



Second Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIB
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	ND
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	ND
CARR, James	Crescentwood	LIB
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIB
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	ND
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	LIB
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	ND
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	ND
DOER, Gary	Concordia	ND
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIB
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	ND
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	ND
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	ND
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIB
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	ND
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	ND
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	LIB
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	ND
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	ND
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	ND
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	ND
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	ND
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	ND
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	ND
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	ND
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	ND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 10, 1991

The House met at 8 p.m.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—CIVIL SERVICE

* (2005)

Mr. Deputy Chairman (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This evening this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will be considering the Estimates of the department of the Civil Service Commission.

Does the honourable Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act (Mr. Praznik) have an opening statement?

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Chairman, just so we might have some idea where the Liberal's critic is because—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: He is right here.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act): Mr. Deputy Chairman, in introducing the 1991-92 budget Estimates for the Civil Service Commission, I would draw attention to the Supplementary Estimates Information which has been tabled in two parts: one containing information relative to the operation of the Civil Service Commission itself, and the second dealing with employment benefits and other payments which are made by the government as an employer.

Members will note that this is a change in format from the previous display of Civil Service Commission Estimates. The salary and operating expenditures of the Civil Service Commission are now being displayed separately from the employment benefits and other payments which are made on behalf of the government as a whole.

The employment benefits and other payments are largely nondiscretionary in nature in that they are fixed through statute or collective agreement. It was, therefore, considered appropriate to display them separately as a distinct appropriation.

As a result, the remaining expenditures under the heading "Civil Service" represent the discretionary salary and operating expenditures related to the

operation of the department of the Civil Service Commission.

Dealing first with the appropriation for the Civil Service, members will note a reduction from the 1990-91 vote of some \$700,000—\$4,717,600 down to \$4,016,900. These reductions are a result of the budgetary decisions emanating from recommendations within the management and reform sectoral envelope and are comprised of a number of program adjustments designed to maximize the utilization of resources within the Civil Service Commission.

The adjustments are largely attributed to reductions to various operating accounts amounting to \$151.1 thousand; an increase in cost recoveries amounting to \$305,000; planned additional cost-sharing of the Employee Assistance Program of \$101,000; and a net reduction of 2.5 staff years, amounting to \$121.5 thousand.

The staff complement of the commission is now 85.10, down from an adjusted vote of 87.10.

The 1991-92 Estimates for the Civil Service Commission recognizes a major requirement to provide central co-ordination and support to deal with the staffing implications, layoff and work force adjustment issues resulting from the 1991-92 budget.

Existing resources within the Civil Service Commission have been reprioritized and redirected to concentrate on managing the variety of human resource issues required to support the work force adjustment process.

The primary source of resourcing and central support to the work force adjustment exercise is being provided through existing resources within the Civil Service Commission, supplemented where required through secondment from departments and other central agencies.

As a result, the 1991-92 budget Estimates reflect an attempt to maintain resource levels in those areas which require a concentrated effort in supporting the layoff work force adjustment process.

As announced in the budget speech on April 16, 1991, some 958 positions were eliminated through the 1991-92 budget exercise, resulting in layoff notices to some 430 government employees.

As a result of various initiatives, such as enhanced severance provisions, voluntary severance incentives and priority staffing from the re-employment list, those numbers have been significantly reduced to some 175 employees remaining on the list at the present point in time, the list for redeployment.

Efforts to re-employ those employees remaining on the list will continue over the next several months, particularly working with a list that has been developed of those who have applied to take advantage of the voluntary incentive program to leave the public service.

In addition, a number of support services have been put into place to assist affected employees adjust to their new circumstances and help them in their efforts of locating new career opportunities.

Some of the services available to employees include:

- (a) Placement on a re-employment list, with priority consideration for Civil Service vacancies for a period of one year from the date of layoff;
- (b) Access to a drop-in job search centre providing job market information and job postings, individual consultation, a computerized resume service, and private rooms for phoning employers;
- (c) Workshops on resume writing, job search techniques and interviewing skills;
- (d) Individual employment counselling to assist employees in developing a plan and strategy regarding their careers; and
- (e) Referral to services such as financial planning, unemployment insurance, Canada Employment Centres, self-employment agencies, and other community resources.

It is anticipated that the provision of central support services to the work force adjustment process will continue as an important priority for the Civil Service Commission for the remainder of the fiscal year.

While I would like to keep my remarks brief, Mr. Deputy Chair, there is one issue I would like to mention before closing, and that is the Hay audit report of employment practices within the Civil

Service, which was tabled in the House April 25, 1991.

As the newly appointed minister following the last provincial election, I assumed responsibility for this issue from my predecessor, the Honourable Gerrie Hammond. Without going into all the detail, the audit was experiencing problems with delays and credibility on the part of the consultant. With the support and assistance from the audit steering committee, I personally intervened with the Hay Management Consultants and was successful in getting the report back on track.

* (2010)

On May 22, 1991, I had the opportunity to meet with Manitoba Women in Government to address the report and more specifically the some 50 recommendations that it contains. These recommendations have fairly wide ranging impact on various constituencies including not only the Civil Service Commission, but all government departments, the Manitoba Government Employees' Association, other unions representing Manitoba government employees, the Central Affirmative Action Steering Committee, Treasury Board, and of course cabinet.

As Minister responsible for the Civil Service, I will be seeking advice and input from several sources in dealing with the implementation of these recommendations, including the steering committee of Women in Government. In general terms, however, the initial reaction from government and the Civil Service Commission is that the majority of the recommendations appear to be acceptable and capable of implementation within a reasonable time frame. In fact, there are several recommendations that are already in the process of being implemented.

As in any report of this nature and scope, there are some recommendations that are readily acceptable and others which may be more difficult to implement or on which we cannot proceed unilaterally in that they require consultation with either union representing employees or such bodies as Treasury Board.

More specifically, however, I can advise that I intend to make the implementation of the report a priority. Considering commitments in the current legislative session, and the fact that the majority of resources within the commission are presently devoted to the work force adjustment process; I

would anticipate an implementation plan to be ready by the fall of this year.

My discussions with the Manitoba Women in Government group indicate they are generally understanding of this time frame. In the meantime, there are many concepts and recommendations set out in the report which, as I have mentioned, are already in the process of being reviewed, looked at, or being developed for implementation and these, of course, will continue to be advanced during the interim period.

With these brief introductory remarks, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I would now welcome comments of my critics and questions from the committee members on the Estimates material now before us. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We thank the honourable Minister responsible for Civil Service Commission for those comments. Does the critic for the official opposition party, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), have any opening comments?

Mr. Ashton: Indeed, I have more than a few opening comments. I want to indicate right from the beginning that this is one area where I will be asking some very specific pointed questions of the minister because, quite frankly, the way in which this government has dealt with the Civil Service of this province over the past year, to my mind, raises some very serious questions about the commitment of this government to fairness and equity in terms of dealing with its own employees.

The minister noted one area that I will be touching on. That is the major cuts in positions that took place and the layoffs, because there indeed were layoffs. There are many people still on the redeployment list as the minister indicates. I will be raising some very specific questions about the impact of those announcements, the way in which they were handled, the role of the Civil Service Commission and, indeed, the minister in the development of those layoffs. I will be asking for some very specific answers.

On a similar note, I will be asking a number of questions in regard to decentralization. While there is a separate Decentralization line, I want to ask the minister a number of questions, as I have in the past, about the role of the Civil Service Commission and the minister in terms of the handling of

decentralization, which I have indicated in previous Estimates.

The concept has certainly been supported by the New Democratic Party, unlike the suggestions to the contrary by the Premier, who in recent weeks and months seems to be increasingly desperate to develop political arguments where none exist. There is no question on the principle, but there are some very significant questions about the way in which it was handled and the way in which certain communities were led or, in some cases, perhaps misled into the decisions that were made and also the decisions that were made in the various communities.

I also want to ask an area that I thought the minister would have discussed quite significantly in his opening comments, and I certainly will be asking some very significant comments about, and that is in terms of negotiations with the Civil Service. That, indeed, is one of the major overall responsibilities as indicated by the document tabled by the minister, in that the Civil Service Commission provides for negotiation of collective agreements, contract administration, and public sector co-ordination of compensation research.

* (2015)

I want to raise some very serious questions about the degree of collective bargaining, if any, on the part of this government. I want to raise some very serious questions about the role the Civil Service Commission has played, if any, in terms of any form of discussions or negotiations, and what the views are of this minister at what I would consider to be a bill, Bill 70, which destroys collective bargaining in the public sector in Manitoba. But beyond that, specific questions not about the bill per se, although I would certainly appreciate the minister's comments and certainly discussion about his own involvement, but how this minister has allowed the Civil Service Commission to become essentially an empty shell.

We have seen increasingly from this government over the last several months that it has had no intention of bargaining in good faith with its Civil Service or the public service generally. This is not a comment I am making in isolation from my own analysis. We are seeing selectors make the same statement. We saw a selector's decision last Thursday involving public sector workers outside of the main Civil Service component, but public sector

workers nonetheless, where the selector, Mr. Bowman, indicated there was no bargaining that had taken place. He repeated that throughout his decision.

I want to also look at the negotiations specifically with the MGEA main component where we saw the Premier (Mr. Filmon) sit down with the head of the MGEA in a number of private meetings, and never once do anything other than give the MGEA a take-it-or-leave-it offer. When it finally did, after repeated meetings at which there was no wage offer—and then we saw what I thought was one of the most fundamental breaches of faith that I have seen in public sector bargaining, when this government advised the head of MGEA 15 minutes before its press conference announcing a Civil Service, a public sector wage freeze that wiped out awards given by final offer selection; that would wipe out any awards given by an arbitrator; that wipes out any collectively bargained language or any collectively bargained wage settlement anywhere in the public sector in the areas that were prescribed by legislation; which goes further to list the number of exemptions, by press release, of groups that could with one stroke of the pen be included as part of the discussions, the bargaining by fiat, the settlement of disputes by fiat that we have seen from this government.

Those are very serious questions, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and those are questions I wish to focus on in these Estimates. I want to ask the very serious question: Where was the minister when these decisions were made? Where was the minister when the Civil Service was being hatcheted in a way unlike anything we have seen other than in the Sterling Lyon years, and arguably in a way that was more insidious and more direct than in the Sterling Lyon years?

We will be asking him, where was the minister in this department, the department of the Civil Service Commission, when the decisions were made in terms of Bill 70, an item of legislation that I have indicated in the House and I have no hesitation in repeating this: It is fascist legislation of the worst kind. It is one of the most Draconian pieces of legislation in Manitoba history. It throws out hundreds of contracts that are in the process of being negotiated. It throws out decades of progress in labour relations. It would turn back the clock to the 1940s in terms of labour laws. We are seeing a government that in other areas is destroying other

precepts of the basic principles of labour legislation, the Rand formula in the case of the MMA. We are seeing a very, very serious situation develop in this province.

* (2020)

What I want to also ask the minister is if he will not now take a stand in these particular areas because he is the minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission. I have had the opportunity to know the minister over the last number of years, and I cannot believe that this minister supports what has taken place in terms of the cutbacks and layoffs. I cannot believe that this minister can support what is taking place in terms of bargaining in the public sector.

I truly believe that this minister has been the victim of a government that is moving in areas that perhaps he does not agree with. I hope so, anyway, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because I am looking for this minister—who I have looked to in terms of his views hoping to see a greater balance than we have seen from previous ministers, a minister whose integrity I have not questioned. I am looking to him for some clear direction that this is not acceptable. I know that I am not the only one. I know many people, particularly in the public sector, many public sector workers and many people who bargain on behalf of public sector workers, are looking for the same sort of clear statement from the minister.

They cannot believe that this minister will sit idly by while this kind of antiworker, antilabour legislation, while those kinds of moves in terms of the layoffs are made. They cannot believe that this minister would not say something at the cabinet level, would not say something publicly or in the Legislature, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

As I said, I would like to believe that the minister disagreed with these policies when they were brought before cabinet. I hope, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am correct in that. If I am wrong, there is a more serious question raised. That is, if this minister did not agree with these policies when they were brought in, how does the minister expect to have any credibility as Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission?

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

How can he come before a legislative committee with a document entitled Supplementary

Information for Legislative Review, which talks about negotiation of collective agreements when, in fact, there has been no negotiation, a complete lack of bargaining in good faith? How can this minister come before this committee talking about centralized human resource management? How can this minister talk about personnel administration when, in fact, we have seen moves that have led to some of the worst levels of Civil Service morale in Manitoba history? How can the minister come before this legislative committee talking about development programs and other areas, in particular, in terms of affirmative action when many people who have been affected are those who were most recently brought in the Civil Service, once again calling the question the impact of those particular programs.

That is the clear decision the minister has to make at this point in time, at this set of Estimates. Does the minister come clean with the people of Manitoba and, particularly, does he come clean with Manitoba workers whose interests he is the trustee of, to a certain extent, at the cabinet level? Does he say that he rejects the disastrous policies of this government in terms of the handling of the Civil Service? Does he reject an approach which attaches to public sector workers the role of scapegoats for the economic situation we are in?

Does he reject the vicious and vindictive way in which the Premier, in particular, has dealt with the public serviced? In the opinion of many, the Premier seems to be more concerned about silencing on a personal basis people who have criticized him and his policies. Of course, the MGEA, led by its president Peter Olfert, have repeatedly warned Manitobans about the impending cutbacks that this government was planning and, indeed, has continued to remind them of the impact of those cutbacks.

We will be looking for the minister to reject those moves on behalf of the government, but he will have to make a choice. Will he toe the line? Will he follow cabinet solidarity? Will he align himself as Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission and Minister of Labour with an agenda that is the most vicious, right-wing, antilabour agenda that we have seen in decades in this province, that can only be matched with the kind of vicious agenda that we saw in the 1919 General Strike? I have to take it back to that far to see an equivalent.

Even Sterling Lyon did not treat the Civil Service of working people as shabbily as this government has. This is a true moment for the minister to decide whose side he is on. Is he with his cabinet colleagues who have for some reason, perhaps for political reasons, decided this is an easy target, the Civil Service of Manitoba? Or will the minister ally himself with the many working people, the many public sector workers, and indeed the many loyal civil servants who have been so shabbily treated by this government, both in the fact of the layoffs and in the fact of the way the layoffs were handled, and now the ultimate insult, the insult to add to injury, the most Draconian authoritarian piece of labour legislation, in fact can probably not be matched by any other legislation in Manitoba history? This is indeed the War Measures Act of labour relations.

About the only thing it does not do is put the public sector in internment camps, but it sets up a wire around the public sector, wage-wise and negotiation-wise, that says that they are somehow different. It sets up a new set of rules, heads I win, tails you lose. It sets up a new world in which—I do not know if this is their version of the new world order—a Premier's (Mr. Filmon) and a Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) word means absolutely nothing in terms of collective bargaining, in terms of commitments to maintain final offer selection or, in this case, we are talking about the Civil Service Commission.

* (2025)

We are dealing with the Civil Service Commission, with arbitration that has been in place in Manitoba since the Duff Roblin period but now has been criticized by the Premier who does not have the courtesy to deal with these items directly, but instead, Mr. Acting Chairperson, through the back door has essentially made anything that arbitration will result in null and void by government fiat, by one item of legislation has wiped out more than 30 years of tradition.

Those are the kind of choices that the minister has to make, and I realize they are very difficult decisions but I am looking from the minister, who I cannot believe supports these decisions, to make a clear statement through his answers, through his comments on his Estimates, that he does not support what this government is doing.

I want to indicate, Mr. Acting Chairperson, once again, that it is not just myself, it is many other

people who will be watching the proceedings of this Estimates, the debate on Bill 70, the continuing debate on the cutbacks that have been put in place in terms of the Civil Service and the resulting cutbacks in service brought in by this government, because they will be the final jury, if you like, on the actions of this minister and this government.

I look to the minister and I realize it is a difficult position for a new minister who perhaps was brought into the cabinet, I believe, under certain false pretenses to a certain extent, by a Premier who said that there would be no change with the majority government, who said that Manitobans would receive more of the same, who was shown, within six months, just how little those words meant. In fact, we are seeing the same sort of agenda we have seen in the past, in fact more of the same ideological right-wing agenda that we have seen in the past.

Perhaps the minister was brought in under false pretenses, perhaps the minister believed those words of the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). I want to indicate to the minister, those of us who believed those words and the words of the government House leader (Mr. Manness), as I did on such issues as final offer selection, now no longer believe anything that is said in terms of labour relations, anything that is said in terms of the Civil Service, from our Finance minister (Mr. Manness) or our Premier (Mr. Filmon) because they have proven, by their actions, that their words of only a few months ago mean absolutely nothing.

Perhaps the minister bought into that when he came into Cabinet but surely he, as an intelligent individual whose integrity I have never questioned in the past, someone who I had, despite our political differences, come to appreciate in terms of friendship within the House—I realize he is in a difficult decision. If even in a small way—I realize he cannot come out and publicly disown the Premier, or the Minister of Finance—he could signal to this committee that this is not exactly what he had in mind; it certainly was not what he had in mind last set of Estimates when he was so full of energy and promise as a new minister. I think he would go a long way towards dealing with some of the very specific concerns that people are raising, and concerns that will rebound on him personally as minister. Not in a personal sense, but as a minister in terms of his credibility in dealing with Civil Service and with Manitoba workers.

With those comments, Mr. Acting Chairperson, and I know I am being urged on by my Liberal counterpart here, I can indicate that these are serious questions. I have never seen in the 10 years that I have been in this House, and certainly I do not hold myself out to be as experienced as other members who have been here longer than I have, I have never seen a level of polarization within the Civil Service to match the situation currently. I have never seen the Civil Service morale as low as it is. I have never seen people as cowed, as beaten, as downtrodden as the Civil Service of this province by the current minister, and you know the sad part is that they are the last people who can speak out.

