



Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

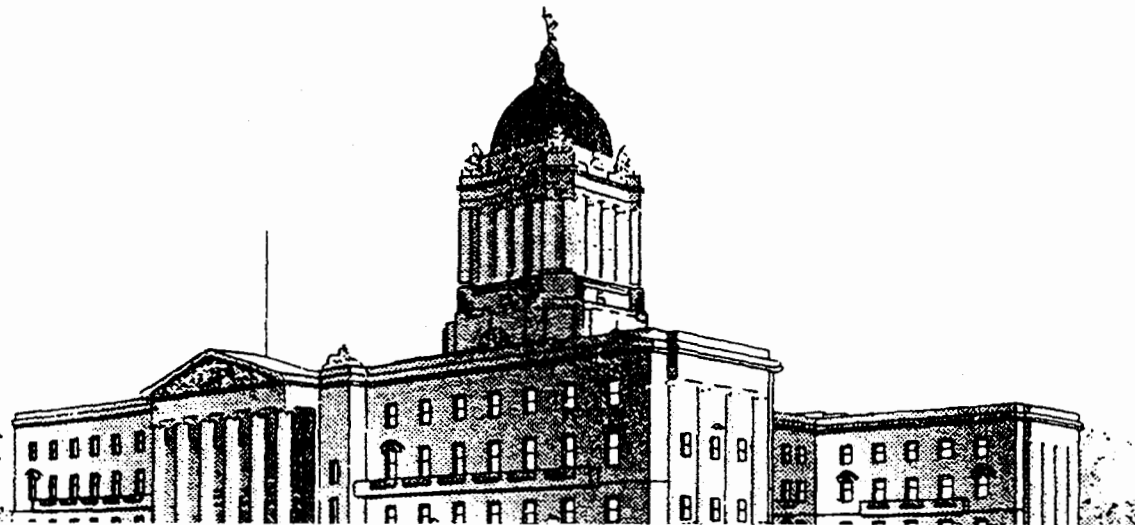
of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Seventh Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, July 30, 2002**

**The House met at 1:30 p.m.**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Transcona-Springfield School Division**

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** I ask for leave to present the member from Springfield's petitions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to present a petition on behalf of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler)? *[Agreed]*

**Mrs. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Melissa Wilson, Debbie Parisien, Gloria Nixon and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to reverse the decision to split the Transcona-Springfield School Division and allow it to remain as a whole or to consider immediately convening the Board of Reference to decide the matter.

**Trans-Canada Highway—Twinning (Virден)**

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could have leave to present the petition on behalf of the Member for Arthur-Virден (Mr. Maguire).

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to present the petition on behalf of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virден? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Wendy Soder, Pearl Stonehouse, Kim Mitchell and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) consider making the completion of the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway between Virден and the Saskatchewan border an immediate fiscal priority for his Government and to

consider taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the work begins in the 2002 construction year.

**READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**

**Transcona-Springfield School Division**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith). Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

I have reviewed the petition and 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.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Clerk, please read.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth

THAT on November 8, 2001, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) announced a split in the Transcona-Springfield School Division but despite repeated requests has been unable to identify any benefits of this decision to the students and taxpayers of said school division; and

THAT this decision was not preceded by adequate public consultation as outlined in section 7 of The Public Schools Act; and

THAT this decision would result in significant hardships for the students in both Transcona and Springfield that would affect the quality of their education; and

THAT the proposal by the Minister of Education on February 12, 2002, neither alleviates nor remedies these hardships; and

THAT this decision results in an increased financial burden on the taxpayers of both the Transcona-Springfield School Division and the province of Manitoba; and

THAT on March 13, 2002, the number of resident electors required by The Public Schools Act requested the Minister of Education to convene a Board of Reference to decide the matter.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly request the Minister of Education to reverse the decision to split the Transcona-Springfield School Division and allow it to remain as a whole or to consider immediately convening the Board of Reference to decide the matter.

### **Trans-Canada Highway—Twinning (Virден)**

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** On behalf of the Member for Arthur-Virден (Mr. Maguire)?

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to present on behalf of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virден? [*Agreed*]

The honourable Member for Gimli, I have reviewed the petition and 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:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense?

**Some Honourable Members:** Read.

**Mr. Speaker:** Clerk, please read.

\* (13:35)

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** These are the reasons for this petition:

Over the years, the Trans-Canada Highway between Virден and the Saskatchewan border has been the site of numerous accidents, a number of which have involved fatalities.

The safety of the motoring public on the Trans-Canada Highway between Virден and the Saskatchewan border would be improved if the twinning of the highway were to be completed.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) consider making the completion of the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway between Virден and the Saskatchewan border an immediate fiscal priority for his Government;

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services consider taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that work toward the completion of the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway between Virден and the Saskatchewan border begins in the 2002 construction year.

### **Salvation Army William and Catherine Booth College**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), I have reviewed the petition and 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.

**Mr. Speaker:** Clerk, please read.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** The petition of the undersigned, the Salvation Army William and Catherine Booth College, of the city of Winnipeg in Manitoba, ('the College') humbly sheweth

THAT your petitioner wishes to amend its act of incorporation ('the act') by:

(a) defining the purposes and objects of the College;

(b) clarifying section 9 of the act; and

(c) removing the distinction between certain degrees the College may grant.

WHEREFORE your petitioner humbly prays that the Legislature of the province of Manitoba may be pleased to pass an act for the purposes above mentioned.

AND as in duty bound your petitioner will ever pray.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. 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 John and Corrine Bartellings, Sfef Bartellings and mother Ans from Swyndrecht, Holland, who are the guests of the honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski).

Also we have with us in the Speaker's Gallery Walter and Kay Gregory and their grandchildren. They are from Winnipeg and they are the guests of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk).

Also in the Speaker's Gallery we have in attendance Vicky and Denis Ullyet who are visiting from Windsor, Ontario, and who are the guests of the Speaker, and also, to let the members know, they are the aunt and uncle of our Clerk (Ms. Chaychuk).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

#### Manitoba Hydro Borrowing Requirements

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Speaker, last year Manitoba Hydro made profits of \$214 million, down significantly from the previous year as a result of this Government's doubling the water rental rates and the debt guarantee fee. Clearly, Manitoba Hydro is going to have to increase its borrowing to pay the \$225 million the Doer government is demanding from Manitoba Hydro this year in order to cover its overspending.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Hydro when he first informed the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province of Manitoba that, as a result of their scheme to take \$288 million away from Manitoba Hydro to cover their overspending, Manitoba Hydro was going to be forced to go out and borrow those funds in the marketplace.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** Mr. Speaker, the member has asked related questions many times before. I was happy to

table the annual report of Manitoba Hydro yesterday, the 51st annual report, and the member may have had the opportunity to read the definitions. Under the definitions there is one called "Retained earnings" and it reads as follows: "Net accumulated earnings that a business has not distributed to shareholders."

We have decided there is a distribution required to the shareholders, being the people of Manitoba through its Government, of \$288 million based on record profits over the last five or six years. That distribution is being used to stabilize the finances of Manitoba at a time when corporate tax revenues were down 60 percent.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, if the minister did his homework he would clearly understand that you do not pay dividends from retained earnings when there is no cash.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (13:40)

### Point of Order

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Would you please remind the honourable member that supplementary questions should have no preamble?

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I would like to remind all honourable members *Beauchesne* 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister responsible for Hydro if he would just admit to the public of Manitoba that, as a result of the serious political backlash from his floating an idea in December to raid the rainy day fund for \$185 million to cover their Budget deficit,

because of that political backlash he and the Premier (Mr. Doer) concocted this plan to raid Manitoba Hydro of \$288 million to cover that deficit and that they knew full well when they concocted this plan Manitoba Hydro would have to go out and borrow that money.

**Mr. Selinger:** The Member for Fort Whyte continues to misrepresent the facts, to mislead the House and to otherwise try to put on the record hypothetical facts which are not the case. Yesterday I distributed to the House a letter from the president of Manitoba Hydro addressed to the committee clerk, Rick Yarish, which indicated Manitoba Hydro had put aside \$170 million of cash. Mr. Speaker, the member should take that into account when he develops his conspiracy theories.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Hydro if he will not for once come clean with the people of Manitoba. I would simply ask him why he is refusing to release documentation that was forwarded to his office from Manitoba Hydro in December of 2001 and February of 2002 which clearly indicates that Manitoba Hydro was not only providing him with information that identified clearly they would have to go out and borrow the money prior to him announcing this dividend policy. Why will he not just admit to the people of Manitoba that: (a) he knew they were going to have to borrow the money, and (b) he did it anyway?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we have talked about this many times in the House before. Manitoba Hydro requires borrowing authority for capital investments which improve the assets and the total wealth of Manitoba Hydro. Those investments have to be made on a business case basis. Any borrowing has to be justified in terms of what value it will add to Manitoba Hydro. That is the basis upon which capital borrowing occurs.

We have answered this question many times in the House. The member knows full well that *Beauchesne* says you are not supposed to ask repetitive questions. The member continues to ask repetitive questions. We have patiently answered those questions. The member asks for the annual report; the annual report was provided

yesterday. It did not give him the comfort he wanted so he ignores it today. What is new?

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister is the one that is ignoring things.

#### Public Utilities Board Review

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** The Public Utilities Board is there to be the watchdog for the ratepayers of the province of Manitoba. It is the only protection the ratepayers have against the abusive power by either the Government or the monopoly of Manitoba Hydro.

I would like to ask this minister why he continues to completely ignore the Public Utilities Board. He refuses to take the purchase of Winnipeg Hydro to the Public Utilities Board. He refuses to take the drawing of \$288 million from Manitoba Hydro in the form of a dividend to the Public Utilities Board. He refuses to take the issue of freezing the rates of Manitoba Hydro to ratepayers until after the next election to the Public Utilities Board and he is refusing to take projects that he is announcing to the Public Utilities Board. Why is this minister completely ignoring the Public Utilities Board and its valuable role?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** Perhaps the member forgets it was just a few weeks ago he was quoting, chapter and verse, from the Public Utilities Board because Manitoba Hydro was there disclosing and answering every question that they provided. Does the member forget that?

