolutely no reason, or there should be no reason, to fear the competitive process in health care. We are going to need more and more people in the community delivering home care into the future, and if we can have more organizations and more people involved in that profession, we are going to be able to serve the people that need that service in a better fashion.

I have to think that the ideologically driven opposition, New Democratic opposition, in this House is putting the unions and their union bosses far ahead of the people that need the service. I am extremely disappointed to hear them ranting and orchestrating the kind of unrest that we are seeing, and many of those people that are working in

home care presently that are MGEU members do not want to be out on strike. They want to be there looking after their patients, and I think it is the ideology and the rumour-mongering that is spread by union bosses and members of the New Democratic Party that does no service to those that are working there and committed to their patients and those that need that kind of care and that kind of support in our community.

We are looking at pilot projects that will provide some competitive process in the marketplace, and I would encourage members of the opposition, rather than standing up in this House and in the media and in the community day after day trying to whip up the troops and fearmonger and spread information that is incorrect out there, to sit down with their friends, the union leadership, and help them develop a bid to compete for the jobs that will be available. I think that might be a very positive process, and, quite frankly, if they could work very cooperatively with their union bosses and indicate to them that there is the opportunity and have them come forward and put in a bid, they might even surprise themselves and win some of the work in one of the quadrants of the city of Winnipeg. I think that would be a very positive option.

I do not want to stand and criticize. I just think they have to get beyond, in the opposition, the New Democratic opposition, their hidebound ideology and sit down and look at how they can work with the union bosses to the benefit of the patients that need the care and put in a proposal that might see them win some of the work in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Chairperson, my understanding is throughout rural Manitoba that things are going fairly well. In the city of Winnipeg things are a little different. I know the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) may have the opportunity to stand up and report on where the strike is at and what kind of service is being provided, but I think it is important for the opposition to look at this in a constructive way to encourage their friends, the union bosses, to sit down and spend their time productively developing proposals to meet the needs of those people that need it.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Mr. Chairperson, I am happy to have this opportunity to put a few comments on record. I do wish to indicate that there

are many, many concerns about the issue that has been raised in this House, and I want to indicate too that we continue to work hard to ensure that the people of Manitoba who require these essential services are in fact receiving them. However, I note with a great amount of concern that there are home care attendants who are in fact on strike who are using intimidation tactics to persuade others not to work.

Indeed, we had a letter from a very frightened woman, and the member from Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) might think nothing of intimidation tactics by union members, but I for one am concerned about them. This particular woman had been assigned to a client, a client who was still at home, wanting to receive care at home, and had gone out to that home in a rural area. This is a woman dedicated to providing health care to these workers. Two home care attendants who were on strike follow this worker from the client's home out in the country, an isolated area, to a location near her home. This country road was blocked by water, and a series of vehicles were turning around. This woman who was attempting to continue providing services, her car was stopped. These two strikers came up to her car, in this isolated area, came over to her vehicle and started to threaten her, started to threaten her with fines of a thousand dollars from the union, that the union would fine her for helping people.

Here is a woman on an isolated country road being met by two thugs who are frightening an elderly woman. Her name, they said her name would be put on a black list, and she would never again be accepted by her co-workers when the strike was over. They threatened to put her name and a picture over a local newspaper. Then, when some traffic came by, these two brave thugs were intimidated themselves and thought they should move away, and so this woman had an opportunity then to leave. She turned her vehicle around and proceeded to drive, and, again, she was stopped by these two strikers, these two people who themselves had no respect for the vulnerable of Manitoba. But what is worse is that they attempted to dissuade her from providing these services. And so she was met by these two health care attendants—what an ironic title “health care attendants”—intimidating, intimidating people wanting to work, and they swung into her lane of traffic and followed her.

Now, the member from Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) might not be frightened about driving down a country road and

being stopped by two male individuals. And where is the member from Osborne (Ms. McGifford) who always talks about women's rights? And we have two thugs, two people on strike, stopping these individuals from working. This is a woman, then, who immediately went to her supervisor and reported the incident; she would still like to work but cannot because of these threats.

Where does the NDP stand? Where does the NDP stand on supporting workers who want to deal with these vulnerable people, who want to give this help. I will tell you, the NDP does not care because of the comic antics that the member from Dauphin is engaging in right at this moment. He does not care. He does not care about the rural women who, in fact, say, I believe that we have a responsibility to look after the vulnerable in our society. He does not care.

The member from Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is spouting off from his seat. He will have an opportunity to stand up, and he will be able to tell the people of Manitoba where, in fact, he stands. Let the people of Manitoba know where he stands.

* (1600)

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I believe, yes, on a point of order, the member speaking just relinquished the floor and asked me to respond to a question which I would be glad to do, so I believe if you refer to his words you will find that he has relinquished the floor.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Toews: I indicated, for the record, and the record will indicate that I said, when he has the opportunity to speak, he can tell where he stands, on the side of the union thugs or on the side of people who care about Manitobans, who want to deliver that service. One could say, perhaps this is just an isolated event. Well, I can indicate, Mr. Chair, that this is not an isolated event, that

this is an attitude that comes down from the union. It is an attitude that comes down from the union and tells us exactly where the union stands, where the union bosses stand on this particular issue.

Over the weekend, this is what the union said to the government negotiators in respect of essential services. As you know, we have been attempting to deal on a voluntary basis with an essential services agreement. In every single situation the governments and the unions, in fact, have been able to agree on an essential services agreement. In this particular case, when we are dealing with the most vulnerable, the union says no. Not only does the union say no, Mr. Chairperson, you know what they say? They say it is our position—and these are the union's words—that the fact that functionally dependent clients are in jeopardy. They admit they are in jeopardy without an essential services agreement, and they say it remains the government's responsibility.

The home care workers who want to work are being intimidated by the union bosses and being encouraged by this kind of language from the union, threatened with fines, threatened with blackmail, and I do not expect any understanding on this part from members opposite, because they do support that kind of activity; because not once have they stood up and said we support the right of people to work if people choose to work in this province.

There is a right to work in this province, and we believe in it. We believe that public servants who choose to help others should be given that opportunity. We will not stand with the NDP and say, let us intimidate women on isolated country roads by sending health care attendants—the irony of that, to send other health care attendants to intimidate women, middle-aged women who are trying to make a living and taking care of the vulnerable people, that these people now are saying do not do it, if you do it you are going to be fined by the union, you are going to be blacklisted.

Well, there is no such law in Manitoba that would prevent workers from exercising their public responsibility, and this government will continue to support workers against union bosses who care nothing for workers, who care nothing for the people of Manitoba, and who care only for themselves. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I would like to put a few comments on the record with regard to this particular issue and this particular topic, Mr. Chairman. I would have to agree with my colleague, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), who has just put on the record some of the realities and some of the incidents that are occurring across this province as a result of union bosses intimidating innocent people who are trying to do their job.