* (2030)

I have spoken specifically to people on the, to use the words of the minister and the government, the redeployment list, who have told me they did not like the way they were treated. They thought they were treated very shabbily; 15- and 20- and 25-year employees summarily fired and told to leave their offices on five minutes notice, but they will not state anything publicly because they do not want to risk not being redeployed. They want to have some chance at least to be able to obtain additional employment, if not for themselves, for their families. These are specific comments that have been made to me.

I have talked to people who have been concerned about some of the disastrous loss of service that will result about the positions that have been cut, a loss of service that has turned back the clock 10, 20 and 30 years in many departments.

They will only state it to me privately; they will not state it publicly. Why? Because they are afraid of retribution, they are afraid of this government not dealing with them fairly in terms of redeployment, because of the situation they are in, the sensitive situation.

I talked to others who have been fired, and I prefer to use that word because those are the words they use, and that is the impact of what has happened, union activists, people who have been involved at the grievance level who believe that they were fired, or whatever word you want to use, put on the redeployment list, either way they are out of a job, they believe that it was because of their union activities. But they, once again, are reluctant to say anything.

I have talked to other people who feel that they were fired because of poor treatment, poor handling by the department of what should have been the proper layoff notice procedure, and I think the minister will see in terms of that, that there are a significant number of grievances, particularly in certain geographic areas, and particularly within certain departments. Once again, these people have said to me they will not raise these concerns publicly because they are afraid for their future.

You know, Mr. Acting Chairperson, I wonder how the minister would feel about that, how he feels about that kind of atmosphere existing in Manitoba. That is the sad, sad result of the policies of this government over the past several months, the fact that it has sunk to that level. Can the minister not understand—and I will be asking him these types of questions—why people should feel this way, when we have a Premier who will lay people off and then go out and threaten them and blackmail them, that if they do not accept a particular contract offer that there might be further layoffs? This is after he has already eliminated 958 positions. Then, when that does not work, when people follow up on their only recourse, as is part of our legislation, and go to arbitration in the forum of the main Civil Service component, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) then turns around, after not having bargained in good faith for one minute, turns around and suggests that it is the union's fault because they did not accept the first and final offer of the government and that somehow it was terrible of the union to ask for arbitration and that somehow the union brought it on itself.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I will be continuing that discussion with the Premier in terms of his own statements and his own actions, including the challenge he put forward on Friday. I hate to repeat the words because I know he was ruled out of order for using that—the rather infamous put up or shut up comments in terms of his own admission publicly that this had been drafted, this legislation had been drafted weeks and months ahead of the time it was announced.

I will be continuing at the minister and, indeed, I will be putting up, because that is what he told the press. He is found guilty, if you like, in the court of public opinion, in this case, by his own words—not my words, his words. I will also be asking the minister, on this particular question, whether he was aware of the drafting of this bill and if so, when, because I want to know if the minister was not aware

of this, who is in charge over there, in terms of Civil Service, and what role the minister has, or this department has, if any? Is it the Premier (Mr. Filmon)? Is it the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness)? Is it the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission (Mr. Praznik), because at some point in time there has to be an accounting for what has happened. At some point in time there has to be someone who is going to accept responsibility, including this minister.

If the minister does not accept what has happened as being proper, and I look to him for at least some admission of that, when will this minister take charge as the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission and start doing nothing more, and nothing less, than giving fair and equitable treatment to civil servants, something this government, the Premier, the Minister of Finance and others have not done, and not done repeatedly since the election that gave them the majority? Not only have not done, this is a government that has decided to use civil servants as the scapegoat for their own economic incompetence.

With those words, Mr. Acting Chairman, I can indicate there will be some very significant questions. I know the acting Liberal critic probably has a few comments as well.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. McAlpine): I thank the honourable member for Thompson for your remarks. Does the critic for the second opposition party, the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), wish to have an opening statement?

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I might want to add a few modest remarks to those of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I am glad he condensed his remarks into a manageable size for this evening.

I am forced to comment, though, on the member who said he was going to put up. I wonder, if in failing that, he is prepared to take the second half of the advice that has come out of the Hollywood cliché-generator that seems to operate around here.

I want to start by just sharing some information because I think there is a philosophical question that I really want to ask here. I want to just tell a little story.

I worked some years ago on a study that was done of managerial practices in large organizations trying to understand similarities and differences in four distinctly different systems: West Germany, Japan, the U.S., and Britain. What we looked at

were four large companies, British Leyland, Chrysler, Mazda, and Telefunken, all of whom in the early '80s were large multinational corporations, huge market share. All of them had huge work forces and all of them were going broke.

All of them were rescued, to some extent, by the government on the belief that they were creating huge numbers of jobs and to go down would be a real problem for all of the workers. All of them were given a huge amount of government subsidy in the belief that they would preserve those jobs. All of them made promises that they would preserve those jobs. All of them survived the '81-82 recession, and all of them came out restructured and reformed. In two cases, British Leyland and Chrysler, Britain and the U.S., all of them violated all of their promises and laid off over half of their total labour force through the course of the change. The other two, Mazda and Telefunken, came through the recession with their labour force intact and, other than some early retirements and such which were voluntary, they went on to grow with all of the workers that they had when they started.

What one of the findings was that there was an attitudinal difference that saw workers as not being a commodity that you buy some of or throw away some of when you do not need it, but in fact they are what you are. They are an integral part of your operation, and they need to be husbanded and preserved and improved on and helped. You do not get rid of them because they are an investment that you make. In the case of Mazda they put people out to sell cars when they were not able to build enough, and at Telefunken they retrained people and got them into product development. I mean, there are a whole bunch of things.

The thing that always struck me was this difference in a point of view. Do you simply treat it like something that you purchase when you need and discard when you do not, or do you treat it like a renewable resource, if you like? That is what I wonder about when I see what is going on right now. When I see the attitude that is expressed that says, well, it is a tough time, so we are simply going to discard a few people. We are going to victimize a few, if you like, to continue, and I was interested in some of the opening comments of the minister about redeployment and the numbers it said on those lists, and I am going to want to know more about that.

* (2040)

There is a second part of it that happens with the Civil Service that I worry about, and that is the way people are viewed somehow as the enemy of the community and the way they are victimized and treated as sloppy and lazy and no good for much and held up as targets. I think that is wrong. I worked for some time in the Civil Service. I can tell you in the time I was there I saw a lot of people who worked extremely hard and cared very much about the work that they did. Yet the management systems that we had, in addition to the public view, did not value them, did not in many cases see them as competent or capable of making decisions or able to contribute. In fact, they were treated, I thought, in often a childlike fashion. Senior managers with huge breadth of responsibility were unable to make the simplest of decisions or the simplest of commitments.

I saw a leaked memo out of the Minister of Labour's office that described some management changes which I felt were extremely progressive and very exciting, and I would like to hear what the Civil Service Commission's response has been to those, because I know they were one of the people that were on the committee that was working on it.

Finally, I guess the comment I want to make—and I represent an area that has a large number of civil servants living in it, and I have yet to be contacted by a single one of them who is feeling that they should get a large raise. In fact, I have been contacted by a very large number of them who say they are more than willing to bite the bullet and carry their share of what everybody is carrying during this downturn. They are thankful that they have a job. I think, if anything, in this debate we have got to try to ratchet down this rhetoric that I think does a disservice to us as a province and certainly does a disservice to the people who work for us, and that is what I want to talk about.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. McAlpine): We thank the honourable member for those remarks, and at this point we would invite the minister's staff to join us at the table.

Under Civil Service, Current Operating Expenditures, item 1.(a) Executive Office: Salaries \$249,500.

Mr. Alcock: I think the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) by protocol would want to go first. I just was wondering if the minister could introduce his staff.

Mr. Praznik: My apologies. Paul Hart, who is the Civil Service commissioner; Terry Edgeworth, who is the director of Human Resources, if that is the correct title; and Gerry Irving, who is in charge of labour-management relations.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, what I would like to suggest, if the minister is agreeable, is to ask general questions under this line. It is a fairly small department, and I believe we can probably deal with most of the general policy questions, if that is agreeable.

Mr. Praznik: I am in agreement, Mr. Acting Chairman.

Mr. Ashton: I want to start with some questions in terms of the layoffs that have taken place in the Civil Service and the positions that have been eliminated.

I want to ask the minister for the most recent breakdown. He mentioned one element of that, the redeployment list. Of the 958 positions that were eliminated by the provincial government as of this budget, what is the breakdown between those on the redeployment list, those who have taken retirement, positions that have been eliminated because they are vacant, basically a summary of where we are at today.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, I would be more than pleased to provide those numbers to the member for Thompson. First of all, as he indicated, the total staff year reduction—and I underline staff year—was 958.38 positions. The number of staff years affected with employees, and some of them may be half-time employees, et cetera, was 430. We have today on our redeployment list, 175.

The impact of our special measures are as follows. The number of laid-off employees accepting enhanced severance packages, which means they would not be on the redeployment list—in many cases, they were people who were near retirement or planning to go back to school at some point, et cetera, so they were not interested in being on the redeployment list—were 134. They have accepted the enhanced severance package, no longer on the redeployment list.

Employees applying for the voluntary severance incentive program that was to offer up their position if a match could be made, a total of 261 employees came forward to apply for that program. The voluntary incentive matches accepted to date have been 52. Voluntary separation or severance

incentive requests declined to date have been 23, and applications in process are 185.

As I am sure the member will appreciate, many of those people who came forward wanting to accept that voluntary severance incentive program did not have people in their immediate departments or classifications, et cetera, who had been affected to take advantage of that. Those ones were easy to do. It is much more difficult to cross people over different departments, so that matching process is taking a considerable amount of time. We have asked departments to be very thorough in trying to find matches off that list for those who have come forward.

Mr. Ashton: What then is the total number of individuals affected as compared to vacant positions, a summary of those who would either have taken the special voluntary severance or who are on the redeployment list? How many people are affected as compared to number of positions?

(Mr. Deputy Chairman in the Chair)

Mr. Praznik: We had 430 people affected. Of those, we had 134 who accepted the enhanced severance package. We have matched 52 of the voluntary incentive program. We had 261 volunteers come forward. We have 185 applications in progress, and I would stress that on the number of employees remaining on the re-employment list today, it is 175.

Mr. Ashton: So, in fact, the initial numbers of the number of people affected is—the initial estimates were within the range. If anything, we are probably somewhat low, because the estimates I have seen were ranging from 300 or 350 up to around 450.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, the estimate of the number of people affected, and again, if I remember correctly, those days when the announcement was made, there were people who were offered transfers to other geographic locations, et cetera. There were a host of options. So we estimated between 375, I believe, and 450 people who would actually be affected; the final number when it was all tallied was 430. Of that 430 today, there are only 175 remaining on the redeployment list, and we are working with about 185 applications of people who have applied for voluntary incentive. Now, I am not suggesting for a minute we will make matches on all of those, but we still have a fairly substantive pool with which to work.

Mr. Ashton: I do not wish to debate with the minister, but I have talked to people who were involved in a number of the severance programs. I do not think the minister should assume that everyone was particularly happy or that they took part in the process on a particularly voluntary basis. I know people who made some very tough decisions based on their assumption as to what, for example, their potential for re-employment would be on the re-employment list.

Many people followed through on these other programs because they felt they had no prospect or a limited prospect. I know other people who, while they were not interested in the re-employment list because of the fact they were close to retirement, felt they were treated in a shabby way, often a year or two away from employment. As I said, I do not want to debate that with the minister. We, unfortunately, do not have time to go on each and every one of those examples, but I just want to draw that to his attention.

* (2050)

I want to ask a specific question which deals with that general end of it and, that is, the way in which the layoffs were handled. The minister is aware, as are all members of this Legislature, of just how poorly some of the layoffs were handled in the initial couple of days in which the 958 positions were eliminated. There are reports of people being given 5-minutes notice. In fact, I can confirm that. I have talked to people who were in that particular circumstance.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) within a day had indicated—they apologized for the way in which people were treated. Some of us did not accept that as being good enough, quite frankly, but there was acknowledgement of that.

What I want to ask the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission is how this happened, in particular whether the department responsible for the Civil Service Commission gave any directions to those who were handing out layoff notices, and if not, why not, and if they did give directions, how we ended up in this situation. I am not saying all the layoffs were handled improperly, but a significant number. Even one really is too many. A number of them were handled in a way in which I can say to the minister, no private employer would do the same or very few. When we are talking about the Civil Service, I do not think anyone would accept that as

being proper procedure, so I would like to ask the minister to give us an update on procedures that were followed.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, if I may, the preamble to your question, the member for Thompson, not for one moment would I disagree that there were people who took the enhanced severance package who were not happy with the whole situation—there certainly were, I acknowledge that. There were people who had some time to go to retirement or felt there would not be a match and took advantage of that. Whenever you have this kind of situation, you are going to have cases like that, and I would not for a moment deny that there were and they are always difficult.

I would just point out that the enhanced severance package was a far better package than what was provided for by the collective agreement. We wanted to make sure we augmented the collective agreement, although that does not necessarily make the situation better for people who are hurting at that time. At least it was financially somewhat better than what their collective agreement had provided, but I certainly acknowledge that there were difficulties faced by many of those people who just did not want to be on the redeployment list and not everyone was happy with it.

With respect to your general question about how things were handled, I want to say, first of all, as Civil Service minister, I was very, very concerned that any employee whose position was going to be terminated be told personally by senior management in their department, where applicable, the deputy minister; that they did not hear about it in the news media; that they did not hear about it from their union beforehand; that they did not receive a notice in the mail. But, wherever possible, they would be told personally by their senior manager, in many cases, the deputy minister.

What we did put into effect from the commission is we did a number of things. We had all deputy ministers assembled, and we provided them with instruction as to how this was to be handled, as well as their senior managers in applicable cases. We provided them with a reference handbook, and I could table it for the information of the member, if he would like that particular material.

There is a particular statement that we did put in the manual, and we reinforced orally to all of the people who would be handling those situations, and

I quote: Above all, the government has indicated the desire to see employees treated in a concerned and compassionate manner. Now, as I am sure the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would agree, whenever you are dealing with a termination of someone's job, it is never going to be an easy situation. It is probably the most difficult thing to do if you are the person doing it, and I will not deny that some people may have shirked their responsibilities as managers somewhat because it is a difficult thing to do.

Others were able to overcome that difficulty and handled it in a very professional and, I think, meaningful way. It varies from manager to manager and department to department. We wanted to make sure that as much material, as much assistance, as much instruction was provided to those people who would be carrying out the actual dismissal as possible, and we tried.

Now, the other point I want to raise is with respect to some individual cases, and some of them were published in the media about the way particular individuals were handled: Clean out the desk; you have so much time—and being watched. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) suggests that this never happens in the private sector and is only unique to government. Each department had in some circumstances employees who were going to be affected, who were in areas where they had access to very critical information. Given the fact that it is a very emotional time for someone being affected, those departments had to, in their opinion, take some measures to ensure that the security of the material, the computers, et cetera, that those employees would have access to were secure.

In this day and age, of the ability to take material off a disk very quickly on a computer, particularly sensitive, often information that is protected information, involving individuals and their lives. It was felt by some departments that measures would have to be taken to ensure that security. In those cases, it is even more difficult, but I can tell the member for Thompson that is not unusual in the private sector, particularly in industries and businesses where employees have access to very sensitive information.

I happen to have a cousin who was laid off at an oil company in Toronto. They were called in and given five minutes to clean out their desk and escorted out to a taxi, simply because they had access to very important geological information. So

that occurred in some cases where there was access to critical information, and that was a judgment call within the department by managers who had responsibility for the security of that information. We very much regret that had to happen in those cases, but those were calls by people who were charged with the security of that information. In cases where it was obviously not appreciated by the employee and caused them great stress, we are certainly apologetic for that, but that was the logic behind those particular cases.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am quite disappointed that the minister would provide a rationale for what happened, because I put it to the minister that in the case of the people who were being affected that probably the major concern, if there was one, about information was probably a political one. That is certainly the view of new people involved in the process. There was a fear that the individuals knew too much.

I do not see how that justifies the conduct of the people who were laying these individuals off, people who after 15, 20 years knew too much in a government that is supposed to be operating under guidelines in terms of freedom of information, a government that—well, at least until a few months ago—used to espouse the virtues of open government, certainly verbally. How can the minister justify, at this point in time, treatment of long-term civil servants that was absolutely objectionable?

The reason I raise the private sector is, indeed, it does happen in the private sector. One of the difficulties, I know the people who have spoken to me about, is in a way, if they were in the private sector, not governed by a grievance, they might be able to exact a greater degree of compensation for what has happened and happens under layoffs governed by the collective agreement and the bargaining process.

* (2100)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in this particular case, I really wonder to the extent to which these individuals received appropriate treatment because—and the minister will talk about the private sector. I am not putting myself out to be a legal expert in terms of layoffs in the private sector, but I do know that there are two elements in terms of a dismissal. One is, indeed, the reasons behind the dismissal or layoff, but the second element is also

the way in which it is done. I believe that some civil servants were publicly humiliated. When I say publicly amongst their peers, they were humiliated by the treatment they received.

Quite frankly, I do not believe that a word of apology or a rationale from the minister is good enough. Does the minister not believe that what happened in a number of cases went beyond normal procedures and, in fact, did humiliate a number of long-term civil servants whose only crime, if I can use that word in a generic sense, was the fact that they perhaps knew too much politically and might be able to provide some damage to the government?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairman, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) makes a very, very large and grandiose assumption. First of all, if these individuals, so called, knew too much, I mean they would know the material when they left government as well as when they were there.

The concern within departments—and I want to stress this very much with the member for Thompson. Decisions made in this area were made within departments by deputy ministers and managers who had responsibility for the security of information, who knew the individuals and how they would react, or some understanding of how they would react, and had to make decisions on how they were going to carry things out. In some cases, and how many I do not know, had to ensure the security of the information to which that employee had access. That would happen in a private company as well as anywhere else.