Mr. Speaker, the member should know that under the former government, they refused to go to the Public Utilities Board. Manitoba Hydro, under our watch, has gone to the Public Utilities Board, answered every question patiently. The member has quoted it in the House and now he says Manitoba Hydro does not want to go to the Public Utilities Board. Wake up and remember what happened.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on a new question.

**Mr. Loewen:** On a new question, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]* It would be a treat if the public got the truth.

**Mr. Speaker:** This is supplementary to the previous question?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** First supplementary.

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the previous government took the purchase of Centra Gas to the Public Utilities Board, I would ask this minister why he is not taking the purchase of Winnipeg Hydro to the Public Utilities Board? Why is he not taking the withdrawal of \$288 million in dividends to the Public Utilities Board? Why is he completely ignoring the role of the Public Utilities Board?

**Mr. Selinger:** I thought the supplementary question was supposed to be one question. I heard three there.

What the member does not put on the record is the previous government went to the Public Utilities Board for the acquisition of Centra Gas, but refused to bring it to the Legislature for public debate in front of all the elected representatives of Manitoba. It was very clear that this side of the House, when they were in opposition, said that any major policy decisions with respect to Manitoba Hydro should come before the Legislature for public debate. That is what we have done. That is what the members opposite refused to do and ought to have done.

\* (13:45)

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister responsible for Hydro: Is the reason that he is afraid to take these issues to the Public Utilities Board because he was thoroughly embarrassed by the facts that were sworn under oath at the last meeting of the Utilities Board, and in fact he is simply trying to hide information from Manitobans?

**Mr. Selinger:** It is incredible. All the information that the member has quoted in the House has come through information through the Public Utilities Board. That is who did the research

for the Member for Fort Whyte. He got all the information that he has used in the House from testimony provided from Manitoba Hydro at the Public Utilities Board.

They have indicated very clearly there that there will be no rate increases as a result of this special payment. They have indicated very clearly there that they understood that their retained earnings had grown to \$1.3 billion, and that they were able, through good management, to provide the special payment to stabilize the finances of the people of Manitoba. The member knows that information was there. He has used it in the House, and now he is pretending that we were not there.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on a new question.

### Export Revenues

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Speaker, I am relying on sworn testimony at the Public Utilities Board because I cannot get an answer out of this minister. We have learned that the Department of Finance's own figures clearly indicated in the first five months of this year export revenues at Manitoba Hydro have declined by 25 percent. At the same time, we see their debt going from \$5.8 billion to \$7.1 billion.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** I thank the Member for Fort Whyte for the question, a question which has been asked before in the House, another repetitive question.

Mr. Speaker, the first three months which he indicates are included in the annual report provided to the Legislature yesterday, whereupon the net profits of Manitoba Hydro were \$214 million including the slowdown in export sales in the first three months of the year; that information has been clearly provided in this report. The member knows it and continues to obfuscate the facts.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask this minister, who continually refuses to answer questions, to focus in on the fact that we are talking about his Department of Finance and the first five months of this year, not the first three

months of this year, which clearly indicates that Manitoba Hydro's export sales are down 25 percent in the first five months. What impact will that have on Manitoba Hydro and its ability to service its over \$7 billion in debt?

**Mr. Selinger:** Once again, I have answered that question in my previous answer when I indicated that just a few month ago the member was complaining about the slowdown in Hydro sales related to a lack of precipitation in the province. That problem went away with the spring floods and the extra precipitation we have got.

We have indicated that Manitoba Hydro profits are extremely healthy for the last quarter of the '01-02 year as reported in the annual report. We have indicated before in the House that there has been \$943 million of profits based on the fact that this Government had the leadership to build Limestone and did not mothball the future of Manitoba Hydro like the members opposite did when they were in office for 12 years and did nothing.

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Loewen:** My supplementary to the minister—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask this minister if he would kindly inform the people of Manitoba what ramification he sees from his own Finance Department's indication that export sales of Manitoba Hydro for the first five months of this year are down 25 percent, given that Manitoba Hydro is only projecting profits of \$100 million, only has \$14 million in cash and yet his Government is demanding \$225 million from the corporation this year. What effect does a 25% downturn in export sales have on his scheme?

**Mr. Selinger:** It is a repetitive question I have answered. The first three months have already been covered off in the year-end in the '01-02 year. I have indicated there have been record profits in the last six years. I have indicated that retained earnings are at a historic high. When the president of Manitoba Hydro was appointed in

1990, there was \$100 million of retained earnings. Today there is \$1.3 billion of retained earnings.

I must correct myself. I indicated the members did nothing when they were in office. I was wrong. They sold off Manitoba Telephone System, washed the money through the Budget and still ran a deficit in the election year. There is good management for you.

### **Health Care Facilities Review—Nursing Layoffs**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, the Deloitte & Touche review of Winnipeg hospitals recommends changes which will lead to the layoff of 180 full-time nursing positions even though the nursing shortage under the NDP has doubled since they formed government. I would like to ask this Minister of Health if he will confirm that if he accepts the recommendations of his \$600,000 review that it will lead to the layoff of 180 full-time nursing positions.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the member during Estimates only an hour and a half ago in this Chamber, the member had a draft interim report, of which I understand she released five or six pages to the media that talked about layoffs, and that is what the member talked about. I urged the member to wait until the final report comes out, firstly, and, secondly, to consider the fact we did not slash nursing programs but that we have doubled the number of nurses enrolled in training in this province. That suggests something that we are not going to do, as the Government did during the dark days of the 1990s, the former government.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Minister of Health who continually refuses to answer questions, either in Estimates or in Question Period, whether or not he is going to accept or reject the recommendations made in that \$600,000 report to him.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that the member talks about from a draft interim report to the WRHA that was commissioned by the WRHA, as I understand it, has



not made those recommendations. We do not have those recommendations before us and we would not in a nursing shortage be firing nurses as happened during the 1990s.

### **Nursing Profession Morale**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us as the report confirms why nurses in critical care are feeling extremely negative, why nurses in many programs are feeling negative and have an angry tone and why nursing morale is low in critical care areas? Why is he failing Manitoba's nurses as indicated in the Deloitte & Touche report?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member raised the issue of critical care nurses, because it has been a major concern for us. One of the reasons we doubled the amount of nurses in training, was to have more nurses. We have double the numbers of nurses in training now than when the members opposite were in office. In addition, there are 20 nurses enrolled in a critical care nursing program, which is double the average enrolment and we have accelerated the program to put the nurses out faster.

In addition, our most recent collective agreement with the nurses ensured the highest standby pay in the country. The highest standby pay in the country was provided to nurses here in Manitoba in order to make those kinds of positions more attractive to nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize there is a problem. That is why we are training more nurses, that is why we are working with nurses and that is why we will continue to do that. That is why we concluded a collective agreement with the nurses that is considered by all to be one that will be fair to all parties and will help ensure in the future as our nurses come to graduation, programs will start to deal with the shortage created during the 1990s.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Charleswood, on a new question.

### **Health Care Facilities Review—Nursing Layoffs**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** On a new question, Mr. Speaker. The Deloitte & Touche report showed that 20 percent, almost a quarter of nursing time, is spent in non-nursing activities. I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he can tell us how much more nursing time is going to be spent in non-nursing activities if he follows the recommendation of the Deloitte & Touche report that eliminates 100 full-time health care aide jobs in the system and nurses will be forced to pick up those positions? How is he going to handle that kind of situation?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we are not going to eliminate health care aides or nurses. I do not know how much more clearly I should state it. We are not going to eliminate health care aides or nurses.

With respect to the report that was commissioned by the WRHA, it was to deal with issues like long stays in hospitals. Members opposite stood up and criticized long stays. The report looks at long stays.

With respect to nurses doing 20 percent non, that is a very important issue. One of the issues we discovered is that charting is not common throughout the system and nurses do spend an inordinate amount of time doing that. I understand that report, which will be finalized and released publicly, will offer some suggestions to deal with that.

### **Nursing Profession Non-Nursing Activities**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Can the Minister of Health tell us how the shortage of respiratory therapists and pharmacists is impacting on the nursing workload, as indicated in the report, because nurses are being forced to pick up the workload of all those other vacancies in the system?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out this morning in Estimates to the member when the member asked what the plan was with respect to health care in this province, I pointed out, if you did not know,

that the plan was to train more health care professionals in virtually every single field: nurses, doctors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, lab technicians, lab technologists, right across the board. That has been the highest priority of this Government and we continue to make that the highest priority.

**Mrs. Driedger:** This Minister of Health had three years almost to do that and he has failed so far.

### **Health Care Facilities Staffing Levels—Step-Down Units**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I would like him to explain what it means in the report when it says, and I quote: There is questionable matching of acuity and resourcing in the step-down units.

I would like to ask this Minister of Health if staffing levels are adequate and safe in the step-down units.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Firstly, Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member this morning during the Estimates debate, I would be happy to debate the whole report when it is made public, as it will be to the WRHA, who will then review it, who will then put it and make recommendations to the Government to look at it with respect to long stays and dealing with long stays in the hospital, dealing with things like decreasing workloads on nurses, who the member identified, it is true, do have increased duties as a result of a whole series of other issues that built up during the 1990s, during the dark days of the 1990s as quoted by the president of the Manitoba Medical Association. We will debate those issues.

For the member to take specific pages out of a report which she indicated this morning was a draft interim report, Mr. Speaker, and try to take one sentence or two and try to make something of it is not conducive to good debate or the improvement of health care in this province. I am prepared to debate that with her any time.

That is why we doubled the number of nurses in training. That is why we have increased the number of doctors and worked from

the day we came to office to increase the professionals in health care.

### **McLeod Harvester Research and Development Funding**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the McLeod Harvester is a new concept in harvesting in which the weed seeds are removed during the harvesting procedure, instead of being returned to the fields. The process generates considerable economies for farmers, since it saves \$12 to \$20 an acre in chemical costs and generates about \$17 an acre in revenue from the additional feed generated.