Since the Minister of Labour stood up on his feet, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) has continually laughed and snickered at the comments that the Minister of Labour has put on the record. I think this is despicable because I have to tell you that in talking to people who are providing services, home care services, to the most vulnerable in our society, the people who are elderly, who cannot get out of bed in the morning without any assistance—we have people out there, home care workers, who earnestly want to deliver the service.

I have spoken to several of them, Mr. Chairman, who have indicated to me very clearly they want to have nothing to do with the strike, nothing whatsoever. All they want is to do their job.

I go back to a time when the nurses were on strike a couple of years ago, other than a small community where the nursing staff in the hospital are part of the community. At that time the nursing staff at that hospital decided that they would not follow suit with the union and did not go out on strike when other nurses did. As a matter of fact, they continued to provide the services to the people that were within that community and in that hospital.

It was no secret that during that period of time these nurses, as well, underwent some tremendous stress in trying to provide the services that they were trained for. It is no different today as we enter this particular strike with the home care workers.

In rural Manitoba, the people who are providing the services are themselves part of the community. They do not want to go on strike. They are happy to have a job. They are happy to have a place to go to work, and they want to continue to work. They are not complaining about their wages. They are not complaining about

anything. They are happy to be able to provide the services to the people that need them.

I can relate a personal story because my father is one who receives home care services. There was a time of confusion a couple of weeks ago when my father approached me and asked me whether or not he would have to begin paying for all the services that he was receiving because this is what the union was telling their members. My father approached me and said, is it true, Len, that in fact we will have to pay for the services? There was no truth in it whatsoever, but this message was coming down from whom? Who was the message coming down from? It was coming down from the union bosses, Mr. Chairman, who are associated directly with the members across the floor.

So, when I look at the despicable actions that we are seeing out there today, I cannot help but feel sorry for the state of our province because indeed we have people who are misrepresenting in fact what ordinary working people have in terms of their own goals, in terms of their own aspirations, in terms of serving the people that they are hired to serve.

I know that in rural Manitoba, no matter what community you go to, you hear the same story over and over again. We do not want to go on strike. We are happy to have a job. We want to serve the clients that have hired us to serve them, or we want to perform the services that we were hired to do, and we want to have nothing to do with what is going on with the strike in the city of Winnipeg.

So I do not understand why these innocent people, who have a desire only to perform the services that they are supposed to do, are being intimidated by others when in fact they have nothing to do with the strike whatsoever. So I would hope that members opposite would do a little bit of thinking about the impact and who is truly impacted by the decisions and the actions that they are taking.

Mr. Chairman, I know words like “deceit” and “lying” and “hypocrisy” are not words that should be used in this Chamber, but indeed, when you look at the actions that are being taken out there, how can one describe them in any other way? With that—

Point of Order

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Point of order, Kildonan, Mr. Chairperson, I have been listening very patiently to comments, very inciteful comments, by members opposite, but I think that the member, by indicating that people are lying, besmirches the reputation of everyone in this House, and I think he ought to withdraw those comments.

Mr. Derkach: If that offends members opposite, I withdraw those comments.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister for that.

* * *

* (1610)

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to conclude.

Mr. Derkach: I did not want to in any way offend members opposite, but let me say to conclude that I think members opposite should rethink their positions and should rethink the strategy that they are taking with regard to this situation and indeed allow Manitobans to deliver the services that they have been hired to deliver. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sale: In addressing this motion, I am, first of all, driven to the documents which the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) so reluctantly and so slowly tabled and so incompletely tabled in this House over the past week. It is striking, Mr. Chairperson, that the government has yet to table a shred of evidence in favour of their proposals. In fact, everything that they have tabled goes against the proposal of privatization in Winnipeg.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Let me first quote from page 6 of the Advisory Committee: "The Advisory Committee would consider it irresponsible to transfer the present program to a Home Care Agency"—let alone private home care delivery agencies—"without first articulating clear program standards that form the basis for measuring program approaches and activities in all regions."

They go on to say that: "Clear articulation of core services is also essential to ensure that basic Home Care needs are met." The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has for a week now gotten up and read portions of a 1986-87 report into the records, a Price Waterhouse report commissioned by the NDP government, commissioned because we knew that home care needed to adapt and to evolve. Unfortunately, we were prevented from acting on that report in an appropriate way. But this government has had eight long years to do even a few of the things that were identified in that study that needed attention. They might not have agreed with all the items that Price Waterhouse recommended. Indeed, our party would not agree with many of the suggestions for user fees, for example. Nevertheless, some real issues were identified and this government has had eight long years with which to work at the question of appropriate home care delivery. They have done virtually nothing in that time to improve and strengthen this system and to deal with the increasing caseload, client load, complexity of cases, technology available in the homes to deliver home care.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, in the Connie Curran study which was finally tabled on Friday, there are five projects recommended. [interjection] Oh, I am glad to see the Minister of Health is listening here. There are five projects recommended to the Minister of Health for his consideration.

First of all, Ms. Curran's work teams recommended that there be a project testing outreach from nursing homes. I would invite the minister to table any work that was done in this regard. Ms. Curran's work team suggested that a screening tool needed to be developed in some great detail and she provided some evidence why this was the case. I would invite the minister to table the screening tool. The same team recommended that there be a new project, a pilot project to examine hospital community referral process. I would invite the minister to table the results of that pilot project for us to understand. There was another suggestion that we should redesign the service delivery model and that is on page 8 of one of the appendices of this particular document. I could just quote from this page. The work teams recognized that the issue of the problem—the fix of individual program delivery components, that is—will not achieve the goals of restructuring. A redesign of the service system is necessary, et cetera.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am having some difficulty with the chirping from the member in the back bench. I wonder if you might call him to order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Could I have order and decorum in the House, please. Thank you.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the fifth project that was recommended is the one that I presume was done by the untendered We Care project in Seven Oaks, a nursing service. Now that particular project called for an independent, external evaluator to be attached to that program. I would invite the minister to table the results of that independent, external evaluation of the We Care program.

An Honourable Member: You supported that project.

Mr. Sale: I have no idea whether it was a supportable project or not because we have never seen any evaluation results from it. I invite the minister to table the results of the evaluation done by an independent third party.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I am very disappointed that this government has decided to gut the capacity of the Canada Health Act to protect and preserve medicare. I want to talk in broad terms about the impact of privatizing home care. The minister has recognized and, indeed, has said on his feet on several occasions that the Canada Health Act does not protect home care. The simple reason is that back in 1977-78, when we left cost-sharing, it was not a listed service. It had not been included under the previous cost-sharing agreements across the country, so nothing there is included and protected.

Now the minister has also pointed out that a modern health care system is based to a great extent on the availability of a continuum of services, and home care is the base of that continuum. A high-quality, responsive, intensive home care system is a sine qua non of a good health care system in the 1990s. You cannot have an effective and efficient hospital and health care system without a solid home care system.