For some employees, this certainly added to the stress of the situation and made things even more uncomfortable than they were. I certainly would acknowledge that. If the member for Thompson is implying that myself as minister or my colleagues in cabinet specifically instructed managers to do this in particular cases, I would think not. Managers who are responsible for the security of information had to make individual decisions. I do not think, in the vast majority of cases, such was what happened.

I know in my other department, the Department of Labour, the two people who were affected at that particular time, the deputy minister met with them in the afternoon, called them each individually in their offices, met with them, gave them the news, discussed the situation with them and allowed them

as much time as they needed to clean their desk and to leave.

In the Department of Highways, I know an individual went out in the dead of night to meet people at various weigh scales across the province as they came on shift to inform them of what was happening. There was a general intent to be as humane as possible. In some cases, people had to be escorted out or their desks and computer secured because of the information that they had access to.

So I reject the premise that the member for Thompson bases his remarks on—not to say that sometimes that may have been too harsh. If the member for Thompson has specific cases that he would like to raise with me, either at committee or privately, I can ensure that they will be checked to see if an overzealous manager did not go too far, but to make a blanket statement about intention is just not the case.

Mr. Ashton: Well, to the minister and to another minister at the back of the hall, the premise I am basing my question on is the premise of the Premier (Mr. Filmon). So, if the minister, or if any of the ministers are arguing with anyone, it is with the Premier who publicly stated that the way in which these people were treated was not acceptable and indicated publicly that they, after this happened, that he had spoken to deputy ministers and reiterated that this was not appropriate procedure, this is not the way to treat people.

I am basing my questions on nothing more and nothing less than statements the Premier made one day after these layoffs were made. The Premier himself was critical of the way in which they were handled. I therefore ask the minister what action, if anything, was taken as a follow-up. Were there any reprimands given? Was there any action on behalf of the Civil Service Commission in saying specifically to managers who had announced the layoffs, first of all asking for what had happened to ensure that proper procedure had not been followed? Second, was there any procedure put in place for senior managers who had not acted properly, in the words not of myself or the employees involved, although certainly we would have subscribed to their statements, but in the words of the Premier? What action was taken to follow up on the words of the Premier in saying that these people were mishandled?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think the Premier's comments in reaction to some of the media stories that came out after the event, my comments that were in the media, certainly to any employee who felt that they were unjustly treated, that they were laid off in a manner that was somewhat more heavy handed than they felt was necessary, we are certainly apologetic for. In each case managers had to make decisions. I know that the commission advises me that they have looked into some of those particular situations and in each one that was raised the manager felt that certain precautions were necessary given the reaction of the employee and the material and information that they had access to.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the manager may have felt they were doing the right thing. I would hope they were of that opinion, but the fact is that other people did not feel that the procedures that were followed in a number of cases were appropriate, including the Premier. So I want to ask the minister again, more straightforwardly—not whether they thought what they were doing was right in the first place. We have dealt with that, or I assume we have dealt with that, unless the minister is questioning the word of the Premier.

What follow-up took place following the statement by the Premier other than the meeting with deputy ministers? Was there any specific investigation in terms of the procedures that were followed? Were there any reprimands given to people who may in their own mind have thought it was appropriate but in the mind of the Premier, in the mind of the employees, in the mind of most people looking objectively at what happened was not appropriate? I am just asking, was there any follow-up at all or was this just brushed under the carpet?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, first of all, just to get the time line right for the member for Thompson, and I know when one reads articles in the newspapers often they are not correct in their description of time lines. The Premier met with deputy ministers prior to the provision of those layoff notices. The member for Thompson shakes his head. I was there at the meeting. He met with deputy ministers. He gave them instruction as to how he wished to handle it, and the comments in the paper that I believe the member is referring to was that the Premier said he had met with deputy ministers and told them to handle the matter in as humane and professional manner as possible. I

know, I was at the meetings. So, unless there was a follow-up to that, that I am not aware, that is when the Premier met and gave that instruction to deputy ministers in their departments.

Now, with respect to particular follow-up, following some of the complaints arising out of the media and certainly interest in particular ministers and seeing how their deputies handled situations that were raised publicly, each of those cases I am advised were investigated by the Civil Service Commission—the staff involved, the managers involved. Discussion was held with them, and in each case the actions that were taken by the managers were felt by the commission to be appropriate.

Now, I just say this to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Whenever you are dealing with people whose job has been terminated, it is probably the greatest crisis in their life and no one can expect them, nor should we ever expect them, to be viewing the situation as being a reasonable one or as being dealt with fairly. That is part of the reaction, and so I just say that because in many of those cases the kind of commentary, et cetera, has to be put into the perspective of an individual whose whole life has been turned upside down to a great degree. They are certainly not going to compliment, very few of them are going to compliment, their employer who has just laid them off. So one has to put it into that perspective.

As I have indicated, we wanted to ensure that each of those cases that was brought to our attention was looked into and they were. Managers were talked to and the situation was reviewed, and, in each case, given the reaction of the employee upon being told and the sensitivity of the material that they had access to at their workstation, appropriate action was taken to safeguard the integrity, secrecy and confidentiality of that material.

* (2110)

Mr. Ashton: I wish there had been as much concern about the concerns of the laid-off workers, because I want to remind the minister—and he can check in terms of newspaper clippings, and if this is another one where the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is now saying that he did not say what he did say, the Premier apologized the day after the layoffs were announced for the sloppy way in which a number of those layoffs were handled. The Premier apologized publicly; it was reported as such. Is the

minister now saying that the Premier did not apologize? Am I misunderstanding the comments of the Premier, or did he indeed apologize?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, I think the Premier's word, as the Civil Service commissioner pointed out to me—I do not remember specifically seeing the quote, but I think it was if indeed things were not handled well, then he certainly apologized for them. Quite frankly, I think the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is trying to pull some words away out of whack to try and get some division here when none really exists.

The Premier asked deputy ministers to handle things in a very humane way. He met with them prior to the delivery of those layoff notices and his comments on it were—I think what any Premier would do—if, in fact, people had been mistreated, he was apologetic for it; in each case that was raised, the commission investigated. I do not see the inconsistency, and I would just advise the member for Thompson not always to use a newspaper article as a total source of reference, they are not always that accurate.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I used to take the words of the Premier as a reference and, indeed, I will follow the ammunition of the minister because I certainly no longer do after seeing his statements, not recorded by newspapers, but in Hansard and in other areas recorded. I do not take what I see at face value any more.

If the minister is now saying that the Premier said, well, for whatever may have happened, or may not have happened, he apologized, then I perhaps once again read into the Premier's words more than I should have, because quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, anybody can turn around and say I apologize for anything anybody may have said or done that has offended anybody since time immemorial until one looks into the future. I mean that is meaningless.

I took from the Premier's comments that he was apologizing for mistreatment of the employees which he—and I will find the quote for the minister if he questions the specific quote, but if the minister took it as being, well, if there were any problems, he apologized, then quite frankly, I think he and the Premier missed the boat, if that was the intent of it, because there were problems in the way it was handled. There was clear evidence of that, and I am

very disappointed that this matter has been swept under the carpet.

I want to ask another question to the minister and that is in terms of the impact of the layoffs, and that is to ask the minister if he can break down the impact of the layoffs as to how many of the people affected and the positions affected were in the city of Winnipeg, and how many were in other areas of the province, and specifically—the minister can use whatever geographical guidelines he wishes, but I am interested in how many people were affected in Brandon, in the North, southwest, the southeast, the Parkland and Interlake?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, just before we leave the previous subject, to comment on the remarks of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I think our Premier (Mr. Filmon) has always indicated very clearly that this is not a perfect process, that there were a lot of people involved in it, a lot of managers involved in the department, and there may have been cases where mistakes were made and he has always been apologetic for that. When we investigate many of these allegations that were made in the media, often they do not turn out to be as they were made. There is often a big gap. One has to appreciate you are dealing with people whose world had been turned upside down that particular day. A lot of things are said and viewed from that perspective, and they do not always turn out to be the case when they are investigated.

To the specific question of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I have to tell him of a caveat I put on these numbers just at this time, as it is somewhat of a fluid process because the matching is still going on, with the redeployment and positions in which there are volunteers under the incentive program. To do a match may be in Winnipeg, may be out, they may be matched with someone who has been laid off, inside or outside, so that our number is continually evolving. A rough guide of the initial numbers where about two-thirds of the employees affected in the layoffs were from Winnipeg and about one-third from outside the capital city.

Mr. Ashton: Is that the same breakdown in terms of positions as well as in terms of employees?

Mr. Praznik: Yes. Mr. Deputy Chair, I do not have a breakdown by position. One of the reasons, obviously, is many of those vacancies were created in departments or allowed to be created and may never have been assigned to a particular place as

people were juggled, et cetera, by departments to maintain a vacancy rate. So that number really is not as relevant as the number of people affected.

Mr. Ashton: I can take from the minister's comments that upwards of 150 individuals and 300 positions, if the same ratio was in place, came from rural and northern Manitoba and the remaining two-thirds from Winnipeg?

Mr. Praznik: Yes. I can indicate that about a third of the people were from outside of Winnipeg. How that ratio would carry over on the vacant positions I do not even want to speculate on, because many of those positions may not have been assigned to a location, et cetera, may have been sitting some time in departments, so it really becomes a meaningless number.

Mr. Ashton: I want to ask the minister if it would be possible to obtain a breakdown in terms of the communities affected. I am not asking for that now; I realize it is information that will take some time to compile. Would he be prepared to provide a list of communities affected by the specific layoffs? I accept the caution of the minister in terms of positions; I am asking in terms of actual employees laid off.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, I would have no problem providing the member for Thompson with that information. The only caveat I put onto that is I would like to do that when the process is complete, with the matching, et cetera, and we have worked through substantially all of the matching and the redeployment, because those numbers tend to vary as you go through and match volunteers with people on the redeployment list. If the member would bear with us time-wise, as soon as we have an accurate assessment, when we have substantially completed that matching process, I would certainly undertake to provide him with a copy of our analysis.

Mr. Ashton: I would be prepared to accept preliminary information since, obviously, the minister does have some, with the caution that there might be some changes following the completion of the redeployment process. Would it be possible to obtain preliminary information, accepting once again that the final numbers might change, and then for the minister to provide the final numbers when that process is completed?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman, we will endeavour to provide to both critics some

preliminary numbers as best we can break them down, and I hope to do that in a fairly timely manner. Again, we are in the process of substantial matching and we may even do that analysis to break down volunteers, et cetera, and what communities they come from, just to give the member as complete a picture as is available.

Mr. Ashton: What I would like to ask since the obvious next question develops from the fact that a significant number of the jobs were certainly from both the city and the rural areas, but in this case in the area of 150 were from rural and northern communities. What consideration was given when these decisions were made as to the obvious fact that, in the case of many communities, these jobs were either cancelling to some extent, cancelling to complete extent, or in some cases going further than the number of jobs that had been moved there by decentralization?

* (2120)

I take the example of my own constituency where by my best estimates, I believe about 15 jobs have been relocated to Thompson. The result of this budget was the layoff of 29 people in Thompson, a net loss of 14 jobs. I realize there are still some other positions being moved to Thompson, but was any consideration given to this? Further to that, there have been some statements by the Minister responsible for Decentralization (Mr. Downey) on the fact that some positions that had been decentralized were eliminated.

I was wondering if the minister could provide an accurate breakdown out of the 150 jobs as to how many of those were positions that had been, or were planned to be, decentralized into rural and northern communities.

Mr. Praznik: Just to put the decision-making process into context, and I think this in many ways answers the question of the member for Thompson and I will give him some specific information following this comment.

The process that we went through in setting up this year's budget was an envelope process where we put deputy ministers from an envelope of ministries together to go through as a group of deputy ministers their departmental estimates for their envelope. For example, the Department of Labour was in the Human Services envelope with Health, Education, Justice and Family Services.

What those deputies did was go through line by line each of the functions of their department and their expenditure areas to examine what were the areas that we required to do by statute, legislation, contract; what areas we really were not necessarily required to do, but really had to do; areas that we would like to be doing but do not necessarily have to be doing; areas that were redundant; areas that were not things that we necessarily should be in anymore; and they examined them, which is a very new process for building a budget.

Deputies went through that process examining each of their departments together, which was very new for them. Out of it came a series of recommendations where increases were needed and reductions could be made. Those, of course, then went to ministers and finally to Treasury Board where final decisions were made.

That process meant that each function of government had a thorough examination and tough choices were made, obviously. The positions that were eliminated in this round were a reflection of that process.

When you ask the question, were rural communities and the effect on those communities looked at, was decentralization looked at, the process by its very nature made it difficult to do that. Although I think deputies and ministers and Treasury Board were cognizant of those types of issues, the reality of that process of trying to make structural reductions in your expenditure meant that certain functions that you just could not afford to do any more may have its staff located in a rural area, and whereas functions that you had to continue to do, staff were located in Winnipeg or Brandon. By the very nature, it made that process difficult to take into account those types of concerns that the member has raised.

There were, in fact, a number of positions that had been decentralized and just simply by this budget process were eliminated. I believe the total, the number that I have is about 44.26 positions.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, 44.26 positions, indeed. In many cases this government, that just before the election was trumpeting the values of the importance of moving these positions to rural and northern communities, all of a sudden found out a few months later that at least 44.26 of those positions—although I am not quite sure what

the .26 would be and I am sure the minister knows on the tip of his tongue.

The minister I think will understand, representing a rural constituency as he does, that people might get just a little bit cynical about this kind of now you see it, now you don't decentralization. Quite frankly, I get a lot cynical when I see the Premier, as recently as a few days ago, get up and repeat the same ridiculous statements that he had made in the past that somehow, in the case of our caucus, we did not support decentralization when that is not true. It is patently false.

The Liberals to their credit, in terms of their position, were fairly clear. They said they did not support decentralization. We said we supported it. We supported it going back to Schreyer. We had concerns about the way it was being dealt with. The bottom line is that our concerns were correct. In the case of my own constituency, there are 29 people laid off in Thompson. There have been fewer than 15 positions transferred, so we were better off before this great decentralization, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Although I note that some constituencies, which just happen to be represented by some Tory cabinet ministers, though not necessarily all, seem to have been better off throughout the whole process, leading one to again be just a wee bit cynical as to whether there be any political agendas attached to suggest that there might have been some influence in terms of where those positions were going. It was not just one of altruism, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, but might have something to do with the representation of the constituency.

Once again, we might be a little bit more cynical, too, if we remember the fine words of the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), who said that the problem with Northerners, who have like the New Democrats by and large, the last 20-odd years, is they do not know how to vote right. This was in direct response in the context of some of the cuts that were taking place. By the way, the same minister is in charge of decentralization. Funny that he should have on his mind even the question of how people would vote.

An Honourable Member: It is a coincidence.

Mr. Ashton: What a coincidence, points out the member for Osborne. That minister would be quite adverse. I bet you he could almost give you a

poll-by-poll breakdown of many of the communities and constituencies in rural Manitoba and, indeed—

An Honourable Member: The Darth Vader of medicare.

Mr. Ashton: The Darth Vader of medicare, who indeed seemed to be part of the process of carving up the spoils only a few months ago.

I just put that out to the minister, and I would ask, very specifically, for the breakdown by community of both the number of employees laid off and also a breakdown of which communities, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, lost the 44.26 positions, so that we can see clearly for the public record who has gotten what from decentralization, who has had some of those positions taken away, and who has been affected in terms of communities by some of the other layoffs. As I indicated, some communities have lost a significant number of jobs as a result of the budget, in excess of the number of jobs lost by the previous process of slowing down the decentralization.

One further question on decentralization, in the context of the Civil Service Commission, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. Again, I am wondering if the minister, since there seem to be some conflicting stories coming from the Minister responsible for Decentralization (Mr. Downey), can indicate the current status of the decentralization program. We have been advised that obviously some of the jobs will not be decentralized. We have been advised that other jobs will not be decentralized as quickly as possible. What are the current number of jobs involved in the next stage of decentralization, and what is the time frame in terms of that decentralization process?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, first of all, the member for Thompson makes comment about the politics of decentralization and cynicism, et cetera, and I recall a story told to me by my colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and as well the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) about the community of, I believe it was Riverton, who were interested in senior citizens housing units or personal care beds, I cannot remember exactly which.

When they looked at the allotment for the Interlake—by the way they do not have a shortage of those beds in Riverton. They found out that the vast majority of the allotment had been placed in the town of Selkirk, at the south far end of the Interlake which just happened to be represented by the

Premier when most of these things were built by Premier Paulley. Here the poor community of Riverton, who was looking for beds found out that their allotment had been moved to the town of Selkirk. So I guess the public does have good grounds for cynicism from time to time.

* (2130)

Mr. Deputy Chair, if I may for a moment, the numbers given by my colleague the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, Mr. Downey, in the House a few days ago certainly hold true. The 44.26 positions that were reduced in this budgetary round are positions that have not been moved. Of the 146 positions, I understand, that have been moved into rural Manitoba, not one was affected by this particular round.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has asked me about a breakdown of those particular communities, and I would be pleased to provide that to him. By and large, I believe there were four in the Department of Agriculture in Altona, one in Dominion City, two in Minnedosa; Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, one in Gimli; Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, six in total, three in Altona, one in Flin Flon, one in Selkirk and one in Brandon—and I would point out to him the three in Altona versus one in Selkirk and one in Flin Flon. Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, none; Education and Training, 6.26 positions, 4.26 in Russell, two in Winkler; Health, one in Beausejour; Industry, Trade and Tourism, two in Portage la Prairie, and there were some Labour in Brandon and Waterhen; Natural Resources, 10, three in Neepawa, two in Altona, two in Lundar, two in Roblin, one in Niverville; Rural Development, seven in total, one in Brandon, one in Portage la Prairie, one in Deloraine, one in Flin Flon, one in Swan River, one in Dauphin, and one in Morden.