At a time when farmers are having a difficult time, it is very important to support efforts which will improve the economies of farming in Manitoba. It is my understanding that, in spite of a lot of rhetoric, the provincial government is not providing any direct support to the research and development being undertaken on this important and revolutionary concept.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** A point of order, Mr. Speaker. This particular member is usually pretty good at his questions in terms of recognizing the rules, but there is an exception today certainly.

Mr. Speaker, would you please remind the honourable member that a question should be brief and it should only contain one carefully drawn sentence.

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I would like to once again draw the attention of all honourable members *Beauchesne* Citation 409(2): A preamble should not exceed one carefully drawn sentence.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** I ask the honourable member to please put his question.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Industry why she does not see fit to help farmers in Manitoba through the development of the new, revolutionary McLeod Harvester technology.

**Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines):** I want to thank the member for the question. The McLeod Harvester system is, in a way, old and new, merged in with new technologies. It is a concept that we hope has come to its day. We are very pleased that Manitoba Hydro has participated and is actively involved in the development of the initiative with McLeod Harvester.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Is the minister suggesting that Manitoba Hydro is an arm of the provincial government and not an arm's length Crown corporation?

I would ask the minister: When is she going to decide on behalf of her department whether or not to support research and development activities that are going on at the moment to produce a new, revolutionary harvester?

**Ms. Mihychuk:** I am very pleased to tell the House that I have met with the inventor and the developer and marketers of the McLeod Harvester. I have looked at their plans and their promotional material. I have assisted the company in moving forward over the past three years.

I do have to ask the member who represents the Liberal Party: Where is the Liberal Party's position when we are dealing with a new opportunity in the functional foods and nutraceuticals centre? It is only the federal government's commitment that has not been made. If he wants to help farmers, come to the table.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Since I was elected a member of the provincial Legislature, I am doing what I can in the province.

I would ask the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin): What is the Minister of Conservation doing to support the production of new technology like the McLeod Harvester which

will allow more environmentally friendly approaches to farming and use less chemicals?

**Ms. Mihychuk:** I am very pleased to inform the member that there are a number of programs available in government that include the feasibility program which is a 50-50 split. We look for opportunities to help Manitobans develop new, innovative ideas. We are always available for working with them in partnership to see that that type of invention is developed and brought to the marketplace.

#### **Dakota Tipi First Nation Independent Audit**

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned that the Premier's (Mr. Doer) brother, David Doer, and his company, Soaring Eagle, signed an agreement on July 12 that makes him responsible for all gaming activity on Dakota Tipi First Nation. In return—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Reimer:** Thank you very much. In return, he will get 15 percent of all VLT revenue; 15 cents of every dollar put into the VLTs on the reserve will go into their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, was the Minister of Gaming aware that one of the principals of this management company, Soaring Eagle's agreement, was the brother of the Premier, or was this not brought to the Premier's attention?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act):** Mr. Speaker, I must indicate my extreme disappointment. The issue of who David Doer is related to is irrelevant. The company was hired by Dakota Tipi by the federal government, not by the provincial government.

It is particularly unfortunate when members opposite raise a legitimate concern that they try and raise it in this kind of context. The issue here is not the principals of Soaring Eagle, the fact that the contract, which was tabled in the House yesterday, is not appropriate under the siteholder agreement and, in fact, Lotteries, being aware of that, will be following up in regard to that.

So when members opposite even raise a legitimate point I wish they would do it without getting into the irrelevancy in terms of who Soaring Eagle's principals are related to. That is irrelevant to this particular issue.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Gaming not see the obvious conflict of interest in this situation? When the Premier's brother is managing all gambling activities on Dakota Tipi, getting 15 percent of the revenue to do it, providing this Government with an audit that will dictate if the gaming is to continue, is that what you call independent?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I am really amazed at the member's question. First of all, I want to stress again that Soaring Eagle was not hired by the provincial government to do anything. So to use phrases like conflict of interest cheapens a concept that is fundamental to the integrity of the operation of this House. I really think the member does a disservice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate, in terms of the process that is in place, I just said, maybe the member did not hear, that the contract is inappropriate under the siteholder agreement, which was signed in 2001 between Dakota Tipi and this Government. That contract is inappropriate, not because of who the principals are, but because it is inappropriate to have a percentage of VLT revenue.

So I would suggest that members stick to the issues here and not the irrelevancies, not the abuse of the term "conflict of interest" that we just saw in this question.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Speaker, on a new question. This House and Government works—

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Southdale, on a new question.

**Mr. Reimer:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. This Government and the members work under the perception of what a conflict of interest entails. You have a situation here where an individual is hired to do an audit and manage, and get a piece of the action.

I only ask the Minister of Gaming whether he does not see this as a perception that some-

thing is not right. How can you classify this as an independent audit when the perception is that there is too much disjointedness in this agreement? That is the only question here. Is it an independent audit?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, the member included about four or five different tangled threads in that.

I want to start by saying I would suggest that we have a seminar for the member on what is conflict of interest. I have two brothers, one works for the federal government, one works for medical services. That is no more of a conflict of interest than in this situation because the individual was not hired by the provincial government.

In terms of the audit process, if the member would care to check, an independent audit is required here. In fact the provincial government, the gaming commission itself, will ensure there is a proper audit of this. I would say the member may want to get a few seminars on accounting procedures as well, while he is at it.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Southdale, on a new question.

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Speaker, the member makes points to an extent of what his comparisons are. I am only asking this minister and this Government, they have a situation where an individual has been hired to manage the VLTs, take a commission on that, plus do the audit of whether the gambling should continue on this reserve. It has to be submitted to this minister, to this Government, for approval by an individual who has direct links to the Premier. It is obvious I am only asking questions whether this minister feels that is appropriate.

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to give a good comparison to show why this side of the House I think has a better grasp on the issues than that side. The other company that is working for Dakota Tipi is the Exchange Group. The former premier of the province is a principal

in the Exchange Group. Is that relevant? No, it is not. It is completely irrelevant.

Mr. Speaker, the member should understand again the role of Soaring Eagle and providing information. They are not conducting an audit. They are providing financial statements. The member should perhaps take some lessons in standard accounting procedure because what is happening here is consistent with any other operation in the public or private sector. We are requiring standard accounting practices. That is why we turned back the initial information from the gaming commission. So we are following through in terms of standard accounting practices and I would suggest the member raise legitimate issues like the contract, not irrelevancies as we are seeing in this question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Fort Garry.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Fort Garry has the floor.

### Sexual Offenders Bail Release

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members that decorum in the eyes of the public is very important. We have the guests in the galleries, we have the viewing public.

Also I would like to remind all honourable members that when the Speaker rises all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I would ask the full co-operation of all honourable members, please.

**Mrs. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a suspected serial rapist was released on bail. Three of the victims did not receive notification, a situation the Manitoba association of victims advocates described as alarming. The Justice Minister, while in opposition, was a vocal critic of bail being granted to violent offenders. For

example, on December 5, 1994, the minister stated, and I quote: Anyone who has been charged with three weapon offences in seven months should not be out on bail.

In this instance, we have a suspected serial rapist being released on bail. Can the minister advise if he has reviewed the court proceedings to determine if the suspect's release on bail is compatible with his election commitment to make our community safer?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that release on bail in circumstances like this is a decision of the courts. My understanding is that decision was made as it is within the discretion of the courts to make. We can all have views on that decision, and I certainly do have views, but that was a decision of the courts.

### Bail Release—Victim Notification

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, instead of the Attorney General of this province offloading responsibility, can this Attorney General advise this House and women in our province what specific steps he has undertaken to ensure that women such as the three victims who were not formally notified do not fall through the cracks waiting for sexual assault to be added to the Victims' Bill of Rights?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House that, actually, as a result of this particular experience, and there have been other experiences with the unfolding and the rolling out of the Victims' Bill of Rights, that we have learned from that. I think that was the reason for a sure-footed going ahead with the Victims' Bill of Rights, so we do learn from the application of that new legislation.

As a result of that legislation coming into force in Manitoba with respect to certain offences, the most serious offences, victims in this province are getting information that they never had a right to before. With this particular case and what we have learned, where victims are tied into the case, even though it is not a registerable offence, we will be providing information to those victims.

I look at this as a positive learning experience and one that will strengthen the Victims' Bill of Rights application in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Justice take a trip back to reality and give the victims of this suspected serial rapist his personal assurance that they will be kept aware of the progression of this case, including changes to bail conditions, court dates, sentencing, things of that nature? These victims do not feel this is a learning experience. These victims feel victimized.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I certainly understand the frustration of the victims in this case. That is why the department has learned from this experience. It is important to learn from shortcomings.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the situation, a policy decision has been made that, where there are multiple victims in any of the offences that fall under the Victims' Bill of Rights, all the victims, all of them, will be included regardless of whether the individual offence is included under the Victims' Bill of Rights or not. It is a matter of learning from shortcomings and making sure that the Victims' Bill of Rights is going to indeed adjust and rebalance the criminal justice system and make sure that the rights of victims and their needs are better recognized in this province.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Fort Garry, on a new question.

#### Seniors Home Security Loan Program Status

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** On a new question, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about real people here in the province of Manitoba. On September 14, 1999, the NDP promised seniors of this province a home security loan program. Fully operational, this commitment had a price tag of \$180,000. Unfortunately, for seniors, as with victims in Manitoba, we are approaching the three-year anniversary of this so-called announcement, and there is still no loan program.

Mr. Speaker, considering Winnipeg's dubious status as the crime capital of Canada, it is no wonder many seniors are scared even in their

own homes. Can this minister advise this House how much longer seniors will have to wait until they can access the home security loan program? Is it weeks away, months away, years away? Let us have a time line here.

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I just find it certainly less than entertaining but certainly ironic when I hear Conservatives get up in the House and say where are all the election promises. We are committed to bringing in the security program for seniors and we will be delivering.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think there are 10 or 15, I think there are about 20 outstanding promises from the Conservative government that was in office here for some 12 years when it comes to crime.

We need no lessons from members opposite on fulfilling election promises, Mr. Speaker. We are committed and we are delivering.