Now there is great concern on the part of many, many groups across the country that, with the federal Liberal

cuts to health care, the Established Programs Financing Act, and provincial government's unwillingness to protect elements of the system—notice, for example, the cuts to Pharmacare, vision care, hospital care—we are on our way to a two-tiered system of health care in Canada. That movement to a two-tiered system, Mr. Chairperson, is greatly accelerated by the increasing priority of home care, because home care is now the cheap way to privatize health care without having to then face the music in terms of breaking the Canada Health Act.

Consumers believe that the Canada Health Act can protect them if it is enforced. They do not realize that home care is not covered by that act.

An Honourable Member: Where was Tommy Douglas?

Mr. Sale: Tommy Douglas, unfortunately, has died, as the member opposite might know, and we honour his memory every time we protect medicare and we besmirch his memory every time we attack it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

I will maintain decorum in the House. The members have the opportunity to put their message on the record. Right now, the member for Crescentwood has the floor. I would appreciate it if we listened. The honourable member for Crescentwood, to continue.

Mr. Sale: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This is perhaps the real threat at the heart of the home care privatization scheme that this government is putting forward. There is no argument that we have used nonprofit agencies to deliver health care in this country over the years very effectively. Indeed, all of our hospitals are nonprofit agencies, and we applaud and value their work. We applaud and value the work of the Victorian Order of Nurses as a nonprofit agency.

* (1620)

But the health care system in Canada from the 1960s onwards has been a not-for-profit administered service, and when you take a core health care service such as

home care and put it in the hands of for-profit agencies, you go straight to the heart of gutting medicare. Because of the central role that home care now plays in health care delivery, you cannot have for-profit home care delivery and then still say that we have protected the medicare system of our country, which is based on not-for-profit administration.

So this minister is moving in a direction which will certainly, in the medium and the longer term, seriously erode the universality of not-for-profit publicly administered medicare in this country. That is why thousands of seniors, thousands of recipients, are rising. Let me tell you, the NDP does not have the power to make 40,000 senior citizens get upset about something. We are not that powerful. They are upset because they know their medicare system is at risk by your government's policies of privatization. We will stand with them, with the clients and with the workers, to defeat your privatization scheme at all costs and for as long as it takes, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I too would like to put a few words on the record in regard to the home care. As of Tuesday, 6 a.m., April 16, the home care attendants—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Just to remind the honourable member, it is the resolution moved by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) that we are debating at this time. I understand that he is discussing home care. As long as he is relevant towards the motion, the honourable member for Turtle Mountain, to continue.

Mr. Tweed: In regard to the motion, thank you. I would just like to comment that the weekend prior to the strike, I had several phone calls to my constituency office and to my home. The people that I talked to were home care providers, and they were feeling very, I guess, in a state of desertion or whatever. They had a strong concern. They were being threatened by their union leaders and by the information that was being put out there falsely, I might add, that if they provided any service to the people that needed the service, that wanted the service, and that as a government of Manitoba we were paying to provide the service, they would be reprimanded by their unions in the forms of fines, in the forms of blacklisting. To my understanding, even some of them, there were threats issued.

They were very concerned, not only for their own health, because they certainly had their health and were capable of providing good care to the people that they were looking after, they were concerned about the health of the people that they were going to withdraw their services from.

Many of the people that I talked to suggested that they had not voted in favour of a strike, and quite a few of them also suggested that they were not even really fully understanding of the reasons of the strike. They were led to believe that the government had intentions of privatizing 100 percent of the home care services which we know, based on the negotiating principles that have been brought forward, that it is an offer to privatize 25 percent of the services in Winnipeg.

I guess the only questions I might ask is that coming from a private industry where competition is day to day and we adjust day to day, I really have gained an understanding of how unions operate. That is, basically, if you can keep people in the dark long enough, they will believe you and march forward without any thought to whom they are hurting or also what they are depriving people of.

I think that as I check the records I do notice that this government, since 1988, has increased the home care budget. It has increased more than double. So I do not think it is a consideration of anybody to suggest that this government does not have compassion and concern for the home care people. The problem I have, again coming from the private sector, is that I see that the number of people we serve with our home care services has risen by 11 percent since 1988, yet the costs of doing that has increased 111 percent. I have a real concern with that as far as, are we getting more efficient? Are we delivering home care in the best possible means? Based on these numbers, simply, I would suggest that we are not. I would think that anybody that could put numbers down on paper would suggest that if your amount of people served has increased by 11 percent and the amount that it has cost you has risen by 111 percent, that is not good economics. Even to the other side, I would think that they would be able to understand the simple facts.

I often, also in the House, Mr. Chairperson, cringe when the word "profit" is brought up, because it seems that no matter what is being talked about or what is being

suggested by the government, if the word "profit" enters into it, the members opposite, I would suggest, who have never probably participated in a profitable industry, and I would probably like to check resumes to see if they have ever participated in any kind of an industry where they were judged based on their productivity instead of just showing up for their nine-to-five times, that they might understand the emphasis and the desire for profit to be integrated into our system.

As the honourable member for St. Vital had suggested, when you suggest profit and we hear the cries and the moans from the other side, it makes me think, is everybody that is involved in this society today that is involved with profit unable to deliver the best service? It does not make sense to me that profit in any term, in any way you express the word "profit," would be deemed as being bad. If I can deliver a service to someone else at a profit, and a better service, I cannot see a problem with that. Although I do understand, again, coming from the opposite members' backgrounds, that that may be a problem.

As I sit here too, I also, reading through the budget and some of the budget discussions that we have had, again refer to the members opposite; here is a group of people that voted against a government of Manitoba adding \$8-million more to the home care service.

You talk about what is right for the people delivering the service or what is wrong, but does it make any sense that you would vote against something that you are so vigilantly defending at this point in time to us? You are standing up and saying that it will never be good unless we put more money into it, and we cannot get profit into it because that will taint them. The people will not provide the good service. I suggest, you cannot have it both ways. You either vote for the increase in the spending, which you did not— and yet you stand up and defend the union's position that they would withdraw services from the people in Manitoba that need it most.

As I sat here earlier today too, I saw a former member of the Choices group stand up and propose none. It seems like, I do not know what the term is, but when you have a name that says "choices," you would think that you would have options, but, again, we see none brought forward by the members opposite.

I also think, as I sit here and listen, that the members opposite, when they cannot win their argument with the facts, they tend to get into personal attacks, obviously, on the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), on the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews). Their attacks become a little tiring, but I guess they feel that they are winning points with the public when they attack a personality instead of the government or the policies that we are bringing forward.

I can attest, Mr. Chairperson, that I have attended several meetings throughout the province with the Minister of Health. He has attended throughout rural Manitoba. He has attended throughout all of the city of Winnipeg, and I do not think you will find a more dedicated minister as far as listening to what the people have to say and trying to put the best deal forward for what they are trying to do. I think he is a kind, compassionate man and he has a concern truly for the patient, unlike the members opposite whose only concern is for the union bosses that they represent here in the House and they are the ones who are standing up to support the withdrawing of services from the people of Manitoba who need it most.