So if the member for Thompson wants to play a political constituency game, it was Conservative constituencies that took the brunt of those. So I do not think those arguments of political involvement are certainly valid.

The other comment I make to him with respect to decentralization is—further to add or to restate the comments by the minister responsible, Mr. Downey—that there are a further 145 positions in the process of being moved, and 186 are waiting for final decision. Needless to say, the recession, the worsening of the recession and the zero growth in

revenue for government has certainly forced the Treasury Board to re-evaluate many of those positions and, of course, if they have to be moved that makes sense.

One of the underlying reasons for decentralization, which I am sure even his party would support, is that many locations in rural Manitoba, the cost of leasing space and operating an office are less or at least should be less than they are in downtown Winnipeg or parts of the city. So there is a good rationale if one can move those operations to areas where the cost is less, where the service is closer to those who are receiving the service as opposed to being located in Winnipeg at higher cost space, that there can be a savings to the taxpayers of Manitoba and an improvement in the delivery of service. Those are guiding features or guiding principles in decentralization.

As the minister, Mr. Downey, indicated some 186 positions are awaiting final decision as they are being evaluated. One of the things, I understand he has indicated, is often the cost of space in a particular location when one tenders for it has turned out not to be what one thought it would be, et cetera, as people think government has lots of money and bid higher than what would reasonably be expected. So there are a lot of those kind of considerations that are there as one negotiates for space.

I know in the town of Beausejour, for example, before I became Minister of Labour, my predecessor had looked at moving some positions out and did. The town of Beausejour was quite interested in having those positions and, in fact, is in the process of offering a very, very economical lease arrangement to house that staff, because they want them in the town of Beausejour.

In other communities that did not quite happen. So each situation is different. The process will continue, but governed of course by the budget of the province and the ability to effect some savings in the long term because of those moves as well as to ensure a good and high level of delivery of service to the people of the province.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I really feel that the announcements that were made, if once again the words of the Premier and the Deputy Premier were to have any believability at all, should be followed. I am quite disturbed by the suggestion that for some economic reasons decentralization is not as high a priority to positions that were going to

be part of the decentralization process are no longer going to be included as part of the process. I mean, these were commitments made directly to those communities.

The government made a lot of effort to publicize the announcement, got the maximum amount of political capital out of it. I believe the government, if it is to have any credibility once again in this area, has to follow through in terms of the commitment to those communities. I am disturbed by the suggestion that it is somehow the communities that are to blame. I think if the government did not know what the office space construction costs would be in those communities, it should have.

Many of those communities do not have the facilities at the present time. Many of those communities would have to have those facilities constructed. In many of those communities, there are not private contractors who have the expertise in constructing such facilities, so either individuals who have other expertise are having to put in bids or people are coming in from other communities.

I am very concerned that the minister would somehow suggest that somehow this has not worked out the way it was planned. I mean, if the government did not realize this, then it is a matter of sheer incompetence on their part. As I understood it from the Deputy Premier, there were specific allocations in place for the acquisition of office space and, in fact, specific allocations in this budget for the allocation of office space. So I am very concerned about that, and I would once again appreciate a breakdown in terms of the layoffs and in terms of the decentralization via the community.

I have some other questions, and given the limited amount of time, I wish to perhaps deal with that. I know the Liberal critic or acting critic will probably have some questions as well.

I want to ask the minister about Bill 70, the bill that kills collective bargaining in the Civil Service. This is the minister responsible for the department of the Civil Service Commission, one of whose roles is to provide for negotiation of collective agreements.

I want to ask the minister specifically: Does he support the principle of Bill 70? Does he support the principle of a bill that wipes out arbitration in the case of MGEA, let alone the wiping out of the whole area of final offer selection and in some cases actual selector's decisions? Does he support the principle of a bill that essentially says, apart from a number

of excluded areas, anything that has taken place in terms of collective bargaining, whether it be in terms of language or wages, in the Civil Service and a broader definition of the public sector no longer applies, and if the minister does support that how he reconciles that with being the minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, which, as I said before, is in essence the trustee department in terms of the Civil Service in this government?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, first all just on the decentralization, the comments of the member for Thompson, with respect to his final comments, I want to tell him I do not think one ever blames a particular community. You have a program. You want to move out people. It was our intention to do it. It is still our intention. The finances of the province have made every decision count and every one to be examined.

Communities as a whole do not necessarily respond by providing space. You are dealing with private developers often, private building owners, and there is a negotiation process to achieve a mutually agreeable rent for those particular premises. It has not been unknown for the price to come in higher than what one expected it to be just simply because that negotiation is going on where there may be some other factors involved.

I do not accept the member's comments that the system is a failure by any stretch of the imagination. It has in fact, I think, been a success. It is not meant to be the be all and end all for every community. It is supposed to do a number of things, be a boost to some of those communities, a small boost. It is meant to provide better service to people in those parts of Manitoba that those departments serve. It is also meant to bring some savings to the taxpayers of Manitoba through less cost space.

* (2140)

The final report on decentralization will come some years down the line when it is in place and hopefully the province's economy will have turned around, and we will have some of those more dollars to proceed with some of those cases, and we have learned as we go through the process. So there is still a fair bit to go on that particular matter.

With respect to the current Public Sector Compensation Management Act before the Legislature, I want to say to the member for Thompson that I certainly support this particular piece of legislation. I think in listening to his

comments, the comments of his party, the comments of the Federation of Labour and of Mr. Olfert from the MGEA I have come to a number of conclusions. One is that they have a very different definition of collective bargaining—and I underline bargaining—than most have, because bargaining is not a third party decision. Bargaining is two parties at a table trying, struggling to come up with an agreement with which both can live. That does not necessarily mean it is in the middle. That does not necessarily mean each party gets half of what they are asking for. In some circumstances it means one party gets very little and one party a lot or vice versa, but it is a bargain.

I know, when I spoke to the House on the repeal of final offer selection and one reviewed the authorities on collective bargaining, people like Russ Paulley, for example, the comments about, it is essential in free collective bargaining to be at the table bargaining hard to get an agreement, but what we have had happen—when I listen to comments by members of the New Democratic Party—is we have had third-party decision making take over from collective bargaining. It is very easy to get a third party to settle issues, but that is not what bargaining is about.

When I addressed the Legislature at that time on the repeal of final offer selection, I made the point, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has made this point, that this government is a very strong believer in collective bargaining, but -(interjection)- Now, the member makes a rude sound to members of the committee, but I will tell you this, third-party decision making does not make bargaining. It is very easy to avoid the table and the tough choices that have to be made at the bargaining table by saying, let us go to a third party. That is easy. That is not collective bargaining; that is opting out of collective bargaining.

So, if the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, do I not support collective bargaining? I do, but you have to be at the table bargaining, not opting for third-party solutions to problems you should be at the table to finally make the decisions on.

When I did address the House on final offer selection, if the member goes back and searches through Hansard, what he will find is that I said, and I think this has been the government's position, and it was certainly the position of the New Democratic Party in 1976 when Mr. Schreyer was Premier, and that is yes, we believe in free collective bargaining,

but there are times, extraordinary times, when government has to bring in a wage freeze such as this.

It is not the first in the country. In fact, if one reads the commentary, we probably have the least comprehensive package of any other province; but beside the point of debating that particular issue, there are times, extraordinary times, when that type of decision-making bill is required, and this is one of them.

You know, I want to pick up on something our colleague the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) said in his opening remarks: We have witnessed, on the part of the New Democratic Party, the leadership of the Manitoba Government Employees' Association and the leadership of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the appearance of a major attack on this particular bill.

I am quite concerned about that because what I think it has done, as the member for Osborne has suggested, it has done a great disservice to the public servants of the province of Manitoba—a great disservice.

I will tell you why I think that is the case and why I support this bill. Because I believe—and the contact I have had with many, many public servants, and this is something close to my home because my wife is one of those public servants who are affected. Many of our friends are her colleagues from work, many of them are constituents who have worked on my campaign, and the message that they have said over and over and over again to me since last September is that they are prepared as employees, civil servants in Manitoba, to carry a share of the burden of this recession, that they are prepared to take a wage freeze because it is in the greater interest of the people of this province. They are prepared to live up to those responsibilities as citizens of this province.

What concerned them the most was being able to continue to work, and we have minimized the number of layoffs in this province, minimized them compared to what other provinces like Newfoundland have had to do and other provinces have had to do. Even in the member's wildest imagination, this being such a disaster is not the case.

I want to point out another fact about the wage freeze for the general MGEA Manitoba government employees. The year of the freeze is September

1990 to September 1991. Our public service has lived through two-thirds to three-quarters of that wage freeze already. They know that. This is not a two-year wage freeze. For them it expires in September of this year. -(interjection)-

The member says, two-year wage freeze with a stroke of the pen. We have indicated what our intentions are. We will be back at the bargaining table, and I hope the MGEA will want to bargain with us in September.

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

I say this to you—the New Democratic Party and the Manitoba Federation of Labour have done the Civil Service of Manitoba a great disservice, because they have taken thousands of public employees in Manitoba who are more than prepared to live with this freeze for the province's good, and they have made them out to be, with their rhetoric, people who are greedy and thinking only of themselves. That is not the case.

I think the comments of the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) and certainly the comments I have had from members of the public service that I have talked to, rank-and-file government employees, are generally accepting of this wage freeze and are prepared to do their share. It is a terrible disservice that the New Democratic Party does to civil servants in this province in trying to put them in a position where the general public, who are suffering from a recession, will view them as not being interested in the general welfare of the province, because they do care and they are prepared to take this wage freeze.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am increasingly disturbed by the fact that this minister is falling in line with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in not understanding what he is doing with this fascist piece of legislation.

This minister just said that the problem is that people in the public sector have gone to third parties to settle disputes. Is this minister not aware that many of the people affected by this odious piece of legislation have been collectively bargaining? Many people have not gone to a selector. Many people have not gone to an arbitration.

In fact, not only that, how can this minister talk about the problem with the legislation being third party arbitration or selection when, in fact, one thing this legislation says and does, if it is passed, is it says that whether there was agreement between the

two parties on everything in the contract other than one particular point—in this case, usually wages—this particular piece of legislation that is before the Manitoba Legislature, which this minister says he supports, says that no matter what has been collectively bargained at the table, that is null and void as a part of this wage freeze.

* (2150)

I am amazed that this minister, who is responsible for the Civil Service Commission and supposedly the Minister of Labour, would use the same kind of ridiculous arguments used by both the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and by the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

In fact, I will follow up on that. If he does not realize that, will he as Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission at least agree to amend the legislation to say what he thinks it should be or is right now to ensure that items that are agreed upon collectively can be put in place in the form of contract, regardless of whatever government fiat is put in place in terms of wages? Will he further allow people to collective bargaining because many of the people affected have not gone to selection and arbitration? That is the first point I want to ask of the minister.

The second point is this minister has talked about his comments on final offer selection. I want to ask him if he believes anything that he said at that point in time as minister, and in particular the Minister of Finance who said that final offer selection would be in place until March 31, 1991, impacting as it would—as the Minister of Finance knew and surely the Minister of Labour must have known—on the public sector.

We negotiated as members of the Legislature on the basis of the word of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). I want to ask him whether he supports the fact that the Minister of Finance has ripped up his word as signed on a document with all three House leaders that said that would be in place, and whether he now believes that even people who took this government at its word and went through their legal right to apply for final offer selection should not receive the award allowed under final offer selection.

The third question I want him to answer, if he is so concerned about third party involvement, is he now saying that the next move this government will

be making will be to get rid of arbitration in the public sector, arbitration which has been since the 1960s an alternative to strikes? I would appreciate him answering that because I am very, very disturbed by his comments.

The fourth thing I want to raise with the minister is, does he believe that it is only the Manitoba Federation of Labour which, indeed, does represent the majority of workers that are concerned about this? Is he not aware of the fact that this bill, Bill 70, which this minister has indicated clearly he supports, is being opposed by every single labour confederation, federation, local that exists? It has brought together people who have never been brought together before on issues of this magnitude. It is threatening the whole question of collective bargaining.

The final thing I want to raise to the minister is that I am offended by the drivel that the minister put on the record to suggest that the MFL or the MGEA or the NDP would suggest that people are—and these were his words—that civil servants are greedy and thinking only of themselves. I am a little bit upset, to say the least, at the paternalistic attitude of this minister who seems to think he can say what is in the best interest of civil servants.

I remind the minister we live in a democratic society. If free collective bargaining is to mean anything, if the labour movement, which is based on democratic principles is going to be allowed to mean anything, it is that those organizations represent the democratic will of those members based on election, which is what they do. When he makes statements like that, and he can make them politically against the NDP, I really do not care, Mr. Acting Chairman, what rhetoric the minister wishes to use to defend the indefensible, but to question the motives of the labour movement, which is asking in this particular case for nothing more or less than the maintenance of the collective bargaining process that has been in place in Manitoba for decades, which allows workers at least some say for themselves what they wish to do, how the minister can turn around and use this statement suggesting that the MFL, or others are suggesting, that workers are greedy, thinking only of themselves, I think indicates very disturbingly the paternalistic attitude this minister has.

(Mr. Deputy Chairman in the Chair)

The whole point of this whole concern about what is happening in collective bargaining is that those workers no longer have the choice. If workers want to take a freeze under a collective bargaining situation, they can indeed do so.

I would remind the minister that the members of the MGEA voted overwhelmingly to go to arbitration. In terms of other areas, the members of the operating engineers who were on strike for 55 days voted to go to final offer selection. I would note that the casino workers voted to go to final offer selection. IBEW, Hydro workers voted to go to final offer selection. Is he suggesting they did not know what was in their own best interest? Is he suggesting that part of the new labour philosophy of this Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) is going to be now, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that the Minister of Labour, because he has talked to some people he knows in his constituency or someone he is related to who thinks that there should be a freeze, is now going to, by legislation, enforce that on all Manitoba workers?

Whatever happened to this Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission defending free collective bargaining that allows the workers their own choice in conjunction with negotiations with the government, their own choice as to whether they, in fact, do that?

The other point I wish to make, Mr. Deputy Chairman, because once again the minister's comments quite frankly scare me in terms of the future of labour legislation in this province, is to ask the minister whether he really believes that the government was bargaining in good faith; if he really believes that, when the selector in the case of non-Civil Service negotiations, in the case of the operating engineers as recently as last Thursday said that there was no bargaining in good faith on the part of the government; if he looks at the casino workers, similar comments again; if he looks at the statements of the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

Let us recount, in case the minister is not aware of this—because that is the other thing I find disturbing is the fact that the Premier and Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) seem to be running labour negotiations in this province, and the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission might be invited to the occasional meeting—but we hear that the Premier sat down with Peter Olfert. Does the minister honestly believe that there can be free collective bargaining when someone comes up and

says, here is the offer, take it or leave it? Does he really believe that this is negotiation and collective bargaining when that process takes place? Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the selectors who have looked objectively at this are saying that is not free collective bargaining. That is negotiation by ultimatum.

What would he expect the MGEA to have done differently—to not go to arbitration; to not go to their members and get a 97 percent vote to go to arbitration; to say, yes, Mr. Premier, your blackmail is going to work, we will bend over, we will do anything you say, just do not do these rotten things you are saying?

One other point to the minister who talked about avoiding layoffs, minimizing layoffs, how much credibility does the minister feel he can have with the Civil Service when this government negotiated through blackmail, then proceeded to lay off hundreds of workers—430 people affected directly, 958 positions eliminated—by the minister's own statistics. Then after the layoff, turns around and says that they are going to impose a wage freeze by legislation that violates every precept of labour law going back to the 1940s, that violates their own word on final offer selection, which violates the provisions in legislation in terms of arbitration, which, by the way, goes a lot further than many provinces.

Six have some form of wage control, for the minister who is obviously not aware of this. B.C. has not frozen wages. Neither has New Brunswick—or it is a partial freeze, and if the minister would care to check, very few provinces, if any, have as many far-reaching provisions in this legislation as does this government. It says one thing in a press release and does another thing in legislation.

I want to ask the minister again; did I not hear him correctly? Is he suggesting that somehow he knows better than the government workers themselves, and that from now on, in terms of collective bargaining, the government might just as well legislate every year for the public sector because they know what those public sector workers want to do.

Is he suggesting that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because the member's statements are very concerning, to say the least.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, the only question the member for Thompson has not put to me tonight

in this list of questions is what I thought of what Ed Schreyer did—almost virtually the same thing—with a stroke of the pen in 1976. It just seems to slip their mind, you know, the whole anti-inflation program, the restriction on public servants' wages, the imposed settlement across the whole province in 1976. It just slips the member's mind that a New Democrat, heaven forbid, could have done that, so let us just ignore it.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, the member for Thompson talks about democracy, and he talks about MGEA members having a chance to voice their opinion. Well, I saw the ballot that MGEA members got to vote on. It had two choices, not three. It did not have the choice of settling at what the government had indicated, the wage offer the government had made clear as far back, I believe, as November. It did not put that choice to its membership for some strange reason. It only asked them if they wanted a strike or arbitration. What choice? Did any MGEA member in the province have a chance to vote on the government offer? Not once, not once did they have that chance, and the member talks about democracy.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicated very clearly—in fact, I think the last offer the government made was to put the offer to the membership. That took the union leadership off the hook. All they had to do was take the offer and put it to their membership. They refused to do it. Why? Why did they refuse? One can only speculate. Some would speculate that the majority of public servants in this province who were affected by the agreement would have voted to take that offer, and would have undermined, in the minds of the leadership, that leadership.