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

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### Frank Friesen

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** On Friday, July 26, my wife Irene and I had the privilege of attending a birthday party of a gentleman, Mr. Frank H. Friesen, a lifelong resident of Morden. The event took place at the Morden Friendship Centre with friends and family at his side. The Friendship Centre was filled to capacity.

When planning the event, Mr. Friesen jokingly indicated to his family that the venue for this birthday party would not be able to house all the well-wishers who would attend. He was right. By mid-afternoon, the Friendship Centre was filled to capacity.

Mr. Friesen was an entrepreneur, a businessman and a clergyman. He was a builder and one who shaped the direction of the community. As a

businessman, he started a business called Morden Lumber and Fuel. He was the first person in Morden to sell gasoline. His business also included the selling of coal, which was used for heating. As the name would indicate, he was a retailer of lumber products.

While he was in business, he continued to serve his community and church as a pastor. For 25 years, he prepared sermons, gave leadership to his congregation and never received compensation, monetary, that is, for his efforts. He indicated that this was all done by choice and with great enthusiasm.

Mr. Friesen was the founder of Tabor Home Inc. in Morden, a personal care home with assisted-living attached to it. He now resides in the residence, however, and is well able to take care of his own needs. Last year his family was unable to locate him for several days. They later learned that he had driven to Regina to visit some of his friends.

When asked to conclude the event by giving a five-minute speech, he indicated for five minutes he was not prepared to get up. They gave him 10 minutes. His parting comment to the assembly on Friday was, I love you all, some more than others.

#### Peacekeeping Award

**Ms. Linda Asper (Riel):** I had the pleasure to present the MLA for Riel Peacekeeper Award this year to two deserving students at elementary schools in my constituency. The purpose was to recognize the value of role models who show a commitment to peacekeeping through nonviolent conflict resolution, co-operation and the principles of fair play in the classroom and the school community. The criteria included commitment to working respectfully and co-operatively with other students, help with younger students and demonstrate an ability to overcome personal challenges.

On June 26, at École Christine-Lespérance, I presented the Peacekeeper Award to Patrick Nogard [*phonetic*], junior high student, for his contribution to peacekeeping and for his co-operative work with his peers.

Thank you to Maurice Landry, school principal, and Dolores Beaumont, vice-principal, and

staff for their work with their students this past year.

On June 27, I attended the Dr. D.W. Penner School Grade 6 farewell at which Mrs. Hunt and Mr. Hindle's classes were honoured. I was delighted to present Ashley McMorris with the Peacekeeper Award for her efforts as a role model in her classroom and her school. Thanks to Irene Henschel, school principal, and her staff for their contribution to their students' learning this past year.

Congratulations to Patrick and Ashley for their being recognized by their schools, by their teachers, by their peers, for their peacekeeping efforts.

#### Pine Falls Paper Mill

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Pine Falls area for its 75th anniversary of paper production. In 1927, the first newsprint was produced in this area. It is incredible to believe that it took only 18 months from start to finish to build a paper mill and most of the Pine Falls townsite, all done without the aid of modern construction equipment. It certainly is a testament to the hard work and ingenuity of pioneers of our northeastern Manitoba area.

The paper production industry is and has been the largest single industrial employer in the northeastern Manitoba area. It provides jobs to hundreds of residents not only in Pine Falls but throughout the region, including Powerview, Sagkeeng, Lac du Bonnet, Whitemouth and the Beausejour areas. Whether they are employed directly in the mill for papermaking or indirectly in the forest industry to supply pulp for the papermaking process, these hundreds of jobs have added substantially to the payrolls in northeastern Manitoba, which in turn created many of the businesses in our area, businesses which in turn created many more jobs for our residents.

The paper production industry has seen many peaks and valleys to prices for newsprint and to demand for newsprint. In spite of those peaks and valleys, I understand that the mill in Pine Falls has always been profitable. This, of course, is recognition to the enterprise and to the

hard work of the employees who have worked there and who continue to work there. Without the outstanding work ethic demonstrated by the employees, this mill would not have enjoyed the success that it has experienced over the years.

Again, congratulations on 75 years of paper-making in Pine Falls, and I wish continued outstanding success in the papermaking industry to this area.

### **Sunflower Festival**

**Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a special festival in the town of Altona. On July 26 to 28, the town of Altona hosted the Sunflower Festival, an event that is considered by many as one of the best events of the summer in the town and the surrounding areas.

I would like to congratulate the chairman of the festival, as well as the town mayor, Ed Klassen, and council members, organizers and volunteers for their work and tremendous success of this year's Sunflower Festival in the town of Altona, Manitoba.

The Manitoba Sunflower Festival is part of a great Manitoba summer tradition. It is one of the many festive gatherings in our province every summer that celebrates the culture and the agricultural heritage of our great province. I am pleased to announce that the Government of Manitoba is among the many supporters of this great event.

Mr. Speaker, in representing the Premier (Mr. Doer), I took part in the parade and I witnessed so many people from all over Manitoba, neighbouring provinces and from the northern United States lining the parade route. Every year, thousands of people come to the festival and enjoy a taste of real Manitoba country-style hospitality.

The weekend was full of exciting things to do, such as baseball, jazz, rock, country music, dance, horse shows, a farmers' market, a circus fairway with rides for the kids, arts and crafts shows and great traditional Mennonite food.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to congratulate the town of Altona, Mr. Ralph Hamm, chairman of the festival, and all the volunteer staff who dreamed up another exciting festival and who have worked hard to make it a reality.

### **Motor Vehicle Mechanic Certification**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a statement today of concern about actions that I see coming from the Department of Education and Training, and in some respects reflecting back to the Ministry of Labour. The provincial Trade Advisory Committee for the Trade of Motor Vehicle Mechanic has formally recommended, at the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board, that their trade be considered as a compulsory certification.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I come from a constituency where there are a vast number of people who make their living through ranching, sometimes fishing, or a combination of ranching and fishing, which is not necessarily a robust economy. These people rely heavily on what would be considered in many circles unqualified shops to work on their vehicles, to work on their equipment. They keep this equipment mechanically sound, they keep it operational and they do it at a rate that is commensurate with the competition in the community, but certainly also in line with the ability of the industry they are serving to pay for the services they are buying.

I fear, as I look at this recommendation for compulsory certification, that many of those constituents and many of those providers of services that would be affected by this regulation will not be well served. I hope as the Ministry of Labour moves forward and Education and Training move forward that they are prepared to listen carefully to those who have spent their lifetime working in this trade, have their lifetime savings invested in there, but may suddenly find they are unable to practise their craft and provide the service to the community that is, in many cases, desperately needed to be provided at a reasonable rate.

So I leave my statement there, Mr. Speaker, in a form of advice to the minister that they proceed very carefully with this regulation.

\* (14:30)

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)**

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** As agreed, Mr. Speaker, we are



continuing in Supply for the Estimates of Health in the Chamber.

**Mr. Speaker:** As agreed, we will continue in Supply in the Chamber.

## COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Continued)

### HEALTH

**Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos):** Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Health.

When this committee last sat, it was agreed to have a global discussion in all areas and then proceed with line-by-line consideration, with the proviso that if a line has been passed, leave will be granted to members of the Opposition to ask questions in areas passed.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber now?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Chairperson, we have again been joined by the Deputy Minister of Health, Mr. Milton Sussman, and shortly will be joined by the chief financial officer, Heather Reichert.

I am prepared to proceed, if the member or members have any questions they want to ask.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Chairperson, I would like to go back to the cardiac surgery questions we were asking this morning. Prior to doing that, I would like to just ask a one-off question of the Minister of Health. If he can tell me, in the year 2000-2001, he spent \$8,372 at Tavern in the Park. I wonder if he could verify for us what that expense was for.

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I recall, that was the final reception of the meeting of the federal-provincial Health ministers held in Winnipeg over that particular weekend. There is a tradition that the host province hosts a reception at the end of their tenure as the chair of the Health and federal ministers' meeting.

So, Mr. Chairperson, if memory serves me correctly, that was in fact the occasion in which we hosted not just the ministers and deputy ministers but all of the delegations from all of the provinces and the federal government at Assiniboine Park.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell me how many people attended at that event?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, there were several hundred people, as I recall, that were attending the event.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Chairperson, can the minister tell me why there would be, and having not been involved in any of this before, why would there have been several hundred if we were just talking about federal-provincial Health ministers? How large are each of the delegations from the provinces?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, from my experience, generally what happens is that there is a delegation from each province which attends, which could vary anywhere from two or three to as many as, in the case of generally Québec and Ontario, as many as fifteen or twenty. In the case of the federal government as well, there is a considerable number of staff involved.

In addition, Mr. Chairperson, when provinces host events, as Manitoba did during that pivotal year, we have more delegates and more people involved because of the co-ordinating functions and all of the duties required surrounding that, so there are additional resources that go in place. As I recall, and I will just go from memory, to the member, in addition there is also the staff that provide bilingual coverage, there are security arrangements. There are protocol arrangements. It is a fairly significant function that occurs.

In that particular year, I should add, it was the culmination of a year of negotiations. We normally only have one, maybe two meetings a year; that year there were six or seven that occurred, and it had been at the culmination of a long series of meetings and discussions that occurred across the country in Toronto, Montreal, Québec. I think twice in Toronto and then in Winnipeg.

I should add, Mr. Chairperson, it varies depending upon the conference. The last federal-provincial conference that I attended was in Newfoundland which was last October. At that time it was similar, and the traditional hosting of an event occurred at Citadel Hill in Halifax where the Halifax Minister of Health hosted all of the ministers and all of our staff, and at that time the room was full of people as well.

So that is generally the experience. We will be going to Banff, I believe, this fall where the Minister of Health in Alberta will be hosting us as well. That will be the end of the tenure of the Minister of Health from Alberta, and there will be a traditional end of one's tenure as chair at that particular FPT meeting.

\* (14:40)

So, to summarize, it varies from, I guess, as small as three to four to as many as fifteen to twenty that could be with each delegation. Traditionally, the province of Québec has the largest delegation, as does the province of Ontario. The federal government has a significant delegation.