* (1630)

They may cajole, they may make remarks from the sides, but I suggest to you that the members opposite stand for the union. They do not stand for the client. They stand for the union, and they support the union in their withdrawal of services to the most vulnerable people in the province of Manitoba. I say to that, shame. I think it is a terrible shame that these people have to suffer for an ideological point of view that does not make sense in today's changing world. The whole world is changing rapidly, and if you do not get on the ship you are going to sink.

So I suggest to the members opposite to take a hard look at where home care is going, take a hard look at what the government is putting into the program and how we are going to make it better for the people of the province of Manitoba. I also ask that the members opposite, when they are criticizing get away from the personal stuff. It does not have any bearing or any effect on the people and the province of Manitoba. The facts are the facts, Mr. Chairperson, and I would suggest that the members opposite take a hard look at their policies

and their programs. I would suggest that they consider standing with the clients instead of with the unions when it comes to taking care of the people of the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I welcome the opportunity of dealing with the resolution that I brought forward that dealt specifically with the inability of the minister to deal with the home care problem.

I do have to comment on the comments of the member who just proceeded me. I agree there ought not to be personal attacks or condemnations in this Chamber, and I implore members opposite to cease and desist. If one were to look at Hansard debates and look at the personal comments that have been levelled, particularly by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), at virtually everyone in this Chamber, I think it is an absolute disgrace. I agree with the member that the Minister of Health ought to cease and desist from levelling those kind of comments.

Let us get a little bit of a grip on reality here in this Chamber, Mr. Chairperson. I sat here and listened to debates of members opposite, and what did I hear? Somehow this whole privatization scheme, this plot, was somehow hatched by the union movement, by the union bosses, as members have repeated over and over again, or somehow it was hatched by the NDP.

The fact that virtually every health care organization in the province of Manitoba is opposing home care has no bearing on members opposite. The fact that there is no major study or recommendation dealing with home care and justifying the government's decision seems to be lost on members opposite.

Where did this idea come from? Where did the privatization come from? It comes from the one document that members opposite will refuse to acknowledge or to deal with in this Chamber and that is their own Treasury Board submission, the government's submission. The minister signed this submission, the Premier approved it, all of them front bench. The two front benches in this Chamber approved this plan, the plan to privatize home care.

What does this plan say? Members opposite, the minister in fact refuses to deal with this document because I asked him about it in Question Period. What

does this document, the government plan say? It says, and I quote, divestiture of all service delivery. It does not say some. It does not say partial. It says divestiture of all service delivery is the policy of Manitoba Health.

Mr. Chairperson, they can play games with numbers. They can say oh, yes, we are only privatizing at this point 25 percent of Winnipeg, and we are only privatizing all of the nursing services at this point. Their health policy, which they are refusing to defend, says divestiture of all service delivery. Government document, cabinet document, signed by the Minister of Health, approved by the front bench. I do not know if the backbenchers had opportunity to see this document. I will provide it to you, but it is your government, your document, your policy.

Members opposite like to talk about user fees, and they like to say that the union bosses or the NDP made up the concept of user fees. Where did that concept come from? Let us look in the government document. Let us look in the minister's cabinet documents, signed by the Minister of Health, approved by both front benches of members opposite. It talks about user fees, it talks about imposing user fees on home care, and let me quote from the government document What Will Be under home care. Services to be categorized: core services, government funded, as is today. Noncore services, customer funded, as is today. But wait, there is another line, core services, government/customer funded. The customer, and I hate that term for clients and patients. Customers. They make it like they are selling sausages, but nonetheless it says in this document core services, government are customer funded. That is user fees. And they can say anything they want, but their own document, their own policy calls for user fees on home care services.

What Will Be, and the cabinet document states core services, government/customer share costs. So they may blame the union movement, they may blame the NDP, they may blame the Manitoba Society of Seniors, they may blame the Manitoba League of the Physically Handicapped, they may blame every disabled group in the city of Winnipeg, they may blame the home care workers, they may blame the home care clients. It is their policy, it is their document, and they cannot shy away from that.

This is the least referred to document in the history, I suggest, of cabinet documents in the Province of Manitoba, because they do not want to acknowledge it.

They do not want to acknowledge that Manitobans know what government policy is. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) refuses to deal with it. The backbenchers and members opposite refuse to deal with it. Instead, the Minister of Health finds reports from 10 or 15 years ago that he wants to deal with, but he cannot deal with his own cabinet document, his own cabinet submission that said they would be privatizing completely home care.

Now, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), I believe, talked about rural Manitoba. What did this document say about rural Manitoba? When the minister was out and when the member was touring with the minister, did the minister say, did he advise the member what was in the cabinet document about rural Manitoba? Let me indicate what it says, and let me remind you, the government document, this is not an NDP document, this is your government's document, and what does it say? Ten regional health associations developed, regional health associations will take over all service delivery in the rural areas, including home care by April 1997.

Now, members opposite might say, well, perhaps that will be government home care. The plan in this document indicates there will be no government home care by that time for those rural health divisions to take over. Who will be left? The private companies, the private friends of the members opposite. Members opposite suggest that somehow we are attacking private companies. Let me tell you what is in this document dealing with private companies. This document says that the city of Winnipeg will be divided up into four quarters and who will be given contracts: northeast quadrant, Drake Medox; southwest quadrant—oh, there is a familiar name—We Care; southeast quadrant and northwest quadrant. They are going to divide the city of Winnipeg up and give a monopoly.

Now the minister took exception to the word "monopoly," but once you give a monopoly, one private company, one service delivery in one section, what option does the client have? Can the client phone up and say, no I do not like it? No, they are stuck with the private deliverer of care in that region. So let us get a grip on the issue here in this Chamber. The issue here is privatization, and it is not privatization as made up by members of the union movement or by the workers or by the public. It is the government's own document. So perhaps we should start from that premise. Perhaps we

should start debating the government policy, and we have been trying to do that in Estimates.

That is why we have been questioning the minister, and that is why we have brought this motion against this minister. We have said, okay, we have got the document, we see what government policy is, now tell us where your studies are, tell us where your rationalization is. That is where the argument breaks down, because they have no rationalization and they have no studies and they have no experts and they have no justification whatsoever for this privatization plan.

* (1640)

So this takes us all back to the beginning. This document, their plan, no justification, they have to defend it. That is why we are facing a strike; that is why patients are in the situation they are in. It is not because of some plot that has been staged by anyone. It is because the government decided, for whatever reason, and we are only still trying to find out—the government made a decision to privatize home care and now they cannot justify it. Now they cannot find any rationale for it, so now what are they doing? Now they are looking for straw men; they are looking for people to blame for the mess that they found themselves in. They found themselves in a political mess, Mr. Chairperson, and their way out is to attack and to attack and to attack.