They never would put the question, even when we asked them to put the question, take them off the hook as union leadership. No, they would not put the question to their membership, never once, and the member for Thompson talks about democracy. I cannot believe it. I cannot believe that he talks about democracy. Then he talks about collective bargaining as if third party arbitration is collective bargaining.

Russ Paulley, if I remember the quote—and I am taking it off the top of my head—talked about collective bargaining—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I hate to disrupt the minister halfway through his—

Mr. Praznik: Tirade.

* (2200)

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Tirade. The hour now being 10 p.m., what is the will of the committee? Is it the will of the committee that we continue to sit?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Agreed? Agreed. We will continue to sit.

Mr. Praznik: The member talks, as I said, about democracy. Never once was that vote put, never once, to the membership of the MGEA. Never once did they have an opportunity to decide whether they want it or not. Now we get to third party arbitration. On almost all of the cases we are talking about here, we are talking about people who have opted for unions, who have opted for final offer selection or arbitration.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Whether they have or not, the point that I am making to the member is, he talks about free collective bargaining and includes in that term not specific examples, but the member has included in that term reference to FOS and arbitration. They are not parts of collective bargaining. They are outside—third party adjudication of those disputes.

The reality of those numbers if you look at many of the settlements that have come through as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has indicated, if that kind of settlement pattern had ended up with a 3 percent, 4 percent or 5 percent wage increase for the MGEA on this arbitration, how would the government have paid for it? The only way they could have paid for it was by laying off public servants.

An Honourable Member: You already did that.

Mr. Praznik: Well, the member says we already did that. We did some structural changes. We minimized the number of people it affected.

An Honourable Member: 958.

Mr. Praznik: Positions. 958 positions. It would probably be less than 300 people actually affected at the end of the day, considerably less. Maybe less than 200. Over a public service of 16,000, 17,000 people, a very small number. How many more people are the New Democratic Party prepared to sacrifice? How many hundreds of public servants would they choose to lay off? How many services reduced to pay that kind of arbitration award, when in the reality the vast majority of public servants out

there probably are very pleased to accept, not pleased necessarily, but willing to accept it for the good of the province, and never, never once had the opportunity to vote on it because their union refused to put the question. It is frustrating. It is terribly frustrating.

So did the government have a choice? The government certainly does not like doing this. No one is enjoying it. I am not enjoying it as Minister of Labour and I do not like doing it, but what choices does a government have? To go to arbitration and get a settlement for the contract expiring September of last year in last year's budget and find 3 percent, 4 percent, 5 percent, 6 percent, and remember I am guessing on that. Remember what the offer was, for a 12 percent increase in year one with a \$63 million price tag. Which hospital would the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) close to pay for that? One hundred and eighty-one items of demands, a huge package.

Now even if we had that kind of arbitration, how would we pay for it? The member for Thompson and members of his party and Mr. Olfert, they talk in some—well, I would change the tax policy here, we will pull some money out of the air there. The reality of the only way to pay for it would be to reduce services, and accompanying that is probably layoffs. -(interjection)- Well, yes, we have reduced services. Yes, we have. Because what the member for Thompson has not realized is that the provinces had no increase in revenue over last year in this fiscal year, and that costs in many priority areas like health care and education and family services go up.

I do not know where he would pull the money from. I do not know where members of the New Democratic Party would pull the money from, as if there is some magic power out there that they can just get it from or some magic pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, or maybe we should borrow it. That has always been their answer in the '80s, to borrow it, and that is why we pay over \$550 million a year in interest. Just think what we could do with that money, but we pay it every year, because their solution in the '80s was to borrow. Borrow, borrow, borrow.

What do you do? What choices do you have? Well, I will tell you, as Minister of Labour, when you present me those choices, my choice is to support this legislation to keep members of the public service working, providing services, particularly

when I am very, very sure that most of them are prepared to accept the wage freeze for the good of the province.

Yet the New Democratic Party goes on and on, how terrible it is, what a great disaster it is, but if we went to arbitration and had a settlement that we had to finance by reducing services, they would be the first to criticize us. If we had to lay off people to finance a settlement, they would be the first to criticize us. Oh, what a great luxury opposition is, when you never have to stand by or justify your actions.

I am sorry, I believe, Mr. Acting Chairman, that the vast majority of Manitobans, and the media coverage would tend to support that, recognize what we are trying to do. The vast majority of public servants recognize what we are doing. The only people who have not recognized it are the leadership and the official opposition party. They have not recognized it, but they are trying to form government. It is a great area to attack and it is right on their home turf. They love it and that is what they are doing, but the world is rolling on and the work is being done and the decisions have to be made.

Now, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) asked a whole litany of questions, and I want to respond to some of them. He talked and there were so many I could not get them all down here. He talked about arbitration and he asked this minister if it was the government's intention to do away with arbitration.

Now, I can tell him at this time that it is not our intention to do it. We put in a one-year wage freeze. We will be back at the table with the MGEA in September of this year which is just a few months away. I am hoping we can work out a livable contract settlement that will be to everyone's benefit. I am hoping that, we seem to perhaps be bottoming out in our economy at this time, and now we start to move ahead, and hopefully we will have the revenue to be able to provide that.

The choices are not easy ones and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) speaks and acts as if there is some magical solution out there, but there is not one. I recognize the politics he is trying to make and I recognize the politics within the MGEA. I recognize there is an election coming in October. I recognize—

An Honourable Member: Provincial?

Mr. Praznik: Not a provincial, an election within the MGEA. I recognize—

An Honourable Member: Do not count on it. We will see if there is an election.

Mr. Praznik: If there is a provincial election, so be it. So be it. I want to make one point to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I feel very strongly on this.

This government and I think we, as individuals, and I, as minister, do not want to make the public service of Manitoba any kind of target for the public. We are not here and it is not our intention to run any kind of campaign against public servants. Many of them are people who are neighbours and friends, and in my case, my spouse. Many of them have spouses who work in the public service. We represent public servants; many of them support us electorally. They are people we know and we work with, and they do a good job.

* (2210)

If the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and the MGEA leadership would have just given the public service of this province the chance to make its contribution to spreading the pain a little bit of this recession, they might have been very much surprised how the vast majority of public servants in Manitoba would have responded, and would have done what I honestly believe is the right thing in these circumstances.

Both the MGEA leadership and the New Democratic Party, yelling about democracy all the time, never ever gave those public employees the opportunity to express their opinion, and hiding behind a vote on a ballot, 97 percent for arbitration. When you only have two choices, a strike or arbitration, some ballot. How many of those people—and I will tell you, there were many in my constituency who bumped into me who were public servants and said, where do I get to vote for the zero and two because we will take it for a couple of years and do our share?

They never even had the chance to vote on that. If the MGEA believed that the majority of public servants did not accept that position, then why were they afraid to put that on the ballot? Why did they not put that on the ballot—because they knew that their membership would not have gone to arbitration but would have taken that. -(interjection)- Well, I am speculating here but the member raises the issues. The member raises the issues and I am speculating.

Why was it never put on the ballot? That has never been asked. Government negotiators asked in the last offer to the MGEA if they would take it to their membership. What were they afraid of? Were they afraid that MGEA members might vote to accept a wage freeze for a year? That is the big unanswered question.

Mr. Acting Chair, the bottom line on all of this is a year is not a particularly hard period when people have already gone through it for two-thirds, three-quarters, of the year. One should never, never undersell the public service of this province and its dedication to this province, its realization of the tough times which the province is now undergoing and its willingness to do its share in controlling the costs of the province for a year.

I just take great offence when people in the opposition, people in the labour movement, try to make more out of this battle and, in doing so, put the public service of this province in a position where the public of Manitoba thinks that every one of them are out there demanding more when the province cannot pay for it, because that is not the case. I only wish that there had been the courage in the MGEA to have taken that settlement to their membership.

Mr. Ashton: I want to ask the minister when he was consulted, if at all, what involvement he had, if at all, in terms of the drafting of Bill 70? I am asking here in terms of his capacity as Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairman, just to explain for the member for Thompson the structure of cabinet and the committee of which I am a part. We have a public sector compensation committee of cabinet, of which I am a member. I am not the chair of that committee. The chair of that committee is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), and that committee has had responsibilities for public sector negotiations since we came to government.

I joined that committee in September. The ultimate decision to bring forward a bill had to initiate in that committee. The Minister of Finance's chair had the responsibility to bring forward that particular bill and for the drafting of that particular legislation.

Mr. Ashton: So this matter was discussed at a committee of which the minister is a member, and I take it he had some role in drafting it?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, in the concept of a bill—it is a rather short bill. Bills are drafted by Legislative Counsel and the chair of the public sector

compensation committee, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), is the person responsible for the bill and responsible for its ultimate drafting, approved by cabinet.

Mr. Ashton: I take it then that the minister has had some time to consider the type of legislation that might be introduced, since it obviously was being discussed at this particular committee.

Mr. Praznik: Yes. One has to appreciate that when you are dealing with these matters and a very large plate, if I may use that term, of negotiation, that options are always considered. Certainly, the final decisions to come with this bill, I was part of the cabinet committee that made the recommendation.

Mr. Ashton: I wanted to ask that to determine whether the minister has had any role in its drafting. I take it then that the minister is saying he has been involved in the development of this bill since its inception through his involvement on this cabinet committee.

While I am not trying to ask the minister to name all the specific processes, it has been indicated that it was under consideration for a considerable period of time. I take it the minister has had ample opportunity over the last number of months to have input on the bill.

Mr. Praznik: I apologize to the member for Thompson. Could he repeat the last part of his question, please?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, my apologies for jumping in. I just wanted to determine the extent of the involvement the minister has had on this. I take it from his comments that he has had the opportunity in the last number of months, at least in the conceptual stage and obviously with the final drafting, to have very direct input as part of this cabinet committee.

Mr. Praznik: I have been part of the committee discussions. Obviously, we have been involved in all public-sector negotiations since I joined that committee with my appointment as Civil Service minister last fall. I have been involved, yes, with this bill.

Mr. Ashton: How long has this been under consideration as an option?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, as the member may know, whenever you are briefed by your support staff, all options are obviously there. I can tell him very clearly that it was always the intention and

always the direction of that committee to negotiate agreements with all of the unions with which we were negotiating. In fact, one of the strongest adherents to that principle has always been the Premier (Mr. Filmon). It has always been our intention. We have always worked toward that goal.

The decision to come in with this legislation was one that was made in essence just before the bill was introduced when we had reached a point where we believed that we could not get agreements with the majority of our unions with whom we were negotiating.

Mr. Ashton: I mean, obviously, it was under consideration as an option. I do not think that is any particular news to anyone. The reason I am asking is because I am trying to determine if the minister had some opportunity to have involvement with this bill and whether he had the opportunity to have input as Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, specifically on some of the principles of the bill.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, but I just want to clarify, although options were always there, the cabinet committee was almost always concerned with reaching collective agreements, with bargaining and really never entertained the idea of a wage bill seriously until we made the decision to bring it in.

That was an option we really did not want to look at. We were hopeful that we would be able to reach agreements with most of the unions within the guidelines established by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) as to what the province could afford.

Mr. Ashton: Even then, the decision was obviously made a number of weeks ago. I mean, it takes a number of weeks just to draft and translate a bill.

Mr. Praznik: A short bill.

Mr. Ashton: Well, short bills take a period of time to translate. I think the minister is aware of that from other short bills that are not available in direct translation for a number of days.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, staff in the Labour Relations unit of the Civil Service Commission obviously keep track of what is happening in other provinces and have copies of legislation that was prepared in other provinces over the years, et cetera. If one wants a precedent for any of these types of bills, et cetera, they are easily come by.

* (2220)

Mr. Ashton: If the minister was involved, how can he reconcile his statements about the freeze as a way of avoiding layoffs when, in fact, one of the provisions of the bill specifically cherry-picks one item from the MGEA agreement, the previous collective agreement, the agreement in terms of the no-layoff provision? Why is it that this minister as part of his cabinet committee and this government have, despite the minister's fine words about this being an alternative to layoffs, specifically, by legislation, allowed this government to bring in layoffs?

If the intent of this government was to avoid layoffs, why did they not freeze that provision of the agreement which specifically provided for a protection against layoff?

Mr. Praznik: I should tell the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) very clearly that the last offer that was put to the MGEA before this bill, which was rejected out of hand by their leadership without going to their membership, had provision for a form of job security under the offer that was made, and that was rejected by the union leadership.

With respect to the general no-layoff provisions of the act, I think the realities, financial realities, under which government operates, particularly in recessionary times, makes it very difficult to guarantee positions. We went, as I indicated earlier, through a major structural review of government. We reduced positions. We managed vacancies in order to minimize the human cost of that process and reduced what we thought were the minimum areas that we could do without. Certainly, there is some service reduction to Manitobans, but the money is not there to pay for them.

The reality of extending that general no-layoff provision is just impossible. The other thing it does, and I would hope the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would recognize it, is the inflexibility, the great inflexibility, of that clause to be able to move resources about government to where they are needed. I would hope at some point when the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) is able to take the floor and get into the questioning—he mentioned in his comments some examples of cases and some issues that I am certainly interested in exploring on the retraining side, et cetera. I can tell you the general layoff provision was a very, very unworkable provision, I think, for any government. That is one. Secondly, we did offer a form of job security to the

MGEA in the last offer that was made, and they rejected that.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, this bill specifically excludes that provision in the contract, and I note the Minister for Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), who is a member of the government, was not aware of that because she was making comments that obviously indicated she had not understood the intent of the bill.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): You did not understand my comments.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I understood the comments quite well. The minister was quite vocal as she normally is, and in this particular case the minister was wrong.

No one is suggesting there be more layoffs. The question was as to why this bill specifically excludes the provision in the bill, provision in the agreement, that provided for no-layoff clause. The minister has, at least, acknowledged the fact that while the minister himself was talking about the no-layoff provisions, they were not in favour of the specific no-layoff provision that was in the previous collective agreement, and that is why that was specifically excluded from the freeze.

I want to ask the minister again, because I think the minister did not deal with this question before; since the minister is also a believer, supposedly, in the collective bargaining process—although I really have to question that given the nature of this bill and his support for it—why he is supporting a bill as minister that will provide for a freeze on all working conditions and, in the case of a number of contracts, will result in parties that have agreed collectively to changes, through a majority, of the contract not being able to implement that in terms of the contract even with the wage freeze, why that should be excluded, why that should be specifically prohibited, because this bill freezes not only wages, it freezes contractual wording.

As a follow-up to that, I would also ask the minister—and it is on a related matter. The minister talked about the fact that this is a one-year freeze. As the minister is aware, it can be extended to be a two-year freeze or a three-year freeze. There is very little limit to what cannot be done in the legislation, but even assuming that is the intent and that will be the action of the government, I would like to ask the minister what impact this will have on

bargaining for multiyear contracts in the second and third year specifically.

If contracts are in the process of expiring and specifically if the first year of the contract is frozen in terms of both wages and working conditions, are there any limitations this government is placing on contracts in terms of subsequent years, whether it be second or third year, either in terms of wages or working conditions? If not, can the minister publicly assure those who are going to try and salvage whatever little chance there is for public sector bargaining over the next number of months? If they come up with contractual provisions that do lead to wage increases in subsequent years beyond the current freeze, those provisions arrived at through collective bargaining, since obviously final offer selection is no longer in place or, I mean, in the case of arbitration—I suppose that is also a possibility as well in that sense—will those provisions of those collective agreements as negotiated for subsequent years be honoured regardless of what they result in, in terms of wage increases or changes of working conditions?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, to answer a number of the questions that were put by the member for Thompson. I believe he asked me specifically about the no-layoff clause, its expiry, and I would also point out to him that I understand that clause expired on March 31 of this year. So it ended by mutual agreement, the agreement that put it in place, grandfathered it, put a deadline on it and that period expired. It was not part of the general collective agreement. It was an attachment to it. -(interjection)-

Well, the member says, it could have been extended. We did make that offer to Mr. Olfert, and Mr. Olfert, for whatever reason, did not put it to his membership or want to discuss that. That is certainly his prerogative, but there was that provision there and we are hopeful that we set our budget for this particular year, that we should be able to hold to it. So we did make that offer. Mr. Olfert rejected it out of hand, and it was there. It was there to be considered.

Now, the effect on multiyear contracts—the legislation is clear as to a year's freeze. What employers and the employees negotiate at the bargaining table for the period following their freeze, I certainly do not want to get into at this time. That is for them to negotiate, but what is negotiated and agreed to is the agreement.

Mr. Ashton: I want to clarify two points. In terms of the no-layoff offer, the minister had said that an offer of some sort of job security was made. Was an offer made to the MGEA to specifically extend the no-layoff provisions? I understand they had expired, but so had the previous contract. On that point, could the minister clarify, was the government then and is the government now willing to extend the no-layoff provisions as existed until March 31 under the previous contract?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, the offer that was made of a no-layoff provision was somewhat different from the one which expired on March 31. It was made to the full-time work force. It was for job security to the end of the fiscal year.

As I am sure the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) appreciates, no government in recessionary times is able to know exactly what its revenues are going to be to the next year, but we had set our budget, and the offer we had made to the MGEA was job security to the end of the fiscal year for the full-time work force.

Mr. Ashton: Okay, so I say that there was some offer, although not necessarily a direct extension. I appreciate it; I am not trying to—I am just trying to get a better sense of what the government decision was.

I also wanted to clarify again, and I am not trying to play word games here, but if the contract is negotiated, the second and third years provide for whatever—2 percent, 4 percent, 5 percent, 10 percent increases in wages. The minister is saying that those second and third subsequent years in terms of bargaining will be respected by the government. I mean, the minister said if there is an agreement, there is an agreement, but we have situations here where agreements are not agreements now in terms of legislation and selectors' decisions are not decisions anymore.

All I am asking is, if a group goes out now, obviously they cannot negotiate under this legislation in the public sector as defined by the government for more than zero this year, but if they negotiate more in the second and third years, will the government honour that collective agreement?