I should add, just by way of information as well, Blood Services meetings are hosted at the same time at these events. So there are also individuals from Canadian Blood Services that attend because, generally, the annual meeting of the Canadian Blood Services is held in conjunction with the FPT meeting, although it precedes the FPT meeting because there is a provincial meeting that precedes the federal-provincial meeting. So that is roughly how it works, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell us what the tens of thousands of dollars spent at delicatensens like Partners and Tastee's would account for? Are those meetings in the minister's office for that particular year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** If the member could be more specific and tell me what period of time she is looking at, I could outline for her what she wants on this one-off question.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I think the Minister of Health was just being cheeky, but I would indicate it is for the year 2000-2001. I thought I had said that earlier on, but that is the particular year. There

were several tens of thousands of dollars spent on deli foods.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Any of the expenses that were spent were spent on meetings, official meetings and otherwise. It would depend also, the member cites 2000-2001. I did not know if she was referencing the previous meeting that was held, the federal-provincial meetings, which were, I believe, '99-2000. I do not know if that was in the same year. That is why I pointed out the issue of the one-offing. I was not sure what the member was referencing in terms of her particular references.

If it is in conjunction with the same year as the federal-provincial conferences, then there were considerable expenses that were entailed by Manitoba since Manitoba had to host at every federal-provincial conference, of which there was, as I indicated, six rather than the usual one because of the negotiations on the health accord. We hosted a number of the events, both in conjunction with the federal government and in conjunction with the province where the event was held.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister just verify for me then, if it was the year 2000-2001, that the Tavern in the Park expense for \$8,300 was related to that federal-provincial Health ministers' wind-up meeting that he did refer to? Is that the same one?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister just confirm, then, the tens of thousands of dollars spent on deli foods, that is for meetings he would hold in his office throughout that particular year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I cannot confirm that. That is for the previous year's Estimates which I do not have in front of me. I am not avoiding the question. If the member would forward to me the information she is referencing, whether it is from Public Accounts or from the previous year's Estimates, I will verify what the locations are with respect to that, but that information is from previous Estimates and I do not have it in front of me at this point.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would like to go back to the line of questioning from earlier this morning

related to cardiac surgeries. I would like to ask the Minister of Health, because he was very evasive in answering questions on this particular issue, basically ducked a lot of the questions, skated around on the questions, if he will guarantee that the cardiac surgery program in Manitoba is a safe program.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I do not understand, Mr. Chairperson, whether the member is seeking information or not. The member talks about my intentions, my thoughts and my feelings. My feelings might be fine for a session we might have where we discuss our feelings, but with respect to dealing with health care my purpose in here is to try to answer factual questions for the member. If the member wants me to answer and ask a factual question, I will try to the best of my ability to give my opinion as the Minister of Health on that particular factual question.

With regard to the issue the member is asking, can I guarantee safety in any program, I cannot guarantee safety across anything in health care. I cannot guarantee it. If I did do it, the first time there was an error or a mistake, the member would stand up and say: You broke your promise.

Let us be realistic. To the best of my ability, I rely on expertise that works in the regions and in the department to provide the safest and the best environment to provide health care in the province of Manitoba. That means realistically every day people, thousands of them do the best they can for the citizens of Manitoba. That means 15 million contacts a year between patients and doctors. That means tens of millions of tests every year. Can I guarantee safety? Can I guarantee a mistake-free environment? No.

We have actually, as I indicated to the member previously, now recognized the fact that we are trying to identify medical error. That was a non-issue when the member was assistant to the Minister of Health. It was not even acknowledged. We at least acknowledge medical error, and we are dealing with it. Yes, it occurs every single day. Our job is to try to reduce it and to work on it. That was the lesson of Sinclair and the lesson of Thomas, to the best of our human ability to deal with the system.

As I said, and I was quoted in the *Winkler Times* recently, our democracy is not perfect, our parliamentary system is not perfect, and our health care system is not perfect, but it is the best system we have. All of us, the Member for Charleswood included, I suggest, work to the best of our ability to ensure that safety and well-being and highest quality care is delivered in Manitoba.

So I cannot guarantee a hundred percent of anything. What I can guarantee is that we work as hard as we can and to the best of our ability to ensure that the care is to the highest quality possible. We work on that every single day, we continue to work on that, and we will continue to work on that. Does that mean things are perfect? No. Does that mean mistakes are not made? No. Mistakes are made. Does that mean that things do not get screwed up? Yes, things do get screwed up sometimes. But we acknowledge, we recognize, we learn from our mistakes, and we move forward and try not to repeat them. That seems to me to be fairly simple, fairly straightforward, and that is our approach.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Chairperson, the minister has just indicated that he comes to these Estimates in order to try his best to give answers, and yet for most of the morning he refused to answer the questions. I would like to ask the minister again then if that is his position. How many cardiac surgeons should there be in Manitoba's cardiac surgery program?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I understand it, and I indicated to the member this morning on, what, three or four occasions, there are five cardiac surgeons providing surgery in Manitoba now. There is a sixth, as I understand it, gradually retired and reducing his practice. I am told by the WRHA that our volumes and our numbers are being met and the WRHA continues to monitor and assess the situation. If you look at it and extrapolate, Mr. Chairperson, roughly a thousand surgeries, if you take five cardiac surgeons that is about 200 per surgeon.

\* (14:50)

I stand by the comments I made earlier. But what I do and want to assure the member opposite is that we are increasing our cardiac program

and our capacity from what had happened and from the period in the past. We are trying to develop a more broad-based cardiac program with cardiologists, with cardiac surgeons, with rehab people to try to improve our care. It is a multifaceted, multiyear plan that is being developed over the next several years.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, if I interpret the minister correctly, then, he appears to be satisfied with us having the five surgeons. He feels that these five surgeons can meet the demand for the numbers of surgeries needed in Manitoba. Does that mean that the four surgeons then that have left in this past year will not be replaced?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I would be happy if we had 50 more cardiac surgeons. I would not say no to 50 cardiac surgeons. That would be absolutely ridiculous to say otherwise. I look to the WRHA who has a province-wide program dealing with cardiac and cardiac surgery. We had a discussion this morning about one of the surgeons that left. The member said she was not talking about surgeons that were leaving. There are a variety of surgeons that come in, in a whole variety of areas, specialists. There is a variety that leave. The WRHA has looked at this situation, as I understand it, and the present situation with respect to cardiac surgeons, if five or ten or fifteen cardiac surgeons wanted to come to Winnipeg, and if they were high quality and wanted to practise their craft here, I think that would be really, really good. Then we would have to probably revise or review our program in some other way to perhaps increase volumes here, perhaps from other jurisdictions or something along those lines.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The Minister of Health has absolutely no credibility with his answers that he has provided on the whole cardiac surgery program. He is refusing to answer very straightforward questions by playing with the words, manipulating the words, skating around it, appears to not want to be accountable and transparent in his answers, putting misinformation on the record, not only with this issue but on a very regular basis. I just find that there is just no credibility in any of the answers that he has put forward on this particular issue.

I think the cardiac surgery program here is very challenged. Even when asked in the House the other day whether or not he had asked the WRHA for a full reporting of the program, I mean, he could not even give a straightforward answer to that. This morning, also, he was quoting FOI information, which again troubles me because the FOI information I have on cardiac surgeries is obviously different from the FOI information he was quoting on cardiac surgeries. I have some concern about that because, when we looked at the number of vacancies previously in the fall and in January for the number of nursing vacancies in the critical care areas in the two tertiary hospitals, the FOIs that I have, once I started questioning the minister on them, within 24 hours of those questionings started, the two FOIs changed. So not only did one FOI change, two FOIs were changed.

Now, the minister this morning is quoting numbers that do not even match the surgical numbers that I have. He had indicated that in 1996-97, there were 1040 heart surgeries. I have the number for 1996-97 as 1177. The minister then said for '98-99, it was 1147, and for 1998-99, I have 1394. So, in fact, you know at that period in time, the numbers of cardiac surgeries, according to my FOI, show that they were much higher than what has happened since he has become the Minister of Health. Can the minister explain these discrepancies to me?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I would just like to suggest to the member if she would put her numbers on the record I would be happy to discuss those numbers with her.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I will put my numbers on the record. I will read them out to the minister right now. This was an FOI that had been provided to me by the WRHA and I will give him the numbers that I have.

For 1996-97, the total cases were 1177. For '97-98, they were 1298. For '98-99, they were 1394. For 1999-2000, they are down to 1231. Then for 2000-2001, they are down again to 1173. Those are the numbers I was provided by the WRHA for cardiac surgeries. I would like his explanation as to why his numbers are in discrepancy with mine.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, can the member indicate exactly what her question was to the WRHA with respect to surgeries?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Cardiac surgeries performed at Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface General Hospital from the years 1996 to 2001.

**Mr. Chomiak:** So the member says the Freedom of Information with cardiac surgeries from the WRHA is: '96-97, 1177; '97-98, 1298; '98-99, 1394; '99-2000, 1231; and '00-01 is 1173. Is that correct?

**Mrs. Driedger:** That is correct. Those are the numbers I was provided. Then Dr. Brock Wright also, on CJOB, recently indicated, in fact in April, I believe, of this year, that, indeed, 1173 were the number of surgeries allocated for '01 and '02, and indicated he felt those were adequate numbers of surgeries that would satisfy the needs in Manitoba.

He, in fact, indicated that 1173 for this year matched 1173 from last year and that those were numbers that would, I guess, satisfy the need for cardiac surgeries in Manitoba. So he, in fact, was using the same numbers that I have in that way.

**Mr. Chomiak:** The fact that there are four fewer in '00-01 from '96-97 is the reason the member is getting all flustered.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Chairperson, the reason the member is getting flustered is because in 1996-97, my FOI shows that 1177 cases were done. This morning the minister said only 1040 were done. That is more than just four. That is quite a significant difference.

In fact, he also said for, I think it was 1998-99, it was 1147 according to his numbers. From my numbers, 1998-99 were 1394. These are not just little discrepancies. If we are talking about FOIs, they should be exactly identical. There should be no differences whatsoever.

\* (15:00)

I am asking for some clarification. Is the whole FOI process compromised? What is going on here? The minister this morning said he was quoting from an FOI, and now I have different numbers from an FOI, and I know that from the

time he received some information not long ago, FOIs got changed.