But I only suggest the members opposite, look at your own cabinet document. If it is such a good policy, defend it. If it is not a good policy, if you cannot justify it, there is nothing wrong with admitting you made a mistake. There is nothing wrong with saying, we made a mistake, we are going back to the drawing board. I think you would be respected by the public of Manitoba and the 1,500 people that were out there today, if you were to have the courage to say, we made a mistake, we are going back to the drawing board, and we are not going to go on this scheme and this plan to privatize. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I want to look at the resolution and speak to the resolution as moved by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) in discussion in this House. However, before I do that, I think it is important to note that home care attendants went on strike on April 16, and not only did home care

attendants in the city of Winnipeg go on strike, some home care workers in rural Manitoba went on strike. What I find most interesting about the fact that rural home care workers went on strike is simply by the way the whole issue was communicated to them.

Mr. Chairperson, I want to indicate to you that I received a number of calls from home care workers asking whether, in fact, they could be penalized, and whether government would, in fact, not pay them, penalize them and they would not be paid if they did not go out on strike or if they could be penalized some other way. My response to them was that their superior staff should have told them that there were no penalties and that there would be no retribution should they decide to continue to go to work and serve the most vulnerable sector in society, mainly our senior people that cannot help themselves.

Secondly, I received a phone call from a client. This person is in a wheelchair, cannot dress himself, cannot wash himself, and said he had been told that he would not be washed, bathed, clothed or helped in and out of his bed because the home care workers would be out on strike; he had been told, and do not call your member of the Legislature. The home care worker that called me said the same thing. He had been told that in no uncertain terms are you to call your member of the Legislature. The home care co-ordinator in my area, when I called her and asked her why these people were on strike, said to me this: I have no right to talk to you.

Since, when can members of my constituency or should members of my constituency be told, you have no right to talk to your member who is duly elected to represent them? What kind of a society have we evolved into? What kind of a police state are our opposition members supporting? You are directing and supporting union bosses who tell their union staff to threaten people—unconscionable; unheard of in this province.

Now, the other thing that I cannot understand, Mr. Chairperson, and this is one of the reasons I wanted to stand in this House, is the opposition members not supporting the budget that we have just passed. They voted against an \$8-million increase to home care, an increase to provide better home care, more equitable home care to vulnerable people, and the opposition members stand and vote against that initiative.

We have increased our home care budget since 1988 from \$38 million to \$91 million. That is almost a tripling of the home care budget. Yet the opposition members at each and every opportunity have voted to deny our senior people that are not able to help themselves that increase in budget. Every time they have voted against that budget increase. In essence, they have voted against services to those that require home care. They sit there and chuckle and support the union bosses and the increased salaries that these union bosses are now negotiating on the backs of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The resolution that the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), in fact, moved in this House is erroneous. I would suggest that we might have thrown out this resolution based on its inaccuracy. It says that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is condemned for his failure to provide any research or recommendations to support the contracting out of home care services to private, for-profit companies. Mr. Chairperson, there is no mention, and neither has the Minister of Health at any time indicated to this House or anybody else, that it would be private, for-profit companies that would be asked to tender for this service. Anybody can tender for this service. The Victorian Order of Nurses, which is a nonprofit group, is now providing services and can tender to provide the services to the home care clients in this province. The union which is opposing this action has every right in the world to tender to provide services to those most vulnerable. Any other group, nonprofit group, has the right to tender to provide services of this kind to the home care clients.

The one thing that the opposition members are afraid of and fear most is that you are going to finally bring the amount of money required to provide the services at the least cost and that the abuses which have been clearly identified by letter to us by some of the home care providers currently will be eliminated. That is what they are afraid of. That is what the unions are afraid of, and the union bosses are absolutely paranoid about losing its clientele, its membership. They are afraid that, if they do not apply the kind of fearmongering and tactics that they used to threaten some of our home care workers and our clientele, if they do not apply those kind of tactics, they will lose their union membership.

Therefore, the opposition members are dependent on the unions for funding to raise money for their next

campaign and are now sitting there across the way paranoid that their funding coffers will be depleted because the unions will no longer be able to support them.

Ladies and gentlemen, most of us that have been involved in private business know that if you keep on spending without looking at the means of where the funds are going to come from, you very quickly run broke. I suggest to you that previous NDP governments in other provinces have demonstrated clearly their inability to administer, to budget and maintain government at a level of affordability. They have simply not been able to without fee. Every NDP government in this country today applies a fee for service. This resolution implies that that is not so. So there are implied inaccuracies in this resolution as well as real.

* (1650)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Thank you.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I was going to go.

Mr. Ashton: I yield to my colleague, if that is—I wish to speak but—

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for the honourable member for Thompson to yield to the member for Radisson? Is there leave?

An Honourable Member: I might object.

Mr. Chairperson: No? Leave would be denied. It does not matter. He does not need leave anyway. He can get up again after.

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, for your willingness to ensure that I have leave to speak and join the debate on this crucial issue in terms of the provision of health care for Manitobans.

This is a turning point, this strike and this issue of privatizing home care is a turning point for the provision

of health care services in Manitoba because, as we heard today in Question Period, because home care is not covered under the Canada Health Act, it provides a way that this government and other governments like it that want to see us move away from medicare can find a way of offloading services into the community, privatizing them and then ensuring that they are not going to be covered under medicare.

This is why this is such an important issue, and I believe that this is why the health care workers that are on strike, the home care workers are fighting a battle that is very important to each and every citizen of Manitoba. It is not just on behalf of those home care workers, it is on behalf of all of us, all the clients, all of the users of our health care system, all of us that use it today and will need services like home care in the future.

Let this government not think that they are pulling the wool over the eyes of anyone when they try and suggest that this is not an issue about privatization of health care services. It is. It is also an issue of dignity. I would suggest that the government, in not ensuring the dignity of home care workers, is not ensuring the dignity of the patients that rely on home care services. That is what home care is about.

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

It is about dignity for patients who are much better off getting home care and treatment, health care services in their home. Not only is it better because they get individualized care, it is better because they have that dignity as being more independent and staying in their home, and they need the support not only of the caring home care worker, which they have had under the existing system, they need the support of the community. That is why we are going to fight to prevent this government from seeing that people are penalized by paying user fees to pay for home care.

If the minister and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) are correct that this is going to save money, passing that saving off on to the backs of elderly, terminally ill, chronically ill and the disabled is reprehensible and has no place in any kind of civilized or democratic society. That is why we are fighting this, and that is why those home care workers are standing up and saying they are fighting for the

dignity of the patients that they treat by ensuring that there is going to be no user fees.

I would suggest that ultimately that is where this government is going. This year they may be creating this four-sector monopoly in the city of Winnipeg where there is going to be no competition, and each of the private companies that win the contracting out will have the assurance of getting government subsidy. They will eventually be able to cut back the funding for those companies and they will eventually be forced to increase user fees and fees to their clients so that they can keep their profits up.