* (2230)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, I just want to clarify the question from the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) because the wage freeze period extends the contract for one year. So I assume what he is

saying is, when that freeze is over and those unions are to the table with an employer, being the government or its agencies, and they negotiate an agreement, whether it be a one, two, three year agreement, will that be lived up to?

Well, the government has always lived up to those agreements. We have followed through on our collective agreement that was in place, and there is a fine point, and again I appreciate the member not wanting to get into word games and I do not want to do that either, but there is a fine point because what we are doing here is we are not rolling back any existing agreement with our legislation. We are not taking money out of anyone's pocket that is getting it today.

What we have done is basically extended the present terms of those agreements for a further year before we negotiate new agreements, so anyone who would negotiate with us at the end of that period and have an agreement should fully expect to have that agreement lived up to.

Mr. Ashton: The minister will appreciate the concern of myself and others given what has happened, because it is not as clear cut as the minister suggests. I mean final offer selection was extended, arbitration was in place that had specifically been thrown out, people have received selectors' decisions based on the legislation this House passed, which had been by agreement subject to proclamation on March 31, was thrown out.

I point to the casino workers and I point to the operating engineers as two groups, one that received a selector's decision prior to the tabling of the bill, the second has received a selector's decision since the tabling of the bill, both of which were tabled before any passage of the bill. Those selectors' decisions, which were part of Manitoba legislation passed by the Manitoba Legislature and agreed by all three parties to remain in place for several more months, have been made null and void subsequently.

So I appreciate the statement by the minister that—and I understand the wording that he is using, I mean he is saying that their contracts were extended for a year. Many of them are viewing it as simply like the first year of a second, third year agreement. Once again, that is a matter of principle, to a lot of bargaining units is the duration of the collective agreement, but whether he wants

to consider that the second or third year, or subsequent years—what I am asking is on behalf of people who quite frankly are very frustrated by the bargaining process.

I have talked to people the last number of months who feel they have completely, absolutely and utterly wasted their time as part of the bargaining process. They have wasted their money. They have wasted their effort. They have wasted their energy.

The minister talks about people he has talked to. I would suggest he talk to some of the people who have participated in what some of them feel was a complete, absolute and utter waste of time in the last number of months, try and persuade them that it is worth their effort to go through that whole process again for another three, four, five, six, seven months unless they have some guarantee that the government is not just going to step in and do that again.

In fact, I want to specifically ask the minister, since he stressed repeatedly tonight that this is a one-year freeze, if it is a one-year freeze, will the government not agree to amend the legislation to say it is a one-year freeze, period, because the legislation allows the government to extend both the application and the time period of this wage freeze? Will the minister now be prepared publicly to recommend that indeed this be a one-year freeze, period?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, first of all, a number of issues that the member has raised with respect to final offer selection, I certainly can appreciate some of the frustration of those who have gone through that process to find that they are caught in this particular freeze. The agreement, I understand, that the government made was not to proclaim the repeal until March 31. That is what happened.

I think we were always very clear in our commentary that we certainly were not looking towards public sector wage-freeze legislation. Given the circumstances that the province faces, it was a decision that we did not take lightly, we certainly did not want to make but felt we had to and consequently had to override those decisions because, again, the only way that they could have been paid for was by reducing the staff of the public service or reducing other services to the people of Manitoba.

With respect to when members question about bargaining and about the life of this particular freeze, we feel at this time, and I know all of us in cabinet are very, very hopeful, that it will only be a year in duration. What I cannot say to the honourable member, what I do not know, is where our economy, where the national economy, where our tax revenue is going to be next year.

To make that commitment tonight to strictly a one-year wage freeze, I think would be inappropriate and foolhardy on my part, because we do not know where we are going to be in next year's budget. Signs now are that the recession has sort of hit the bottom, and we expect a slow recovery beginning this fall. We see some signs of it now in the housing market. God willing, everything turning out well, we will have some increases in revenue next year and we are going to be able to provide our public service with some reasonable increases. I do not want to preclude totally tonight the possibility that that may not happen, that we may find ourselves in a very bad financial situation and have to look at renewing it for a year. I think that is a possibility that is somewhat remote. I hope it does not happen.

My recommendation tonight, if we are able to do it, we should go for it with negotiated agreements and not extend it a year, but one always has to recognize that there is a possibility it could happen. That is, I hope, a very small possibility. I think the general public appreciates that, and I hope we do not have to extend it another year, but that door has to remain open until we are out of this recessionary period.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am disappointed again that the minister states something and then indicates intent. Then when I ask him a specific question—

An Honourable Member: A very small intent.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the intent, I took the minister at his word, that he felt that an agreement would be an agreement, but that is part of the problem here. An agreement is not an agreement any more under Bill 70. An agreement on working conditions is not an agreement on Bill 70. An agreement on 99 percent of contract items is not an agreement under Bill 70. -(interjection)-

Well, Mr. Acting Chairperson, the minister says, which contract? Once again, the minister is suffering from the tunnel vision that seems to be affecting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister

of Finance (Mr. Manness), in the sense that they keep applying either the MGEA main unit negotiations or they apply some of the final offer selection negotiations. They forget that there is a mixture of bargaining units affected by this bill.

Many of the bargaining units have not gone to final offer selection or arbitration. Many of the bargaining units have had agreement on all items except wages. Many of the bargaining units, and I will give the minister an example, the IBEW local, which represents Hydro workers, has complete agreement on working conditions, contractual language provisions and is in the position of having complete agreement, yet is denied the access under the legislation to that agreed-upon provision.

(Mrs. Rosemary Vodrey, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has suggested this is because it was in the best interests of the union, naively suggesting the concern was that unions might make compromises on contract language, expecting to pick up a quid pro quo on the dollar, the monetary, value of an award. I have talked to many bargaining units where they are quite happy with the changes in wording that took place. Those negotiations have stood on their own, so that is the specific example I am referring to.

The minister, I hope, will get out of the political bunker on this one and recognize, Madam Acting Chairperson, that the bottom line is that there are many different bargaining units affected, with one fell swoop, in these negotiations that are not characterized directly by the stereotype that the minister keeps putting forward. I hope he would recognize that there are many different bargaining situations.

* (2240)

All I would ask from the minister is that, in recognizing that, if he does not yet recognize that, for the minister, as Minister of Labour and for minister responsible for the Civil Service, at least if he is not going to oppose us, go on principles. It is very clear from tonight, he fully supports the principle.

All I am asking him to do is be consistent with his own words. He made my own arguments before in terms of some of the inconsistencies in this bill. He said, collective bargaining—he has a difficulty with third party involvement, even though that is part of

the legislation that has been in place, final offer selection arbitration.

The bottom line he has not recognized is that even the collective bargaining decisions that have been reached have been frozen by this particular bill. All I want to ask as one final comment in this particular area is, will the minister at least, I realize it is not his bill, but he has indicated he was involved with the drafting of it, look at amendments and look at sponsoring, supporting amendments, lobbying for amendments, with his colleagues that will clear up some of the major deficiencies in this bill that go beyond the principle which I do not agree with, which I will never agree with?

I feel it seriously damages labour relations in this province and collective bargaining, but even within the context that the minister has put forward, his reference to collective bargaining, no layoffs, et cetera, one-year freeze. The problem with the bill is, the bill can, through one stroke of a pen, include many groups that are not supposedly included, can extend from one year to whenever, has frozen all collective decisions, has not provided any layoff protection. I mean, this bill does a lot of the things the minister does not agree with, and very little of the things that he has argued are the rationale behind the bill.

I ask the minister, will he at least keep an open mind in terms of amendments?

Mr. Praznik: Well, obviously, any member of a legislative committee, whether it be government or otherwise, should always have an open mind toward amendments. I mean, one is always interested in those amendments. I do want to make a comment. The member indicated that I may have tunnel vision as Civil Service minister, and I would just remind him that, although I sit at that committee, I am Civil Service minister. One of my prime areas of responsibility has been in the area of our own employees, whereas other ministers have taken a lead role with respect to major Crown corporations, et cetera, and are far more intimate in the details of those particular agreements.

I would indicate, though, that in many of those contracts the member may be referring to where so-called nonmonetary issues had reached agreement, often they were dependent upon the financial settlement, so although there may be agreement in that particular wording or that particular provision, other components that make

that agreement, particularly in monetary areas, were frozen and not provided for. It is not as clear-cut as it may appear to be.

The other part of course is, there is still the ability on interpretation of existing agreements. There are still other vehicles, some vehicles where nonmonetary issues, et cetera, where you have some agreement on a way to do something differently, can still be carried out without violating this particular legislation.

Some of those concerns I think will be taken care of as matters of fact and with interpretation of existing agreements. They can certainly be there ready to go into the next agreement when the freeze is over. There is a fair bit of leverage on this particular area.

Again, to the member for Thompson, the reason for the blanket coverage generally was that in many cases where you had the substantial agreements in other areas, they were contingent upon monetary settlements. There were trade-offs sometimes for monetary concessions. It would not be fair to implement them without the monetary side of the package being complete, and so the argument goes of course that you just extend the agreement in its entirety.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Acting Chairperson, there will be sections of those agreements that will be agreed to by all parties—shift changes, technological change provisions. All I would suggest to the minister is that he look at changes agreed to after the freeze on the contract that if the two bargaining authorities agree that they will abide by those conditions.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Chairman, I want to indicate, I have a number of other questions. Due to the limited time available for Estimates and the major series of events this year affecting the Civil Service, areas that we might have spent far more time on, we are not going to have the same time during this Estimates process. I particularly asked the minister for an update on pay equity, an update on affirmative action. I asked that actually in terms of notice because, once again, we are fairly short in terms of time available.

The minister is aware of the concerns that I have expressed on behalf of our caucus at previous sittings. I am also in a bit of a dilemma, Mr. Acting Chairman. I know the Liberal critic had a number of

questions. The Liberal critic is not able to ask those questions currently. I suggest that perhaps we adjourn for perhaps one minute. If the Liberal critic is able then to find his voice, fine; if not, I am certainly prepared at this time to pass the Estimates, not -(interjection)- in all seriousness, I think it is only fair.

The Liberal critic did defer to myself and they do have a rather small caucus. It is difficult for them to be in several places at once. It is difficult enough for them to be in one place at once because of the small numbers of the caucus. I just ask that we adjourn for one minute. My only final comment, and I think I said in my opening comments, throughout my own comments, our concerns will be continuing the debate on Bill 70 in the House quite extensively, I might add. We will be continuing to question in terms of the impact of the layoffs and decentralization.

I really do look to the minister, and I said in all seriousness before, I look to him to be open-minded. The minister said that he felt that all public officials should be, or are, open-minded. I do not agree with the minister. I found, unfortunately, that there are some political ministers, MLAs, some politicians in general, that are notorious for not having an open mind, and looking—

The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) raises his hand. I think there is no disagreement from myself on the Deputy Premier not having an open mind. Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Acting Chairperson, I should not, perhaps, characterize the Deputy Premier that way.

I do look to the minister because I think he is going to find in a number of these areas that people are going to be looking at him as a trustee of the Civil Service, and in his capacity of the Department of Labour, which we will deal with soon, as a trustee on behalf of workers, as well as balancing the role, in this particular case, the government as an employer and employers generally.

There are a number of areas of significant principles at stake here. I hope the minister will recognize that. The fight that will be undertaken is on a matter of principle in this particular case in terms of labour. What I am asking from the minister, quite seriously, is to take an open mind, and not be afraid to criticize the decisions that are being made, not be afraid, and I am not suggesting he do it here in this committee, but at least internally, to question some of the assumptions on which these decisions are being made, because, I think, as we have seen

from this committee, there is no stereotype of the Civil Service or the public service. There are many different workers; there are many different bargaining situations and many different circumstances.

One of the problems of the policy of the government is that it treats all workers the same way. I would suggest, unfairly the same way, in terms of those who are included by the bill, although, it excludes others. Those are a few comments. I would suggest we adjourn for perhaps one minute, and if the Liberal member wishes to participate, we are quite prepared to pass the Estimates.

* (2250)

Mr. Praznik: If I, Mr. Acting Chair, just may respond to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), certainly undertake to provide him by way of letter—if I may undertake to provide to the member for Thompson, by way of letter, with respect to an update on pay equity and affirmative action. I can tell him, with respect to the layoffs from our preliminary numbers, that men were affected in far greater numbers than women, and the other target groups in affirmative action were about their representation in the public service. So we will get that to him by way of letter if that satisfies his request, and be pleased to do that.

The other comment I must make to the member for Thompson is that I certainly think he appreciates the difficulty in being both the Minister of Labour and the employer. It does always put a minister in a difficult situation, which he certainly recognizes being both Minister of Labour, the independent third party, and yet, at the same time, the employer. It is a difficult road to walk.

I also make this comment to him, the arguments and the points raised by Manitoba Federation, by some of the leadership of the MGEA, and by his party. I recognize that there are matters of principle involved here in which they are making argument about. I certainly respect that and I am not surprised by that. That is part of the political process, particularly with the Manitoba Federation of Labour. I am not surprised by any of their comments. I certainly recognize the principles that they are making, and certainly, I am ready to get on with the questions from the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as intrigued as I was with the last three hours of discussion, I might want to come back to some of the questions

that we began to talk about at the beginning of this, or at least I had indicated I want to talk about. The first is this question of management changes that have been discussed at least within the Department of Labour. I know the Civil Service Commission has had a role to play in that. I would like to get an idea of the progress to date and some of the feelings of the commission on the suggestions that were contained in the memo that I saw.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am certainly very pleased to respond to this question from the member for Osborne. It is a very exciting time for us in the Department of Labour in making some adjustments.

The document he referred to that was leaked to the media, one of the regrettable things about it was it was a preliminary working document, as I think I have indicated to him privately. Some of the things that were drawn out of it are not necessarily what we are moving on.

We are taking the general thrust to give managers more authority to make decisions, and incumbent upon that is also the tolerance to accept that sometime those decisions will be wrong. That is something we all have to get used to within the department.

From the Civil Service perspective, of course, we have no intention of violating any provisions of the collective agreement. So that is something that they have been important to be involved in that process. Their main role has been in the discussion of adjustment and training within the department, because you are in fact changing a mind-set, a culture as to how you work, and they have assisted the department and will be assisting the department in obtaining the kind of training expertise we will need as we go through this process. Although we have a general plan as to how we want to go, a lot of it is internally driven and will develop as we go along.

One comment, you lead into another area in terms of the Civil Service and training. Since I became minister we have had quite a few discussions on what role the Civil Service Commission should have in actually the provision of training in departments. In my experience as Minister of Labour I have found a great deal of the training that we purchase annually, and I am a great believer of that in the department, has been very specific training. We have a lot of inspectors, et cetera, so that is not

surprising, but even in our administrative support, training from outside the commission, and it has been very specific, requested by employees in many cases, because they know what they want, and it fits the objective of their job and has been approved.

As we discuss this within the commission we see the role of the commission very much becoming a brokerage for training, where our training unit would be the one buying training, blocks of it at good prices and brokering it out to departments, responding to departments needs and really perform that buying function, trying to get better prices for government. There will always be some courses and some training that is very specific to government that the commission has an expertise in that it can do the best, and so it will provide that.

In many, many other areas there are training programs and expertise that are available outside of government. Departments want it, and the commission is probably the best vehicle to purchase it and get us good rates in government. So it does not answer your question specifically but gets into another tangent.

Mr. Alcock: Well, having been a participant in a number of training sessions sponsored by the commission, I guess I have a mixed opinion about it. I think like any other organization, some things work well, other things work less well. I have been involved in a couple of sessions I thought were excellent that were done in just that way, purchasing an outside service and then making it available to a variety of people. So I do not have any particular questions or concerns about that.

I am interested though in—if I understand this direction you are attempting to head in, it is essentially a changing of some of the authority or an expansion of the delegation that a manager might have where, as long as they are within the budget allocation for their department and as long as they are meeting the conditions of the collective agreement, they will have greater scope to hire, reclassify and dismiss.

Mr. Praznik: My staff made an important point. Before I answer your question, I would like to convey that to the member for Osborne. Our main thrust has more to do with the allocation of financial resources within the department, the ability to move unused staff dollars into operating, and vice versa on occasion, in order to have flexibility moving it

within budget lines, in essence, so that if we find that in one particular year we have a staff vacancy or two in, say, apprenticeship and training and we have a run of pamphlets that we want to do, that we can convert some of those dollars as we are waiting to staff that position into printing those pamphlets, is to have that flexibility within our budget—always accountable, of course, to Treasury Board at the end of the day, but to be able to move those resources around within the department to suit specific needs.

In the Department of Labour that becomes very important because so many of our areas have ups and downs in terms of service. Employment standards is one that tends to be more busy during a recessionary period. There are areas in the planning and building inspection, et cetera, that are busier than during nonrecessionary periods when you have greater construction activity, et cetera. You know you sort of budget on a year-to-year but you do not know what you are going to get, so you can move things around a little bit within the department and give you flexibility.

With respect to specific staff, although that is not quite our emphasis, the ability to delegate classifications is something that the commission is looking at, is likely to be worked into this effort with the Department of Labour. But they will always have a monitoring and supervisory role because that is the check. That is the check against the manager who is using it to their advantage or disadvantage of an employee.

Mr. Alcock: I am pleased to hear that. I mean, I do not suggest that there is not a need for that. I do not want to try and pick apart here.

One of the concerns I had when I was a manager in the department is that the former government, in any event, would basically manage every decision that you had to make. I mean, you really had no decisions to make, you just functioned as a conduit for paper. One of the classic ones was trying to hire a three-month term replacement for a person on maternity leave. The classification is intact, the money is there, but instead of being able just to go out and access somebody off the civil service list, one often had to go up through Treasury Board or to cabinet to get bloody approval for it. So it took an enormous amount of management time making a decision that was going to be made. It just struck me as eating up an awful lot of time that could be better spent.