So I am wondering if our whole FOI process has been compromised. Can we even believe in the information that is being put forward now?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, if the answer is no, then why are the numbers different?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I believe the member in one of her previous questions indicated that there had been some changed numbers and corrected. Is she referencing this, Mr. Chairperson?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Chairperson, I think the minister is trying to put us both on this merry-go-round again, and dance around, and I am really not prepared to tango with him this afternoon.

I think my questions have been very straightforward. My comments have been very straightforward, and right now he has different information than what I have, and I am just asking him what is going on here.

Mr. Chairperson, if the minister wants to double-check into all of this and maybe save himself some embarrassment, I would certainly be prepared to wait until he can double-check and find out why these numbers are different because, to me, the freedom of information process should not have any discrepancies in it, that whenever numbers are being forwarded by anybody, I would hope that if 10 different people applied for an FOI, that all those 10 different people would get the same information, because it is coincidental that the vacancy rates for ICU nurses has changed, and now I am hearing from the minister that the numbers he has for heart surgeries are very different from the FOIs that I have.

I am asking for clarification of that, because I think it is important to the integrity of the system that all of this information be accurate, and I would be prepared to wait for him to do his homework on this one and to come back with some accurate information.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I wonder if the member would be willing to table the information she has.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Certainly, I can. I have one sheet. If the minister is prepared to accept my one sheet, I can table that right now.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that the WRHA information is based on actual cases and that the Manitoba Health information I quoted this morning is based on actual billings, which is actual post, but we should just use one number base. I am prepared to use the WHRA figures in discussions with the member opposite.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Chairperson, I am sorry, I did not hear the minister's response. Could he just repeat that again?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I am advised that the FIPPA the member received from WRHA is based on total actual cases performed and that the information I was quoting from this morning deals with the number of billings that were done by the Department of Health, which accounts for the discrepancy, but I am quite prepared to use the numbers the member cites, since I always believe we should use one base, regardless, and if this is what the WHRA provided in terms of the actual cases, that is fine. We can utilize these numbers.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Certainly, then, if the minister is prepared to acknowledge the WRHA numbers, he will see that the numbers are, in some cases, for instance, 1998-99, significantly higher than where they are now. In fact, then some of his comments from this morning, I wondered if he wanted to retract them.

**Mr. Chomiak:** According to the numbers that were provided by the member and the WRHA, I note that for the year '99-2000 there were more heart surgeries performed than in the year '96-97, which was the mid-nineties that the member referenced this morning. So I think we both should agree, given these numbers we are looking at, that we are both compromising in terms of looking at these numbers in terms of the statements both of us made in that regard.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would like to ask the Minister of Health, as it relates to the cardiac surgery program, the norm across Canada is for a single

integrated site for cardiac surgery, and in places such as Calgary, Ottawa, Hamilton, Halifax, Victoria, Kingston and London, perhaps by now, all have one site. One site has been acknowledged, that larger, more efficient programs work best. You can get adequate volumes of procedures that ensure the best training, staffing opportunities, education and potential for research opportunities, optimal cost-efficiency and staff expertise, generates patient volume increases by having one site. So everybody across the country has moved to one site.

Can the minister indicate why we have two sites in Manitoba and are bucking the trend?

**Mr. Chomiak:** When the Government made that decision to reverse the Conservative government's decision to consolidate all surgeries at Health Sciences Centre, I think we had that debate. We explained it and dealt with it. If the member wants to revisit that debate, that is fine, but that decision was made, and that decision is continuing to be developed.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess I would be interested in hearing the minister's comments this year in answering the question, why are we bucking the trend here in Manitoba? It certainly is much more costly, especially when you are looking at the dollar issue in health care. I really do have concern that our health care budget is going to hit the wall at some point. All of these other hospitals and provinces and cities are saying that you get optimal cost efficiency by having one site. I mean, the minister certainly had time, probably, to think about this one over the years. How can he justify two sites when we are probably the only place in Canada that is going in this direction?

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Chomiak:** First off, I do not think we are the only place in Canada that is doing this. Secondly, I think Manitoba has, in many cases, been out ahead of other regions and other programs in Canada where we have been the leader. That does not mean that we have to do everything exactly like it is done in other jurisdictions all the time.

We led with home care. We led with Pharmacare. We are leading soon with the

gamma knife and innovations in that area. We led with repatriating surgery to rural Manitoba, a first. Maybe other jurisdictions are not repatriating surgery from urban centres to rural centres, but we are doing that. We do not have to follow necessarily all the trend lines if we think it is in the best interests of our patients and on the advice of people that provide us with that kind of advice.

If we followed that advice, if we took the member's statement, everything, a hundred per cent would be located in Winnipeg and everything would come to Winnipeg. I do not think members in this Chamber would approve of that, of centralizing everything in one urban centre, because that clearly is not what we are talking about. I do not think that we have to do that. I think we can be more innovative than that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister went off on a bit of a tangent which had absolutely nothing to do with centralizing everything in Winnipeg, and then that would be a disservice to the rest of the province. I am only talking about cardiac surgery. The recommendations by physicians in the field have been for a single site for a number of reasons.

I mean, cost is only one of them, but best training, best staffing opportunities, best education, best opportunity for research—to sort of be indicating that we are going to go our own way and we are going to buck the trend because, maybe, the trend is not right when these other centres are leading centres—all of them are leading centres for cardiac surgery. It is the experts in the system; it is the health care professionals in the systems in those places that are recommending one site.

Maybe St. B should be the site. That was the home of heart surgery in the province. Certainly, they would be quite capable of managing something like that, but, certainly, the movement and recognition of the many, many values to having one site—I am surprised to hear that the minister would be saying something that experts across the rest of the country would probably disagree with.

Certainly, I cannot support the comments that he is making, because they do not even

make sense when you listen to what the experts are saying and why they are saying it. The idea is to end up with the best care possible for cardiac surgery patients. When we hear all of the challenges in the system and we are trying to spread five doctors between two hospitals, I have to say I have some very huge concerns about that, about lack of backup that could happen on some occasions because we have spread our doctors so thin. So my feeling is certainly more in line, I think, with the medical experts across the country who have advocated for one site. Certainly, the minister can buck the trend and feel comfortable with it. I guess I do not feel comfortable with it.

St. Boniface Hospital's campaign recently—their heart care campaign, actually, is what it was called—used a heart patient as the person to be the face of the campaign. This particular gentleman said Manitobans should not have to leave the province for treatment like I did. All of St. Boniface's campaign was based on that particular comment, which sort of flies a bit in the face of the minister's assertions that we have such a wonderful program. Here you have one of the major centres for heart surgery indicating that: Manitobans should not have to leave the province for treatment like I did. They have taken ads out in papers. They have sent fundraising letters to everybody, and that is the focus of their whole campaign.

Can the minister tell us, then, how we are going to keep those patients in Manitoba and be able to provide them the service here? Obviously, St. B. feels like we cannot provide them the service here, that they have focussed their whole campaign around this. How are we going to make it so that these patients do not have to leave the province for care and so that St. Boniface Hospital does not have to be trying to raise funds for its heart program by having a slogan such as: Manitobans should not have to leave the province for treatment like I did? How are we going to make all of this work?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Well, the first thing we did, Mr. Chairperson, is reverse the member's government's decision to consolidate all heart surgery at Health Sciences Centre. Let me reiterate that. The member's government's decision was to consolidate all heart surgery at Health Sciences

Centre. We reversed that decision. One program, two sites. That is the decision we made.

Now the member is saying why do you not do it all at one place like St. Boniface, which, if there could be more than a 360-degree turn, I do not know what it is, Mr. Chairperson.

But the point is, Mr. Chairperson, we made the decision to go one program, two sites. This decision was not made based—and this is where I think the member is having difficulty—on today's situation. It is based on future developments which are of a significant degree in the next few years.

I have already talked about putting in the new equipment at Health Sciences Centre and the upgraded equipment, the catheterization labs at St. Boniface Hospital and Health Sciences Centre. We are having more catheterization labs than at any other time in provincial history. *[interjection]* The member says duplicate. I prefer to suggest that it provides for a wide range of services.

But the member wants to revisit a decision that was made for clinical, practical reasons. We made the determination, one program, two sites. I can assure the member that there will be future developments in this area. I can assure the member of that. I think most Manitobans will be pleasantly surprised with some of the developments that are going to be occurring in the near future as we roll out this multiyear program.

So, Mr. Chairperson, the member may want to consolidate, centralize everything in one facility all the time. That has not been our style. Where we can, we accommodate. We are delivering pediatric cardiac surgery, not in Winnipeg because we do not have the numbers and the volumes to justify it. We are cognizant of the realities, but we also know we need a thriving, effective cardiac adult program and cardiac supports to children. We intend to develop those.

We have a significant restructuring of the program under way. St. Boniface campaign is part of the fundraising to provide for developments in that field and in that program. I would just tell the member opposite to wait until future

developments because there are extensive future developments that will be announced in regard to the cardiac programs.

The member is, I think, doing a disservice to the people who provide the cardiac service now in Manitoba by suggesting it is not of a high quality. I think the people here are doing the job and will continue to do the job.

\* (15:20)

**Mrs. Driedger:** I think if anybody is doing a disservice to anything it is the Minister of Health right now by putting misinformation on the record. To even infer that I am saying it is not high quality I think is shameful for the minister. I do not know where he gets his interpretation, or misinterpretation, of so much information. He tends to put misinformation on the record consistently.

In his job, the Minister of Health of this province, people are expecting more, I certainly expect more from him and I think health care professionals do, so where he gets this from, I have no idea.

People in the system are the ones who are doing the good job. The people in the system are the ones who are struggling with the promises. *[interjection]* The minister is saying, good, you said that. I have always said that. I have walked in their shoes so I know what they are going through on a day-to-day basis. If anybody knows the struggles they go through, how hard they try to make the system, it is me, because I have been there with them at many different levels. I have worked alongside doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and dieticians. I have great respect for what they are able to do. Once patients are in the system, there is high regard for the quality of care they receive. It is accessing care that is certainly the piece of it that is a challenge.