I just want to talk a little bit about that, because I am sure that the majority of people in the province of Manitoba, like us, would rather see subsidy going to pay for home care going to the pockets of those home care workers that treat the patients and work with the patients on a daily or weekly basis and have developed a relationship with those patients. They would rather see them get, for example, in the case of a registered nurse, a salary of approximately \$23 an hour. They would rather see it go to the nurse than go to the pocket of some boss for We Care. They would rather see that.

We know that this is what this government is up to; they are really up to just trying to bust the union. That is what this is about; that is what it was about in the strike with the university professors; that is what it was about with the strike with the emergency wards; that is what they are trying to do with education, with their reprehensible document about ensuring quality and accountability in education. They are out to union-bust.

It is a philosophical or ideological debate. That is what we are here to do. We have very different beliefs than you do, and one of the things that we believe in the depth of our soul is there is no place for profit, no place for profit in health care or in education. That is what this debate is about. It is reprehensible to make money off people who, of no fault of their own, are aging, are ill, are chronically or terminally ill. That is what this is about, and the ideological argument that it is reasonable to privatize home care is reprehensible.

I just want to talk a little bit about the manipulation that is going on with this government in terms of trying to sway the public. When I look at the way that they

have handled the questions that have come from Mr. Chomiak, the MLA for Kildonan, or Mr. Doer, the MLA for Concordia and the other people that have asked questions about getting studies that are going to justify this kind of an action, it is clear. One day they have said one thing, one day they have said another thing. One day they have got one study apparently that can justify this; the next day we find out that their own advisory committees have not recommended or supported this kind of initiative to introduce, as they say, competition in the provision of home care services. It is reprehensible, it is manipulative, and it is just not true, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

I would also just like to reiterate what I think that this government is going to do. They boast now of increasing by \$8 million the funding for home care in the province, and it is the first year that they have increased that line, even though we know that home care is the way to go in any sane health reform, that it is better for patients to have treatment in their homes as much as possible, that it costs a fraction to treat people in their homes than in personal care homes or in hospitals. I think the difference in one year is \$18,000, but the real issue here is eventually the government will reduce that line item in their budget. They will reduce the money allocated for home care, and that is when we are really going to see the competition and the increase in user fees and the loss of a number of people in our community who cannot afford to pay the fees that We Care has—in some cases, some \$23 per hour for care—when they are going to go without that care.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

It is going to cost the government more because they will be at the door at the emergency wards, they will be at the need of other health care services like personal care homes or nursing homes, and it is completely backwards for this government to try and make the argument that this is going to save money.

If, in fact, there are problems in the existing delivery of services in home care, for example, with the I.V. program, which some nurses suggest this government has deliberately kept from working efficiently so that they can create the feeling in the public system or with the public system that there are problems so that gives them some kind of, in their mind, justification for privatization. That

is the way that governments of this ilk always try and privatize services. First, they try and create so much chaos in the public system that people are concerned; then they will go ahead and try to use that as their justification for privatization. If any of that is true, all that it takes is a commitment to public health care and political will to make the public system more efficient and work better.

So any bureaucratic problems in the delivery of home care as it is now do not need privatization. What it needs is a commitment to public health and a commitment to those health care patients that rely on home care.

* (1700)

In closing, I just want to talk a little bit about how important it is for no user fees for clients who are of low income. I have had people on the phone crying because they are concerned about not getting treatment, as I am sure we all have, and I just want to say that it is reprehensible that this government will try to manipulate and use this as a political issue for their own ideological ends. This is not going to work, they have gone too far, and this is one issue, I think, where people are going to see them for what they really are, where there is no care, not only for the home care workers, but by extension of that for the home care patients. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Chairman, if there was ever any doubt of the tactics and who the members opposite support and who the members opposite are governed by, that was dispelled totally on Friday afternoon. On Friday afternoon, I cannot say it was the dead of night because it was afternoon, obviously, but the fact of the matter is, in a time when expectations, at least, particularly under the new rules of this House that were brought in, there was an anticipation that for Fridays, particularly Friday afternoons, being a committee day, there would be only a minimum of people here to carry on the question of Estimates discussion.

That is not what happened. What happened was, the member from Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) introduced a motion of censure for the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), and he brought in 12 of his caucus members to back him up, 12 bully boys to come in here and try and intimidate the Minister of Health. That kind of thing certainly was uncalled for.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to advise the honourable minister that all honourable members are honourable and that he choose his words very carefully.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Chair, at a time when the expectations were that there would be the minister and the critic and perhaps the odd other member about, you bring in a motion such as this one, full well the understanding was that there would be no votes on committee day. This is the first time we have had that opportunity to deal with that particular day. So this is the first time that we have had actually a Friday as a committee day since the rules have been changed, and I am disappointed. I am very disappointed that the member would—the member can bring a motion any time he wishes, but to do it late on a Friday afternoon, I think, is certainly not in the spirit of the rules that were negotiated and adopted by all members of this House.

Mr. Chairperson, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) can rationalize all he wishes. The fact of the matter is, to do it in that manner particularly was extremely disappointing from my point of view, particularly in the spirit of the work that had been done by all members of the House in terms of trying to change the rules.

Mr. Chairperson, that aside, I want to speak to the motion. The motion, of course, is to censure and condemn the minister for failing to do a certain number of things. [interjection] It is a very serious matter, to condemn the member. The members opposite want to clap and giggle and laugh as they have been doing all afternoon with respect to this particular issue. The fact of the matter is, there is no more dedicated person, no more caring person in this House than the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). I have sat in a caucus with him for, I am reminded now, just over 10 years, and I have seen the kind of interest, the kind of effort that he has put forward, when he was a critic when we were in opposition, when he was the Attorney-General and when he is now the Minister of Health.

I sit in Treasury Board, and I have since we have been in government. I see what the minister does when he brings his Health Estimates forward to Treasury Board. He fights tooth and nail in support of his department, in support of his efforts to try and provide health care to the citizens of Manitoba, good, solid health care. Let me tell

you, I and my colleague the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) are the only two members of Treasury Board who have been there since Day One, since 1988, when we came into office. We both can bear witness to the fact of the interest, the concern and the efforts performed by the Minister of Health. He has done more in terms of health care on behalf of his government here than any other province in the country. We spend more money on health care than any other province in the country. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I have said at the beginning of this meeting that I would maintain decorum, and I will maintain decorum. All honourable members will have an opportunity to put their remarks on the record. At this time, the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has the floor. The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is amazing. I find the members opposite come in here and, all of a sudden, anything that has anything to do with a private, for-profit operation somehow is going to absolutely destroy the health care system. I have heard that come from the mouths of many members opposite. Anything to do with private, for-profit is the death knell of medicare.

An Honourable Member: That is what the public feels.

Mr. Ernst: Let me ask the question, Mr. Chairman, if that is the case, then how come every fee-for-service doctor is in this business to make a profit and it has not fallen apart? Every lab that does the tests that are required by the doctors to make diagnoses are all private. They make a profit, or they are supposed to make a profit, at least. They may not all make a profit, but they are a profit-making corporation. How come, for the years and years that those private labs have operated, the health care system has not fallen apart?