* (2300)

What I hear you saying, or at least what I saw the intent seemed to be in that change, was a fairly progressive change to let managers manage, with appropriate checks and balances. I mean, you do not want to allow capricious kinds of reclassification and those kinds of things, and you do not want all the managers to hire and fire at will, but you do have some pretty significant protections built into the collective agreement and into The Civil Service Act as it is, but just to allow people, once they are operating legitimately within those parameters, to operate and to do exactly the kinds of things that you are talking about doing.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Chair, I have to say I very much appreciate the comments of the member for Osborne. He had spoken to me after the story in the newspaper this winter and we have had some very good discussions on this.

I think one of the most difficult parts of this is going to be twofold—changing the culture or the mind-set of those managers where they are able to accept that responsibility and make those decisions, and also on the part of their superiors, including ministers, to be able to accept that sometimes mistakes are going to be made, and within parameters one has to accept that.

Now the other caveat I guess I put on that is I would hope that our media and members of the Legislature also appreciate, as I know the member for Osborne does, that within departments if you are going to give people some authority to manage, then the minister cannot always be held 100 percent accountable for a bad management decision. If it is a major decision or it is something that deals with dishonesty, et cetera, yes, then the minister has responsibility to correct it.

The role of ministers, deputies and senior managers in those cases becomes one more of coming in when there is a problem and correcting it if correction is needed. It is going to be very, very difficult to change some of those cultures and those mind-sets simply because of the nature of the process. So that is going to be the greatest challenge, I think.

Mr. Alcock: Actually, it is an interesting comment. I have a draft paper called In Defence of Failure right now about use of technology in the system and allowing people to go through exactly that process, because it is part of learning. It is part of our R&D

and growth development and all that kind of stuff. There is a lot of literature that backs it up, but it is something that the Civil Service has been particularly—and not just here. I mean, this is a problem right throughout North America, that they have been particularly unable to deal with for the political consequences that you suggest.

A question though, is it intended to also reward, not just managers but staff, for competent performance over and above basic salary?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, that is part of our intention. I am very glad you asked that question, because one of the great areas that we are having discussions now internally within the department is what kind of rewards, what form does that reward take and how you can implement a reward system. I know staff in the internal discussions we are having are coming forward with some ideas. I am not privy to all of those discussions yet. They are generating them internally, and at some point I will be sitting down with my staff and we will be going through some of those suggestions. They are looking at how you deal with that, because that has to be a part of it. Reward has to be there, I think, to make this work. It is the incentive.

Mr. Alcock: Well, perhaps, given that the hour is late and that we are getting along so famously, rather than sit and do this on the record and keep an entire committee here, what I could do is just, if the minister would undertake to meet with me at some time, we could have a discussion about this, I could get the information I want separate to this time.

I would like to make just a parting comment on it. If there is one frustration I experienced in trying to particularly manage change in the department, it was the multiplicity of small things that one had to do that served, I think, some of them legitimately as checks and balances on independent action which are necessary in that kind of management system, but it just struck me we had gotten to a point where it became virtually, not impossible, but so tiresome to proceed that a lot of creative things that could have been done were not done, simply because the process was so overwhelming.

I fault the former government for that. I think that they were either so lacking in understanding on how to run anything or how to manage anything, that they simply would not delegate any decisions. I think that the commission at times has moved to become

an arm of that. They have felt that they have had to manage decisions excessively, although in fairness to the commission I think there are departments that are weak and at times you need a check on that. I would not abdicate the handing it over, you know, mom-and-pop-store style so that they run everything. I mean, I think the commission does play a legitimate role. It may have been that they were policy driven, also, to manage all of the little bits and pieces, but I think we suffered from it. I think managers are capable of finding significant efficiencies if they are allowed to do it and they are protected. This concept of failure is incredibly important. I think we should talk some more about it, and I would like to be helpful in that whole process.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Relmer): Item 1.(a) Executive Office: Salaries \$249,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$84,000—pass.

Item 1.(b) Administrative Services: (1) Salaries \$703,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$400,800—pass.

Item 1.(c) Human Resource Management Services: (1) Salaries \$1,680,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$590,300—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$493,000—pass.

Item 1.(d) Labour Relations Services: (1) Salaries \$660,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$141,800—pass.

Resolution 15: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,016,900 for Civil Service for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1992—pass.

This completes the committee on Civil Service. The meeting is so adjourned. Committee rise.

* (2000)

SUPPLY—NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Deputy Chairman (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Natural Resources.

We are on item 3. Resource Support Programs 3.(a) Special Resource Projects \$23,800—pass; 3.(b) Habitat Enhancement Fund \$100,000—pass; 3.(c) Natural Resources Institute Grant \$20,000—pass.

Item 3.(d) Sustainable Development \$189,400.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Item 3.(d). Could the minister just inform the House here on the cut to the Sustainable Development part of this Resource Support Program, please?

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Rose): We are on item 3.(d). The member for Interlake, would you like to repeat your question, please?

Mr. Cliff Evans: Mr. Acting Chairman, I would just like to ask the minister on the Sustainable Development expenditure, the cut in that area, could he just inform us of the 30-some-odd or \$40,000 cut in Sustainable Development?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Acting Chairman, to the honourable member for the Interlake, there was a \$35,000 nonrecurring, one-time funding for round table meetings conducted in 1990-91 that was charged to my department in last year's Estimates, not occurring in this year's Estimates. This is the Manitoba round table chaired by the Premier on the environment.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Acting Chairperson, can the minister indicate the recent round of cuts to his department, that is the 231 positions that were cut in the last budget, what process of review they went through in terms of sustainable development? Specifically, were the cuts reviewed by the Manitoba round table? If so, what was the view of the round table with respect to the cuts to this department in the areas that they were cut from?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, I would have to indicate to the honourable member for St. James that there was no review by the round table. The budgetary decisions, difficult as they are from time to time, were conducted solely by members of Treasury Board and their staff and, of course, senior departmental personnel.

Mr. Edwards: Was there any review of the cuts by the sustainable development technical advisory committee or the Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, I think it would be appropriate to point out to the honourable member that both the Manitoba round table and the relatively small sustainable development unit headed by one Robert Sopuck are in effect policy advisers, if you like, the round table being, of course, a much wider forum in that it encompasses nongovernmental

people as well, of what government does and, indeed, from time to time what government perhaps should do.

The member may wish to pursue it as a legitimate role for these organizations to become involved in and I suppose that is fair game. I would have to report to him that, on the advice of my senior staff, there was no consultation, no review by either of these two bodies in the development of the Estimates that are before the honourable member.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairperson, just so I have it perfectly clear. As I understand it the sustainable development technical advisory committee is a committee—and I think that is the one the minister has indicated is headed up by Mr. Sopuck, and I also sense by the title alone the Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet would appear to be a cabinet committee of cabinet ministers, who would be particularly interested in issues of sustainable development who presumably form a subcommittee of cabinet.

I understand the minister to be saying that the cuts to the Natural Resources department was a sole decision of Treasury Board and was not reviewed by either the sustainable development technical advisory committee or the Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet prior to the decision being made. Is that the correct interpretation of what the minister has said?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, that is basically correct. I should indicate to the honourable member though that certainly representations no doubt were made directly to me by the sustainable development unit, for instance, with respect to the criteria and the manner of funding of such specific funds as contained under the Special Conservation Fund, that is, Lotteries monies that the department has had for the first time a year ago to expend on different environmental programs.

In the same way it has had an influence and impact directly on a similar kind of fund that my colleague the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) has in his Innovations Fund, that is used essentially for various community-based and other innovative environmental programs throughout the province.

The fact of the matter is that fund was originally established at, in my instance, the Special Conservation Fund—that half a million dollars. It was a Treasury Board decision, governmental

decision to, for this current year, as we try to meet the priorities of this government. I want to put it on the record, I have been candid with honourable members that I have not always been all that happy with some of the reductions occurring in my department.

Let no one misread into that anything other than total and full support of the priorities that this government that I am part of has accepted and has put in place. We had to take a quarter of a million dollars out of that half-million dollar Special Conservation Fund so that my colleague in Family Services could effect an increase in this funding for Family Services, so that my colleague in Health could increase by some \$98 million and \$99 million in the priorities that this government has established in Health, so that my colleague in Education could increase, not cut back any funding in Education.

Departments like mine, and with my full concurrence, albeit at times some pain, accepted this kind of direction from the overall policy decision. But to answer directly the member for St. James' question, these decisions were essentially made by Treasury Board and Treasury Board minutes are available that would indicate the kind of meetings that they have had with our staff people. There were numerous sections that senior staff indulged in.

Perhaps it is not inappropriate to suggest or to also put on the record that there was a somewhat added dimension to the Estimate's development this year, in the sense that the member may or may not be totally cognizant of the fact that we have divided government services into various catalogues or envelopes.

We in the Department of Natural Resources, along with my colleagues the Ministers of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), Rural Development (Mr. Downey) are in the development envelope. We were treated as a group of six or seven departments, and long before any specific figures were dealt with by my department officials, the deputy ministers of these seven ministers had to come to terms with the kind of targets that Treasury Board placed generally before this group of departments in that envelope. It was a very difficult and drawn-out procedure to try to meet these budgetary goals of government in its totality that had the final decision with respect to funding levels of any and all departmental programs that you see before you.

* (2010)

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairperson, just one final question on this appropriation for me at the bottom of Expected Results in this branch.

It is indicated that one of the goals is to maximize the federal-provincial co-operative initiatives on sustainable development, e.g., Green Plan initiatives. We all know that the Green Plan was released with much fanfare after much waiting by all Canadians, by the federal government. At the outset, I and other commentators, people who monitored the federal government's initiatives in the area of the environment were skeptical, and it has proven to be with good reason.

Can the minister indicate what projects are presently ongoing? What initiatives, in the words of the Estimates book itself, are presently ongoing in Manitoba under the Green Plan?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, the potential or actual applications for specific projects under the federal Green Plan, of course, not exclusive through my department, I cannot answer for what projects may be under consideration by different departments other than my own.

In the Department of Natural Resources, we are hopeful and preliminary discussions have indicated that we may well find some opportunity of developing pilot programs in the Forestry branch in co-operation with Abitibi-Price for different and more environmentally friendly methods of forest management, forest harvesting and forest activity, generally speaking, having consideration for multiple resource interests that abound in an area like that. By that I mean wildlife, recreation and so forth. There seems to have been some indication by the federal officials within Forestry Canada that Manitoba may well be able to avail itself of some specific funds under that announced program which at this point in time is still a little on the vague side in terms of hard and fast programs.

I am also aware that in our Fisheries and some of our waterways people, we are hopeful, and I happen to be aware that the federal Minister of Energy, Mr. Epp, has suggested that there may be some opportunities that Manitoba could avail itself to some of the study work done on the Assiniboine and Red River basins in terms of their improved quality and cleanup from an environmental point of view, and of course I have the additional immediate—well, I should not say immediate—concern, but concern

not that far over the horizon that could very well enable me to kind of piggyback or dovetail some of those kinds of studies that may be possible under the Green Plan to some of the kind of environmental work that will need to be done prior to any approval of any, say, further diversions of Assiniboine River water to accommodate the Pembina task force report.

We are aware that the department will face extensive and exhaustive environmental hearings before any decisions with respect to that further use and allocation of the Assiniboine waters will have to be undertaken.

Those studies are not, you know—somebody has to pay for them. If we can utilize some of the basic scientific biological data that Mr. Epp has suggested might be available to us under the Green Plan in a kind of more general study of the Red River basin and the Assiniboine basin, it is possible that some of that data could be of considerable help to us and/or indeed to the Pembina task force group that will be having to come up with some of these answers at future environmental hearings.

Mr. Edwards: I do not have a copy of the Green Plan in front of me, but it is my recollection that the Green Plan promised some \$5 billion or \$6 billion, I believe, investment by the federal government over five years, something like that in any event. That was some six months ago, I think, that the Green Plan was announced. Can the minister indicate whether or not, just so I can be perfectly clear, there are presently any federal-provincial co-operative Green Plan initiatives on sustainable development ongoing in Manitoba to his knowledge?

Mr. Enns: To my knowledge and within the area of my immediate jurisdiction within the Department of Natural Resources, there is no ongoing program currently availing itself of federal Green Plan monies. We have hopes of two areas in forestry and in the Red River and Assiniboine basin studies of perhaps tapping into some of that money some time in the future.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): The minister has indicated, and this government has over the years been committed to sustainable development. He talks about the development in the southern part of the province, the needs for water there, but there are also many people who make a living off the other natural resources, the forestry, the fishing and those types of things, and I

wonder is this government still committed to development of those parts?

Are we prepared to look at sustainable development, or is the whole round-table process just something you went through? If so, was the minister not concerned to have a cut of that amount taken from sustainable development, if this is really the route that his government is on? Are you really supporting the development or is it just lip service to those people?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, let me assure the honourable member for Swan River that the department and the government have every intention of, to the best of their ability, carrying out its mandate in all parts of the province.

I am pleased, for instance, that though we have had protracted and delayed discussions, we were among the first to successfully conclude another five-year forestry agreement, for instance, of some \$30 million, pretty well at the same level of the last agreement—I see a nod from my officials. I think it is in that area. It is a \$30 million agreement that certainly has important parts and details that she would be concerned with, coming from the constituency that she does.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Chairman, in the Chair)

This enables us to pretty well maintain the level of replantation in our reforestation program. This enables us to add further support to some of the hopes that we could perhaps introduce woodlot farming in other parts of the province other than in the traditional forested areas of this province.

* (2020)

In any event, the honourable member will have to acknowledge that in the particular areas that she mentioned, the Wildlife branch probably suffered the least of any reductions within the department. The major reductions, as has already been stated, have occurred in Water Resources, Engineering and Economics branch. I am aware that the honourable member is concerned about a dam and a project in her constituency, one that has been in the planning stage for some years, one that her brother did not just quite finish building, darn it all, but I am sure that if he would have been given another year or two, he would have had it built. It is one that Mr. Whitney, the director of Water Services, reminds me of from time to time that it is a worthwhile project. Now all you have to do is kind of get together a bit of an

association to help Harry Enns do the right thing and get me a few more dollars.

Madam Chairman: Item 3.(d) Sustainable Development—pass.

Resolution 106: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$333,200 for Natural Resources, Resource Support Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1992—pass.

Item 4. Water Resources 4.(a) Administration: 4.(a)(1) Salaries \$382,400.

Ms. Wowchuk: Since we are on Water Resources management and the minister brought up an area that is near and dear to my heart, I would like to pursue that a little bit further. First of all, in this area, the minister has mentioned that the Water Resources branch did suffer the most, and I have real difficulty with that when we get back to sustainable development and we need to control the drainage of water, something that previous governments have worked hard at, to get municipalities and towns to co-operate and do a systematic method of controlling water and drainage of water.

I believe it was coming under control but to have the resources in this department cut to the degree that they were, I believe is going backward. For an example, there are many, many drainage programs, two that I know of in particular in the R.M. of Minitonas that have been waiting to get their licences for some time, but there are such limited resources, such limited staff in the area that they cannot go ahead. What is going to happen is that municipalities are just going to get frustrated and go ahead and dig these ditches without the design, without the engineering that is required.

I ask the minister, is this what he really believes in, that the department was going in the wrong way, there is no need for these engineering services? Why were these services cut when on one hand the minister says he supports sustainable development and the control of the resources, management of water and then on the other hand, cut the very people who are needed, the engineers and the technical service that is needed to provide proper management and advice to the municipalities to carry through on this service?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I will not in each and every instance attempt to support or defend the reductions that this segment of my department had

to introduce. As I said earlier in my comments in the consideration of these Estimates, this group of public employees has been scaling down for a number of years. It can be argued, and I do not fault the member for the opposition for arguing, that the steps, the degree of the downsizing was extreme or more than correct. That is her prerogative to do so.

I am assured by senior staff that we maintain the capability of assuring Manitobans that in the first instance we have the capacity of providing for the maintenance and the operation of our basic infrastructure that has been built by this division over the last 30-35 odd years. By that I include all the major flood control structures including all the individual protection facilities, ring dikes that have been built around some 18, 19 Manitoba communities, along with the some 2,700—about 3,000 miles—of provincial water drains that are our responsibility. These are the major channels that have made possible for some 5 million to 6 million acres of prime agricultural land to be fully utilized for agricultural production, principally in the Red River Valley. There are other areas as well. That job has essentially been accomplished.

I am aware that there is, in the honourable member for Interlake's (Mr. Clif Evans) area, a project that we were pleased to start and have completed, first phase, the Washow Bay drainage improvement program. I am aware that there are no doubt some additional ones in the member for Swan River's (Ms. Wowchuk) area, although she did not make clear whether the specific drains that she was talking about were municipal drains that wanted to access a provincial drain.

If they were municipal drains that are wanting to access the provincial drains, I am advised, and I will so direct my director of Water Resources right now that there ought not to be any reason why we would not provide the necessary engineering and design advice to the municipalities, to the local government involved because, as I said earlier, we are concerned about maintaining the integrity of our system and would not allow random hitching onto the system without regard to capacity downstream, which could then hold the province liable to situations if we severely disrupt the operation of our provincial waterways.

If those are No. 2 order drains, whose total responsibility is the local municipal governments, but they are needing a knack, looking for engineering advice, I would ask her to make sure

that I am made aware of it, and I will see that they are attended to. That kind of capacity I have just broadly described is, I am assured, available to Manitobans and to local governments and will continue to be available.