I would appreciate if the Minister of Health would at least stop trying to mislead in terms and misrepresent what I say because, in fact, it is his credibility that is on the line every time he does that.

To go back to some of the decision-making as to one site, not only are others in Canada



moving in that direction, but it was the doctors here, the experts in Manitoba at the time, who made the recommendation for one site. In fact, Dr. Brian Postl was adamant that it be one site. The head of the section of cardiology at the time insisted it be one site, the head of the cardiac sciences program. We as a government appreciated their expertise, valued their expertise and agreed with them.

We were not the ones that did not listen. In fact, we listened to the experts in the system. Brian Postl at the time was absolutely adamant that it be one site. I can recall those discussions. Brian Postl was the one who felt strongly we needed one site in order to get the best possible care for patients in this province. When the NDP came in, all of a sudden everything changed, and all of a sudden Brian Postl had to sing a different tune off somebody else's song sheet. I think he was put in a compromising position.

Certainly, Mr. Chairperson, the experts at the time—and although the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) tries to again mislead around the Wade-Bell report, even in Wade-Bell they indicated that one site was preferable. I can even quote the page number if the minister is interested, but they even said one site was preferable.

So, for the minister to go down this line saying things have changed, a lot of that thinking was already put into place at the time the decisions were being made. The experts in Manitoba, in cardiac sciences, were the ones that recommended one site and we chose to respect their decision. I will leave it at that.

I know we can probably go round and round on this issue, as we have every year. I would like to just state that I have some concerns in how he is handling the cardiac surgery situation in Manitoba, and I do hope that patient care is not compromised in any way. I will leave it at that.

*Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

We got off onto this issue of cardiac surgery because we are talking about human resources and the importance of building that human resource infrastructure. The minister had talked about doctors and the physician resource plan and certainly, as I said earlier, I do not have any

criticism with all the efforts that are being made to recruit and retain physicians or nurses or any of the other professions. But the minister goes on and on numerous times saying that he doubled the number of nurses in the system.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I wonder if the minister could be very specific about how he or his Government doubled the number of nurses in the system.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will answer that question.

I just want to comment, just a wrap up to the member's statement. I am glad and I acknowledge what the member said in her comments, that she supports people that are working in the system, firstly. Secondly, I, too, hope that the care is not compromised in any way. Thirdly, the Wade-Bell report recommended the two sites, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

So, now, with respect to nursing. The members that I see in terms of people involved and enrolled in nursing is double what it was under the previous administration. The number of nurses, as I have said on many occasions, has doubled from a decade ago, nurses that are enrolled in the program.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, Mr. Acting Chairperson, can the minister tell me why he is taking credit for that doubled enrolment? Those nurses that now represent a large number of the students entered training prior to him even becoming the Minister of Health. It was because of the extraordinary efforts by the University of Manitoba Faculty of Nursing recruitment initiatives and it had nothing, nothing to do with what this Minister of Health or the NDP government did. Yet, they—by the way, they are using their language around this issue—are trying to take credit for the fact that enrolment in nursing has doubled.

The only thing this Government can take credit for is the reinstatement of that two-year diploma program, and they can take credit for the number of graduates that come out of that program, but he certainly cannot take credit for what the University of Manitoba is doing.

That is shameful because I know how hard they worked at the University of Manitoba to

become aggressive in their recruitment campaign. I know how hard they worked and how innovative they tried to be.

So, if the minister wants to take credit for doubled enrolment at the University of Manitoba, can he tell me exactly what he did? Did he increase the seats in any way in any of the years in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I know how difficult it is for members opposite to acknowledge any positive steps by this Government. I recognize that. To me, it does not matter who takes credit. The fact is, there is double the number of nurses in training. There are more doctors in training. There are more occupational therapists in training. There are more physiotherapists in training. There are more in virtually every profession in training. The member can say or do what she likes. The point is that Manitobans are going to have health care personnel trained, not cut and slashed as happened.

\* (15:30)

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister cannot answer the question, because he did not add any more student seats to the Faculty of Nursing. In fact, when Allan Rock was in town, he was appalled that with a nursing shortage the NDP government had not added any seats to the University of Manitoba. He is quoted in the paper, I believe, as indicating his dismay with this Government that they did not add any seats to the University of Manitoba Faculty of Nursing program.

But I will ask the Minister of Health, with the two-year program that was implemented at Red River, I understood the program was for 90 nurses, but then I heard they accepted 100. Then, on a CBC program not long ago, they said only 75 were graduating. Can the minister verify those numbers?

**Mr. Chomiak:** If we eliminated all of the things that the member opposite says that we cannot take credit for, the \$2.8-billion budget, I guess, is the member's budget. She did everything. We did not fund it as a government; we did not make the policy decisions. Maybe we will eliminate the six or so million dollars we paid for the

physician recruitment retention. Oh, we did not do that. Or maybe we will eliminate the millions of dollars we paid for nursing training. Oh, we did not do that. Or maybe we will eliminate the tens of millions of dollars we pay for other professional training. Oh, we did not do that, on and on and on. The fact is, that we are responsible for developing policy and paying for that policy and ensuring that that policy is carried out. That is what we have done and that is what we intend to do.

With respect to the diploma nurses' program, I would still be anxious if the member would tell me whether or not she supports the program or still is taking the position that she took in the past.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I see we are into the tango again. I asked a very straightforward question, and that was verification of some numbers. Can the minister verify that only 75 graduates came out of that program?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, I cannot verify that. I will provide the member with those numbers, as I have done every year.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I appreciate that the minister answered that one directly, because I certainly think that is better for the whole system to have that happen.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to give a reason why his prostate cancer screening program, which he promised within the first year of government, is not up and running. I will start there, because, certainly, the whole issue of prostate cancer is a serious one. I certainly have a number of friends that have struggled with prostate cancer. There are a lot of men in this province currently going through that. The minister, during the campaign, during the election, promised that within the first year of government, for the cost of \$1 million, he was going to establish a prostate cancer screening program. We are now three years down the road, and I would like to know where that screening program is.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am very pleased that we have been able to announce a cervical cancer screening program, something

that was promised, I believe, starting in 1995 and then '96 and then '97 and then '98 and then '99, and then we came into government and we delivered on the cervical screening program.

I am also pleased that we have the breast screening program in place, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I know we have been up and down this same issue with the member opposite. The member was on a local radio show dealing with that issue not too long ago and was talking about waiting lists and was talking about screening, et cetera, and we dealt with those particular issues at that time.

As I understand it, Mr. Acting Chairperson, men in Manitoba have access to the PSA testing if they are symptomatic.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Men in Manitoba have had access to PSA bloodwork for a long time to do some screening, but that was not the screening program that he promised during the campaign.

Again, we are talking about cancer patients, people feeling very vulnerable. A promise was made in the election by the NDP: Elect me and we are going to establish a prostate cancer screening program within the first year of government. They even put a price tag on it, a million dollars. We are now three years down the road. I would like a progress report. We know they failed to do it in their first year. They failed to do it in their second year. They failed to do it in their third year.

I think it is a fair question and one of accountability on a promise made in the election. Where is the prostate cancer screening program at?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Acting Chairperson, I have had discussions with the prostate cancer support group with regard to that, as well as with the departmental officials with regard to a prostate cancer screening program.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, that is wonderful that the Minister of Health has had discussions with them. Where is he in terms of progress in keeping his promise to establish a prostate cancer screening program within the first year of government? How far along has that proceeded?

Well, we know it has not proceeded anywhere, but there must be something happening somewhere on this issue, and I am curious as to how far the program had advanced in its development, if at all.

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated, there were numerous commitments we made and lived up to with respect to prostate cancer, including a prostate cancer centre, including various types of therapy that we are proceeding on, as well as slashing radiation waiting lists, all commitments that were made and that were fulfilled and are in the process of being fulfilled.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister seems to have a lot of difficulty answering this question. I mean, if he has to say, I failed to keep my promise, maybe he needs to start doing that because he has failed to keep a lot of his promises made in the election. Then one has to wonder, well, what were these promises based on, just say anything to win an election, or is there some accountability behind making these promises?

I mean, we are three years down the road, and there is not even a peep out there about the prostate cancer screening program. I really think the minister owes some bigger explanation and maybe even an apology to Manitoba men for making such a promise and failing to keep that promise.

I would like to ask him again and give him a chance to answer this. Why has he not kept his promise to establish a prostate cancer screening program within the first year of forming government?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Acting Chairperson, there were numerous commitments we made with respect to prostate cancer that we have delivered on, and the member opposite knows that. The member opposite knows that there is a whole series of initiatives we have undertaken with respect to prostate cancer, as well as other forms of cancer that we have dealt with. I would be happy to discuss those or other issues as we go along.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The credibility of the minister is being eroded even more as we go through these Estimates. The minister said he had lived up to

his promise for the comprehensive prostate cancer centre. Can the minister give us an update on where that comprehensive prostate centre is? I understand when I went to the opening of the oncology unit at the Concordia Hospital, which was not long ago, I was told that the comprehensive prostate cancer floor at CancerCare Manitoba was still just a shell, and there was nothing happening there.

So how can the minister indicate that he has got this comprehensive centre, and lived up to that promise when we were told not that long ago that that new floor at CancerCare has not even been opened?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, I always find it curious that things that the members opposite did not do when they were in government, then come back to us and say: Now you do it, but you do it faster than we did it, which is, when they did it, they did not do it. A prostate centre will become operational with operating costs attached to it, and we are working on it.

\* (15:40)

**Mrs. Driedger:** I am afraid that answer does not do much for my satisfaction in terms of the specifics. The minister did promise in the election that it was something that was immediately going to happen.

**An Honourable Member:** Immediately.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Yes, and there was some discussion that this would not be hard to do: We are going to get it up and running as soon as we possibly can. And I am told that we still have only a shell for that floor. That hardly equates to a comprehensive program. So I would like the minister to get into a little bit more of the detail in terms of where this is at, I mean, in terms of consultation, where they are at in their planning, where they are in their capital plans on this, what is happening with that prostate cancer centre.