Even under the NDP, there were private labs operating. Every radiologist outside of a hospital is in a private, for-profit business. Now, Mr. Chairman, the health care system has not fallen apart, because they are in there providing radiology. It is amazing that all of a sudden a private supplier of home care services, some home care services—the VON have been providing home care services for a considerable length of time, but private. So the members opposite, somehow find that—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable minister's comments. If there are some members who want to carry on a conversation, I would appreciate they do so in the hall. The honourable minister to continue.

Mr. Ernst: If for some reason the members opposite think that simply because something is motivated by a profit is wrong—I mean, the entire North American economy, by and large, runs on that basis—and that the entire world would collapse, the entire economic system would collapse, the entire North American—as a matter of fact, the entire free world would collapse if their premise was the right premise.

Their premise is not the right premise. Their premise is the wrong premise. They are stuck in the past. They are stuck with their union buddies who are yanking their chains, and you can see that every time you say that, up they pop. You touch the hot button and up they pop, with their hidebound ideology dealing with their union buddies and their union bosses who are telling them how and what to do.

They think the only person in the world, and I find that incongruous, who can provide an effective service is a government employee, yet it was not very long ago when I heard members opposite popping up and condemning the existing system, condemning the existing system because it did not work, it was not providing service, it was not doing the things that they thought should happen. That is coming from members opposite again, but as soon as their union buddies yanked on the chain, bingo, they are right back on-stream, right back outside.

* (1710)

So we heard earlier the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) talk about the kind of threats and intimidation that members of that union are putting against vulnerable women in the middle of a remote location in the province of Manitoba. That is unacceptable. That should never occur, and the members opposite ought to think a little bit about the kind of support they are providing when situations like that occur, because their member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) stands up to defend women on a daily basis. Where was she defending this woman who was being threatened by two members of that union for attempting to provide service to somebody who was in

need of that service, somebody who was vulnerable, somebody who needed to have—thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I will continue at my next opportunity.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Ashton: First of all, I want to ensure the government House leader, as I did in our private discussions, that our intent on Friday in moving this motion was no different than the intent on Mondays under the old rules. We knew it would not come to a recorded vote. In fact, we did not even expect it to come to a voice vote, but I do believe, too, that if there is a concern about the requirement that there be two people present for a recorded vote on a Friday, that that can, with the co-operation of the House, be waived, as well.

That was not our intent. Our intent was to get a debate on this issue, and, quite frankly, Mr. Chairperson, I am glad we are finally getting a chance to debate this issue. We have tried to have emergency debates; both opposition parties have. We have tried to have the matter dealt with in this House in other ways. We have tried to get this government to put this to a vote. Start with the clients, the people who are served by home care.

But you know what is interesting, Mr. Chairperson, is that throughout the debate, if you can call it that, on this issue, and this is really the first real debate we have had, the thing that has characterized the government's response to any of the concerns that have been expressed has been a very predictable script.

Mr. Chairperson, if you get up in the House, if you ask a question on home care, I can tell you it is going to be a rare answer that does not include some reference to union bosses. In fact, the government House leader got off the script. He said union buddies. You know, the script is union bosses. We have heard it time and time again. They must hand this out at the beginning of every day and remind them, you have got to go in there and talk about union bosses. I found it amazing when the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) got up and said, the NDP gets support from unions. He was going on. This may come as news to members opposite.

By the way, I had gone through the contribution lists from all three parties. We can get into that if they want

to get into that. Yes, we always have had support. The New Democratic Party has always had support from the labour movement, surprise, surprise. You know how much we get, Mr. Chairperson? We have funds from the labour movement—9 percent, 9 percent. The remaining 91 percent is from individuals. [interjection]

Well, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) says we will see what happens when the legislation comes out. The so-called Minister of Labour, Mr. Chairperson, who has gone out of his way—he would go and visit union offices when he started off his ministry. He said, do not worry, we are going to bring in a few minor changes to labour relations. Well, I wonder what has happened since then? Maybe some other members of his caucus are now running the show because this so-called Minister of Labour now has given up any pretense of objectivity. This is the Minister of Labour—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I have been giving a fair bit of leniency in accordance with this resolution because it does have quite a wide varying role to it, but I do believe the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has gone a little further away from it than I can understand within the motion. So I would ask the honourable member to be a little bit more relevant towards the motion. The honourable member, to continue.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I must apologize. I was distracted from the so-called Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) who, in concert with the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), is on some sort of a—especially the Minister of Health, because I have seen the Minister of Health. I had some respect for the Minister of Health in Justice. I had some respect for him as government House leader. I dealt with him as government House leader. I say to the Minister of Health he has had a 10 year decade long vendetta against anything connected with labour, organized workers. I remember the speeches he used to give as the Labour critic when he was in opposition, and I do not know why every time the issue comes up, this is all the government members can do.

Mr. Chairperson, you know what is interesting is if government members will take the time to talk to people, the public of Manitoba, they will find one thing here. The key issue for most people is not the—they can say, oh, the NDP is support from unions. I can get up and I could

say to the Minister of Labour that his current employer gave \$25,000, Great-West Life, to the Conservative Party. What does that make him? Does that make him a corporate boss? Am I going to get up every day and say the Minister of Labour is a corporate boss?

Mr. Chairperson, let us get the debate back on the issues. I look forward to the comments from the Minister of Labour. I look forward to the comments from him. I could get up and point out that the Conservatives got \$2,000 last election from guess what, from We Care. We could get into the connections between We Care and the Conservatives. Surprise, surprise.

I think most people realize that this government gets a significant amount of support from corporations like Great-West Life, from We Care, many of whom have a direct interest in this issue. But you know what, Mr. Chairperson? I know one thing. I know one thing—that the people of Manitoba judge issues like this based on the merits of the issue. We can get into union bosses. I can call the Minister of Labour a corporate whatever. I can call the Minister of Health—we have got to net that out of this, because what is happening now—and for all this talk here, people get up and most of the afternoon we have heard talk about this or that or the other related to the current labour dispute. The key issue here is what is best for clients, what is best for the health care system. That is the key issue.

To the members opposite, you know they did not campaign on privatizing the home care system. That brings about a certain obligation, I believe, if you campaign on something. I will tell you, Mr. Chairperson, the government campaigned on some things, and they won the election on those things. If you want to get into some of that, I would say in the last election the balanced budget legislation, for example, there were disagreements in the House over that, but they campaigned on it very openly and people obviously supported them. I think they supported them on some other reasons because of what I call a fraudulent election campaign.

What do you say to a government, Mr. Chairperson, that campaigns on no cuts to health care? Pharmacare, a 33 percent cut, that was not in the election. Home care privatization, that was not in the election. Eye care, that was not in the election, but I believe there is an obligation—other issues—privatization of MTS. I can run

through all sorts of other issues, but they did not campaign on it. They must, therefore, support an open public debate on this issue.