The minister certainly took some shots at me when I went on a radio station and talked about this, and, in fact, that news release that I issued at that time that the minister trashed me on is exactly these promises that he still has not kept. Now we are into almost three years since the

election, and the minister has the audacity to criticize my news release when my news release is exactly accurate and is still valid today.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I just remind the member, it was not me that criticized the member on the show. It was the host of the radio show that criticized the member for her news release, not me. I have the transcript, which I am quite happy to share with the member. I have a copy of the transcript. I kept it for the member. It was not me that criticized the member for her initiatives. It was the host of the radio program, which does happen on occasion. It happens to all of us on occasion. I am sorry that I had to criticize the member's press release, but the member's press information was wrong.

**An Honourable Member:** It was not.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Well, the member says it was not. You know—Mr. Acting Chairperson, let me—*[interjection]*

**An Honourable Member:** Just quit. You know she is going to have the last word.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I am not going to go down that road, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I am not going to go down that road. What I will attempt to do is to outline the initiatives with respect to prostate cancer, because there was a series of initiatives that were lacking, that we as a government when we came into office said we would undertake with respect to prostate cancer. As members opposite know, together with other forms of cancer, there is a significant increase in terms of cancer and the initiatives. The requirements are becoming more significant as we move along.

We committed to a prostate centre which would include a wide variety of services for Manitoba men, including clinical assessment, information to help with patient decision making, linkages with prostate cancer support groups and research in other areas. We are proceeding with the development of that project at the CancerCare building. I only tell the member opposite to stay tuned for further developments in that regard.

We have also committed to deal with and develop a brachytherapy program. We also

committed to provide funding for this particular program. Since then, there have been other developments in other types of programs that we have had to provide for.

For example, when we came into office, we did not realize that the waiting lists for cancer were so long. We put in place, well, it is true, we put in place the critical shortages fund that allowed individuals who were on the two waiting lists with respect to cancer, mostly breast cancer victims and prostate cancer victims, those that are more transportable, more able to move to go to other locations to receive their treatment while we dealt with the shortage of radiation therapists which was affecting cancer treatment in Manitoba.

I did not realize how lengthy the waiting lists were until we came into office and we looked. The member opposite said we should have done our homework. We make no apologies for what we did. In fact, it is one of the initiatives, I think, that has been well received by Manitobans, that we said it did not matter what the issues were, we would try to get care to individuals. We have cut the radiation waiting lists in half since we have been in office.

We are into one of these debates with the member. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) can arbitrate on this issue, but every time we suggest that we have cut a waiting list, the Member for Charleswood says, oh, you changed the way you account for it. Every time the waiting list goes up, that is not the case. So I suggest that using similar numbers, apples to apples, we have cut it in half. *[interjection]* The Member for Lakeside is attempting to get me to digress with respect to the budget. I will deal with that issue.

Let me conclude my remarks as it relates to the serious issue of cancer and prostate cancer. We recognize that there was a need to deal with patients. That is why we put in place the critical shortages fund that saw patients go for treatment outside of Winnipeg. That has been one of the factors that has resulted in the decrease in waiting lists for cancer treatment and radiation therapy.

Now, it is a fluid and it is a fluctuating list. I do not want to wax too eloquent on it, because things go up and down. If another linear accelerator breaks down, or some of the radiation therapists become ill or something, then the lists can go up, unfortunately, quite dramatically.

But we have managed to reduce the waiting list significantly in this area, Mr. Acting Chairperson. Given the same resources, three years ago members opposite chose not to. We chose to do that. I think it has been well received across the system with respect to a reduction in waiting lists.

To return to the point that was raised by the Member for Charleswood, whether or not we agree or disagree on her particular interpretation of the statistics as it related to wait lists, the fact is, on the instance when the member felt that the radio host had criticized her, he was dealing with information not provided by me, but provided by other individuals. So the member may have to take up her cause or take up her case with someone else other than myself. We deal with the facts as they are before us, whether the member agrees with it or not.

So it is a significant issue, Mr. Acting Chairperson. We have been working significantly to try to deal with this issue. We have made some progress. We will continue to make progress. There will be further announcements as we move along. I happen to be in a position where I know what some of the timing considerations are. I know how the timing considerations have been reviewed.

I know in fact, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that even since the election campaign, there have been different types of therapies that are newly introduced and newly available to deal with this type of cancer, this type of tumour, that have been identified and have been utilized. We are, as well, looking at some of those initiatives to try to provide the maximum type of care to patients who find themselves, unfortunately, in this situation and in this position. So I know it is something that affects all Manitobans and is something that is significant and has a significant impact.

I have had the occasion to address the support group and some of the excellent work that they have undertaken. In fact, they have now expanded the support group to include Brandon. They have recently attended in the Far East to see if they could set up chapters in the Far East. I think it is another example of working with support groups and self-help groups, which is something that we do across the board in the health care field. We do it through all areas of health care, because we find that support of peers and other individuals and their expertise is of significant impact on recovery of individuals right across the board, Mr. Acting Chairperson. So I think I have fairly summarized the issues for the Member for Charleswood.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Thank you, Mr. Acting Chairperson. The minister has not summarized anything adequately in this area. In fact, he has failed to keep most of his promises in the area of prostate cancer. Pretty unconscionable for, I think, his party to make election promises based on vulnerable Manitobans who were just asking for a health care system that was there for them.

We had an NDP government, I think, that was desperate to say anything in order to win an election.

\* (15:50)

**An Honourable Member:** And they did.

**Mrs. Driedger:** And they did, as the member from Lakeside said. It seems that the NDP were willing to say anything to get people to vote for them, and now the minister actually—I am amazed that he can actually say that he has met his prostate cancer screening promises or his comprehensive prostate centre to any degree and almost gloats around this issue when, in fact, on this particular issue, he has failed to keep his promise to the men in this province. He promised to establish a prostate cancer screening program within the first year of government.

Again, like hallway medicine, he did not say, well, we will put this in place and we will put that in place. Black and white, unequivocal, just like we will end hallway medicine. He said to Manitoba men who were scared that they might have prostate cancer, said to them that he

was going to put a screening program in place in the first year of government. Now he sits and gloats and tries to put forward that he somehow accomplished something in that area.

He promised to develop a comprehensive prostate centre very, very soon after he became government. Just vote for me, we will put this in place, and there will be minimal capital cost to it. Yet, where is this at? This, I imagine, is probably a long ways down the road.

The minister, again, is trying to say well, we are talking to people about it. Well, that hardly meets the promise that was made in the election—well, we are talking to people about it. Well, wonderful. But, again, he has failed to keep that promise to the men of this province.

CancerCare even admitted that they changed the way cancer wait times are calculated. The minister likes to go on with this one, as well, and gloats that he has made such a big difference to it when CancerCare themselves have said they have changed how wait times are calculated and, by doing so, it dramatically changes how those numbers are presented to the public. It was not anything that the NDP did to dramatically improve wait times for people who need radiation therapy. In fact, this Government has done very little in that area. They are continuing to have to send people out of province—

**An Honourable Member:** They stood on highways saying how terrible that was.

**Mrs. Driedger:** That is right. This minister has failed in the whole issue of addressing their promises in the election for prostate cancer. Yet the minister somehow seems to think that, well, having a few little discussions is sort of moving in that direction. I am told that the prostate cancer screening program is not even on the radar screen out there according to the men with prostate cancer who are tracking this. At least that is what they are telling me.

CancerCare is telling us that the way cancer wait times are calculated was changed. So I do not know how the minister can take any comfort in the fact that he has failed miserably in keeping this election promise. Again, it is vulnerable

people; it is people who are scared they are going to die; it is people who are worried about what is going to happen to their families if they should die.

You know, as we have an increasing population, we have more men that are going to contract prostate cancer and they want this issue dealt with. I think this minister trivializes this whole issue with his gloating, with his shallow responses on it, with his deflection. Every time he cannot defend his own record, whenever he cannot be accountable for the promises he made to Manitobans, he immediately tries to criticize the person that asks the question or he waltzes around and plays with the words of a question.

I find that when I pick up my phone messages on a daily basis, I am starting to hear from more and more people about how offended they are at the minister's responses to a lot of the questions that is put forward to him. Maybe it is a certain degree of arrogance coming forward from this minister. Somehow, he thinks he is above having to keep his election promises that he made. Somehow, by deflecting from the questions and refusing to answer them and being evasive with his answers, he somehow thinks that is an acceptable way to do his job.

But, certainly, the minister has failed in this particular promise to Manitoba men, just like he has failed to end hallway medicine. In fact, just the other day, the minister indicated that with hallway medicine, the numbers that are put on the WRHA Web site on a weekly basis, the methodology that is used, is exactly the same as it was in 1999. In fact, the minister is wrong. If he were to go to the Web site, he would see point No. 3: there are also patients awaiting admission to surgical and psychiatric beds, generally between zero and six patients on a daily basis. These patients are not included in the above data for 2000, which are for medical beds only. However, they are included for the data for 1999. If we were to look at surgical and psychiatric patients in ER hallways and there could be six a day, they are admitted patients and they are waiting there, but they are not counted anymore, but the WRHA Web site says they

were counted in 1999, but they are not counted today.

In fact, the numbers on a weekly basis would be right now well above what they were in 1999. For the week of July 15 to 21, 2002, there were eight patients in the hallway. If we were to add on top of that the six they no longer might count because they are surgical and psychiatric patients—they were counted in 1999. So, in 1999, for this same week, there were nine patients in the hallway, now there are eight patients, but they do not include psych patients or they do not include surgical patients so, in fact, the numbers of patients in ER hallways right now might be very much higher than what they were in 1999.

When the minister put on the record the other day that they are actually compiling stats in the same way that the previous government did, he actually put misinformation on the record. If he would go to the WRHA's site—

#### Point of Order

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Stan Struthers):** The honourable minister, on a point of order.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I pointed out that discrepancy to the member opposite and I told her to look to that note, which I think clarifies the issue.

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Stan Struthers):** The minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Stan Struthers):** The hour being 4 p.m., as previously agreed, the committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Speaker:** As previously agreed, the hour being 4 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 30, 2002

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