Why have we brought in this particular motion censuring the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae)? Because throughout this entire discussion on this issue there has been no real public input and no public debate. At the very least this government should have listened to the people of Manitoba on this issue. If they did not have the courage to raise this as an election issue, we are now in a situation where they could raise this, they could go to public hearings, they could ask the clients, they could set up an independent committee.

It is amazing, we set MLAs' salaries to an independent commission. Could they not develop some sort of independent way of looking at this? Mr. Chairperson, that is the sad part of what is happening here. The government is desperately trying to find any way possible to get this issue back on their terms, and they are falling back down—I mean the only thing they have not done in this case is pull out the old red scare, and I guess maybe that has got something to do with the new world we live in when the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is off in mainland China currently. It is a little bit difficult to get into that. He has raised that many a time.

So they are getting into the classic old, sort of, the union bosses, but I have got news for members opposite. The public of Manitoba is very concerned about what they are doing. They want this government to listen, and I made the suggestion earlier. I would say the two most difficult things you could say on a personal basis, and it is doubly more difficult as government, and No. 1 is, I am sorry, No. 2 is, I made a mistake.

* (1720)

An Honourable Member: You sure did. You have made a lot of them.

Mr. Ashton: When I make mistakes, I admit it. Yes, to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), I have made mistakes and it is tough to admit it, but sometimes you have got to do it.

In this case, this government has made a mistake. Even its own friends are saying it; people like Fred Cleverley, who is very known for his sympathies.

An Honourable Member: Let us let it run. Let it run.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Deputy Premier says let it run. I do not want to see the damage that is going to take place to a system of more than two decades of public home care just because the Deputy Premier wants to let it run. This is not something we can experiment with. This government does not have public support for what it is doing.

An Honourable Member: Yes, we do.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Deputy Premier says it does. Why will they not put it to a vote then of the clients? Let us start with the clients. They say they are concerned about the clients. What are they afraid of? I have a suggestion. If they cannot say they made a mistake, at least they can come up with some mechanism to get us out of this bind.

We can get here, we can trade back and forth for the rest of the day and the next several weeks with the same sort of rhetoric, but there is a very serious situation in this province currently, and something has got to be done to resolve it. I already believe that the only fair way to do it is to try and get an objective situation, and I believe the only way to start that is to at least put the changes to home care on hold. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Let me begin where the member for Thompson left off when he said we should be talking about the merits of the issue, we should be talking about whether or not there is public support, we should be talking about whether or not there is a practical aspect to this. I have only heard some of the more recent remarks from the opposition, but I have been listening through Question Period and through their public pronouncements in front of the media, and it seems to me the furthest thing from their minds is the merits of the issue.

So, when he starts to raise the question of whether or not we are throwing out red herrings, then, for goodness' sake, look at what the opposition, led by their position, is saying. Because it is not a matter of looking at whether or not there is another way of providing services, it is a matter of saying, nah, nyet, no-no, no change.

That position, frankly, is even more reprehensible than some of the comments that have been made, purported to

come from the members of the opposition, certainly supported by them, when they started talking about the need to have services withdrawn, when they talk about the fact that there is absolutely no way to deal with this service other than through a publicly funded, publicly operated system.

What the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has put forward is a practical approach to providing some additional choice of services within the system and that statement, unfortunately, when it gets out in the public and when it is being conveyed to the clients by those who are opposed to any change or by those who in some way are offended by the idea of change, they immediately start to talk about user fees. I have two offices in my constituency, plus my office number here which is advertised regularly in the paper, and the only calls I have had are, why are you going to start charging me fees? That is the rumour that people are being fed.

That is what people are being fed by those who sit over there and chuckle about what they think might be an opportunity to score a few political points. The very fact that they are talking through some of those in the union who are very concerned about the issue, and I understand their concern, but if they want to continue to put forward falsehoods about whether or not there is any issue at any time about a user fee, then they should be, I think, called to task.

Unfortunately, at twenty-five after five on a Monday afternoon, I am not too sure there is going to be a whole lot of publicity in the public, but I certainly intend to circulate what is being said in this House. The concerns of the clients out there who have called me is that they want to be assured that the service will continue to be of a high standard—that can be guaranteed; that the service will continue to be free and that is without question; that the service will continue to be consistent so that if they become comfortable with a worker that they can rest assured that that will continue as long as is reasonable. That is just as easy to control in another process as it is under today's system.

Strangely enough, my riding is a rural riding where no changes were contemplated. We are talking about changes in an opportunity in Winnipeg. In rural ridings, in rural parts of the province, it has nothing to do with ridings, the changes are not even contemplated. The

minister has said he intends to look at the process after having 25 percent of the city service contracted.

Now the member from Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) wants to sit over there and shake his head and wave papers around which I cannot read from here, even with my bifocals on, but the bottom line is that he knows full well that they are using the opportunity to provide scare tactics across the province, across the province to imply to the clients that they are somehow going to be at risk. The only risk that is out there today is for those who are having their services withdrawn and life made to be as awkward for them as possible. Again, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has moved diligently, aggressively, to do everything possible to make sure we protect the best interests of those clients.

The members opposite do not necessarily want to listen to those types of facts because they believe this is an opportunity, and I would give the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) some credit. He said this is not a labour issue. He made that comment. He made it, however, in a context that I disagree with because the fact is that this is a reasoned opportunity to look at a different delivery system, and governments of all stripes and all provinces are looking at a better and improved way of delivering services.

When seven of the provinces of this country have already taken the opportunity to provide some choice in the way services are being delivered, then you can be guaranteed that there are lots of models out there that show that this method of delivery can provide some options for the public which, in fact, the public appreciates. I would challenge the members across the way. When they were continually talking about public housing a few years ago, one thing that they never contemplated, I will bet, was the fact that we now have private citizens, senior citizens, being prepared to invest in their own life-leases in order to take over the responsibility and provide decent accommodations for themselves and for future generations.

At the same time, you can provide a mix of that with publicly funded and publicly supported housing for those same seniors. It works very, very well. It is only as recently as about a half dozen years ago the members across the way were flailing away at our Housing department for not having provided additional funds for that service. So I say to the members opposite, let us start talking about the facts of the issue and let us stop playing games with the lives, and frankly abusing the sensibilities of the seniors, the sensibilities of many of the personal caregivers who are out there—some of them on the picket line, some of them not—but not necessarily being given all of the facts.

I suggest that a rational review by them and by the clients will very quickly come to the realization that this is, in fact, a realistic option and one where we can provide a high level of care and provide some options to the people in the public, who are demanding, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, not demanding but needing these very, very personalized services that they must receive.

I think the other problem we have is that, frankly, when we get into a strike and walk-out situation, tempers begin to rise, and, frankly, we have comments that are being made to some of the clients out there by their previous servers that do not serve in the best interests of their peace of mind, nor do they serve in the best interests of arriving at a reasonable conclusion to how this sort of service can be phased in.

As I look, Mr. Chairman, at the level of—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 22, 1996

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