I see one of our problems and one of our challenges in the department will be, there is a shifting emphasis on—people want to know a lot more about ground water supplies. They want to be a lot more sure about what we know about ground water supplies before we license people to draw water, to allocate water from those supplies, whether it is in the different aquifers in the country that have specific demands on them for down municipal or agricultural irrigation use. I can see in the future growth in this area of water-related activity in getting a much better handle on ground water supplies and its appropriate allocation.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would just like to let the minister know that there are municipalities, in particular the R.M. of Minitonas, that have been waiting for two years for a licence to add two drains. Now we have raised many times with the minister that there has been a shortage of staff in the Water Resources branch for Dauphin. There was an additional person who was supposed to be coming out. That position was cancelled in this last term.

* (2030)

I have raised this with the minister, and he says there are adequate staff. There is not. It is a frustration not only in the R.M. of Minitonas, it is within the LGD of Mountain. There are problems with getting licence. As I say, people are going to go ahead and dig these ditches without the licence, and that goes completely against what the government is talking about, about managing things. I will bring these specific cases to the minister's attention, but I know his staff has heard about them before.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I certainly undertake—and staff is here to note the request. Let me also indicate to her the fact that something does not happen within a year or two years or, indeed, as I am advised by staff, that this has a longer history than that, of three and four and five and six years. It may well underline the fact that there are some basic problems with respect to the resolution that, perhaps, the municipal council has come to, but one that is not being concurred in by the provincial authorities. I am not sure that is the

case, but I will undertake to look into the matter and have a more full report for her and invite her to inquire directly of Mr. Whitney as to where the matter stands.

I would not be adverse to having honourable members—while we are discussing this whole area much in the same way that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) suggested as we discussed Regional Services in its totality—be free to refer to pages 184 and 185 that have the capital that is associated with my program for the coming year. Regrettably, it will become evident to the honourable members when you consider that when I last was minister responsible for this department, that capital item was in the range of \$14 million to \$16 million. It used to be in the range of \$20 million and \$25 million. When honourable members now see what the capital allocation is, with the greatest of respect, there was just not that kind of work being done by government in this area that one could justify a continued level of staffing within the branch.

Ms. Wowchuk: If I could just ask clarification of the minister of what he just said. There was not enough work being done to justify that much money? I just would like clarification on what he has—why was there not work being done?

Mr. Enns: I am happy to clarify that. I am simply saying that relative to the capital budgets of the past when this item would have been in the order of 14 or 15 millions of dollars, and relative to what it is today and has been for the last several years, it ought to be understandable that there would be an accompanying reduction in the work force simply because there is not the money being allocated in capital projects for the work force to engage in.

I would like to take this opportunity, Madam Chairperson, to more formally introduce the Director of Water Services, Larry Whitney, who is the director of our board, and would encourage those honourable members who have specific problems in this area to feel free to make contact with his office from time to time.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister talked about money not being available to be spent on projects. That brings me to the one project that he brought up earlier. Earlier on he mentioned the development in southern Manitoba, the importance of water to continue with the Carnation plant and I believe that is very important, but there is a group of people in northern Manitoba along the Duck River who also

want to make a living and have to have their soil retained. They have been lobbying government, they have done all the work necessary. They have put the plans together, they have met all the environmental requirements and, of course, the minister knows I am talking about the Cowan Headwater Storage which he mentioned earlier.

Can the minister tell us if he is now prepared to put money into that headwater storage so that those people can continue to farm and preserve their land just as he is willing and very supportive of bringing water into the southern part of the province so that people can continue to grow potatoes for the Carnation plant? These people want to make a living too.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, firstly, let me indicate to you that we have listed on page 138 in the Expenditures Related to Capital, total program of some \$4,528,900. It is that figure that I alluded to just a few moments ago as being considerably reduced from what historically was spent in this area. The monies that we will be spending this year are essentially related to projects that are underway in different parts of the projects. The director of Water Services will be providing me with a list of projects of where this money is being incurred.

With respect to the particular project that the honourable member has on several occasions spoken to me about, the North Duck River dam, I acknowledge to her, even though I would have to find additional funds for our share, our real problem has been that we have to this day not been able to solicit a commitment from the federal government for their share of that project. Projects of this kind—we tried very hard several years ago, I am advised, when there were some monies that we had under the last of the Agri-Food Agreement, dollars that she may well be familiar with. I am sure the previous administration was in those agreements and in those negotiations. Those were the kind of monies that we were able to expend in the improvement of the reservoirs at Stephenfield, Jackson and one or two others, but we were not able to get a commitment from the federal government on the North Duck River dam. I solicit her support. He will perhaps have lunch some day with that genial Interlaker, the honourable member for Portage Marquette or Portage Selkirk. He raises hogs when he is not representing our good people in Ottawa—maybe along with Mr. Murphy from the North. There needs to be some encouragement on

our part to get the federal government interested in providing us with some monies for that kind of a structure.

I am advised, and I was advised from the first day that I came into the office, that from a technical point of view, it is a sound project. It has the appropriate cost benefit ratios, and there is not an unwillingness on the part of the province to proceed with that project. Understandably, we look to some participation usually at the level of 50-50 or 40-60 on the part of the federal government to help us with these kind of projects. That has been the level of participation on the others that I refer to, at least 50-50.

* (2040)

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chair, this department has been cut by almost \$3 million; 63 full-time jobs have been cut from this department. Here we hear the minister telling us that he is going to guarantee that the work and the water management end of things is going to be done; we will be helped out. He will assure that there are going to be engineers, and he is going to assure that there are going to be government people there to help municipalities, and such and such and such.

The jobs, Madam Chair, I am concerned about that I questioned the minister in the House just a few weeks ago and did not get a satisfactory answer, were the 50-some odd jobs in Surveys and Water Resources that are being cut down from a full-year term to a nine-month term, and part of the department that I feel, and hearing from them, they also feel, that this three-month layoff for 57 people does not really make any sense when there is lots of work that can be done, and work throughout the whole year.

This is not only going to affect them family-wise and economically-wise. We just may lose some of these 57 people out of province if they decide they can find something in full term in their capacity. What my concern is, as well as theirs—and part of it is the Washow Bay project that the minister had mentioned, and who stated that his government helped get Phase I through. I know that in speaking to the municipality, to the reeve and to the people in that area not only from his department, but from municipalities, that Phase II is pretty well ready to roll. During campaign, the Premier himself went up and took a look at the project with the people in question and stated that he would do what he could

to continue Washow Bay project and Phase II to continue, and I believe that it is about now that allocation of funding or the project for Phase II should be started or at least be into it already.

Can the minister tell me what are his plans for Washow Bay and has he got money allocated for it?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I want the honourable members to understand that because our program is not necessarily going forward this year, that does not mean that there is not a continued commitment on the part of this department, of this government, to at some point in time proceed with those programs.

What should become obvious, and what I am obviously aware of, working with the constraints, particularly in this division, is that I have to await better budgetary times, generally speaking, for this department, for this branch to receive the kind of additional dollars that we could well expend in different areas. There are not enough funds allocated in this department. The funds that have been allocated will be essentially to carry out and complete projects that we are currently involved in.

Phase I of the Washow Bay project was carried out to its completion. The project was designed in such a way that it had several phases to it, each phase having a further financial commitment involved with it both at the federal and provincial level. For the time being, I would have to indicate to the honourable member that there are no monies for Phase II of the Washow Bay project in the current Estimates before you. We are expending the last of some \$60,000 in the cleaning up of Phase I work on that project, but it will be my hope that when we get some more funds and we see a turnaround in the economy, this department will find the additional dollars to proceed with Phase II on projects such as the one that I know he is interested in. The project is a major one. We are talking about some \$3 million involved in that project and, for the time being, this government has not got the money to commence with that project.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chair, as I can well see, I have here a notice from the municipality that this same minister advised the delegation that he was going to have approximately \$400,000 to work with in this year's budget. Now he is telling me and he is telling them that there is no money, absolutely no money. My sense is that there is really no commitment to the rural people, and if he knew then,

why did he advise them then that there was? Why did the Premier himself advise the delegation when he went up in the airplane to see and to look at the project? Why did he not advise them then?

Granted the government was not in, as such, but the Premier stated that it was a very important project, and here the minister is telling me that there is no money, and this is what he is going to have to tell the delegation and the municipality of Bifrost and everybody in the Interlake who are involved in that.

Can I at least get a better commitment from the minister that he says, if the economics are better, and if this is better, and if that is better, then for the next budget a commitment for Washow Bay project will be put in place?

Can I hear that from the minister specifically, not just back and forth and perhaps, I would like to hear a commitment from the minister because—he laughs, he smirks. The fact is that the people here have asked this minister to go ahead with the project. This minister has told them that he is willing to do it, and he is willing to have the money put up front, the \$400,000. All I am asking is, if you are going to make a commitment, please put it on record that you are going to make a commitment, regardless, for the next budget.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I may smile occasionally, but I do not smirk. I want to put that on the record.

That is the problem. The honourable members ask for commitments regardless of what the economic or the budgetary situations are. I cannot make you that kind of a commitment. I do not know if 30 percent more of our residents buy all their goods and services in North Dakota and the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) revenues go down by 20 percent what further cuts will have to be made. I do not know. I cannot predict that. I am hopeful that is not the case.

I can tell the honourable member that at the time the commitment was made, at the time that I met with the delegation, we had every intention of phasing in Phase II with about a \$400,000 commitment on the part of the provincial government. We believed that was an achievable goal. It was certainly in the original draft Estimates that the department used in putting preliminary figures of this year's Estimates, but that was before the severity of the economic situation of the province was impressed upon us by Treasury Board and

before this department was asked to make the contribution and the depth of the contribution that it was asked to make in trying to achieve the overall government's objectives of being able to not affect any cuts on those prioritized areas of Government Services, Health, Education, Family Services and maintain an acceptable level in those areas, but certainly at a price in some other aspects of government.

* (2050)

To the honourable member directly, quite frankly, this is the contribution that the residents of your constituency are being asked to make in delaying this project at this time in the hopes that it can be picked up as soon as possible. Certainly, it is a project that is not unlike some other projects that sometimes are before government or before the department that are on people's or on a municipality's wish list of things that it would like to see done but have not convinced our own water people, our own engineers as to the advisability of doing them.

The Washow Bay project is not one of those projects, as I understand it. The advisability of otherwise moving forward with it is there. It is a matter of funds, and I again, as I will do repeatedly in these Estimates, every once in a while muscle your way past your frontbenchers and make this, make my Premier, make my colleagues aware of the importance of the Department of Natural Resources, and in these kinds of projects, to your constituents. It is not good enough to simply get one question in every two months on the subject of Natural Resources while the rest of the time it is spend, spend, spend more on social services.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I was interested to read in Saturday's Free Press an article about the residents of Langford and how they are more than a little upset at what they feel is the negligence of the minister and the department in allowing a depletion of the Assiniboine Delta Aquifer and in particular one of the local councillors, Mr. Briese, has indicated that certain wells on the fringe of the aquifer are in fact drying up and, at the same time, the government has lifted a moratorium on new irrigation wells, specifically, it appears, to serve the interests of the Carnation Company and the growing of potatoes.

Indeed, it is laudable to try and encourage companies to spend more, and the minister

indicates 20 percent growth over the next few years. Lots of jobs for potatoes and Carnation, and I think that is wonderful that they are going to invest in the province and they are going to create jobs and good jobs, and supply potatoes for McDonald's from coast to coast.

I also know that it is the consensus, and I believe it is accepted probably by this department, that the priority for water is people first, human consumption first, livestock second and irrigation third. That is my understanding and maybe I am wrong. Perhaps the minister can enlighten me, but if wells are drying up out on the outlying area of the aquifer, wells which serve people and livestock, and at the same time the farmers in Carberry are being allowed to further drain the aquifer for irrigation, that would seem to contradict that prioritization of use for that water. It is not an endless resource, and I would ask the minister to confirm what the priorities are for his department specific to the Assiniboine Delta Aquifer, whether or not there have been studies, investigations done and he is certain that the aquifer is not drying up such that the outlying regions that draw on it for human and livestock consumption are not being dried out. Can he tell me today that councillor Briese is wrong?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, the honourable member for St. James is a lawyer. I am not a lawyer, but he will understand that, you know, as a lay person I should not get myself involved in attempting to interpret law or pretend I am a lawyer. I have got two very fine engineers here in the person of Mr. Mital and Mr. Whitney, who tell me that Mr. Briese is wrong, who point out to me that the best information that we have on the Carberry-Assiniboine Aquifer that we have some—it is a major and wonderful resource. That resource has a sustainable yield of some 17,000 acre-feet. Only 6,000 acre-feet are being used for irrigation purposes of an annual average sustainable yield of 72,000.

I can understand the concern that anybody experiences when their wells drop or are drying up, but I am repeatedly advised by the capable engineering people in my department that irrigation is not the culprit, that it is the drought that is drying up and lowering the water tables in the areas that the honourable member refers to.

Over the last three years, only 10 percent of the annual sustainable yield on that particular aquifer has been allocated for irrigation—only 10 percent.

Now compare that, for instance, to a situation like the community of Winkler where my department had to authorize the drilling of three additional wells, and we are taking 130 percent. We are mining the aquifer there. We have no choice. It is that or turning off the taps in Winkler, period. We will be in a very serious situation in a short time. That is why we need to do something about what I mentioned earlier.

In the area that is being quoted by the local official there, Mr. Briese, we have an ongoing problem. I have attempted to resolve and bring better understanding, better communications, by setting up an advisory board on the aquifer. Regrettably, it has not lessened some of the emotions involving water. There are those who simply do not like the idea of water being used for irrigation, period.

The honourable member is absolutely correct in terms of the priorities that he stated. There is no question that domestic, municipal and then agriculture generally is maintained in a very rigid way. There are areas that we do not allow irrigation use of water where that does not fit into those priorities. In a situation where we have the two components of badly needed jobs and the opportunity in the plant to make use of the water, namely the Carnation plant, and we are only using 6 to 10 percent of the maximum of the sustainable yield. We feel justified in the policy that we have adopted.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, as the minister is aware, and he has referenced it before, this is an area of some controversy in southern Manitoba. I do not claim to be an expert on hydrology or water resources, generally, but I have had the occasion to read some of the comments that have been made in the local press, some of the statements made. I have spoken personally to Mr. Roth, I believe it is, the reeve of the local municipality south of here, as well as Bob Hudson, who is a very interested and active local resident down around the Stephenfield reservoir. They have provided me with literally volumes of information, which I must confess I have not read all of, everything back from—I think it was the Hespeler report. There are other documents which are out there and I have had a chance to look at.

* (2100)

In having gotten the commitment from the minister on the record that I have the priorities right, gives me

some confidence to ask him this question with respect to diversion from the Assiniboine River. Is the minister, today, committing that no water will be diverted from the Assiniboine River for a purpose other than human consumption or livestock consumption? That is, will there be any water diversion?

Is it contemplated that there will be water diversion from the Assiniboine River for the purposes of irrigation because, of course, the argument of those from whom the water will be diverted, as I understand it, is they would like it for irrigation. Most Manitobans in southern Manitoba would like to have water for irrigation. It is seen as a luxury of sorts. If one can put it in place, great, but we must be sure that the first two priorities are met first.

Can the minister enlighten me on what the purposes for the diversion from the Assiniboine River would be and, specifically, whether or not any water is contemplated to be diverted for the purpose of irrigation, because that is the suspicion of people like Bob Hudson and others in the area south of Winnipeg?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, allow me to be as precise as I can in responding to what is a very important issue and important question. I know it concerns a number of people in the affected areas.

Number 1, the study and the proposal that were provided to the government by the Pembina task force group, that has been alluded to on several occasions in this House, presented to myself and the federal minister in Morris some time in late February, calls for a diversion of some 20 cubic feet per second of water from the Assiniboine River to the Boyne River, and then to be pipelined to various communities. That proposal, with the price tag on it of some \$65 million, does not include any waters for irrigation. That is the report that is currently before the government. It has not been addressed by myself or by my government.

I am in the position of having staff react to that report. I am expecting recommendations from staff in the next relatively short period of time and, of course, I would have to involve caucus, cabinet, in terms of what may or may not become government policy. That is the status of the situation before.

I want to be specific on the point there that the study has been referred to, the study has been questioned, for instance, by my colleague, the

member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), the diversion that is being called for from the Assiniboine River does not include any irrigation waters. -(interjection)- I have not said that. You know, quite frankly, that poses problems for me because the member is quite right. I suspect that prior to any additional diversion of water from the Assiniboine, the existing users along the Assiniboine from Brandon down to Portage will be extremely concerned about any further diversions that they can only interpret as a net loss to them, even though engineering-wise, again we feel confident that we can provide the 20 cfs diversion and still provide adequate water levels for current levels of consumption by current users on the Assiniboine.

That does not resolve, other than the immediate domestic and municipal water requirements for those areas to the south, south central part of the province, the big question facing my department, quite frankly, facing this government, which is whether or not we wish to enhance that proposal to include an amount sufficient for some additional irrigation capacity of perhaps some 10,000 or 12,000 acre-feet, which would then enable us to meet some of those diversified agricultural opportunities that we know and believe are there, but of course that can only be done if I can enhance the overall water supply currently available to us in the Assiniboine.

There are several proposals that are being considered. There is an opportunity of enhancing the existing structure, the Shellmouth structure, that could provide additional water capacity for us. There are other more dynamic, more visionary, more long-term solutions to the problems. I am about ready to take off, but I am restraining myself.

The point of all of this is that the department is acutely aware, it is extremely sensitive to, even if on straight engineering advice, we feel that we can act on the report before us, that is, divert the 20 cfs knowing that there will be no irrigation component to it. It would certainly meet the next several decades, 30 years, 40 years needs, domestic and municipal only, for the communities down south central, Carman, Morden, Winkler, but I have trouble with entertaining a program even of that magnitude.

As I mentioned, the estimated figures are around \$65 million, possibly shared three ways: a third at the local government level in the distribution cost, a third at our level and perhaps a third at the federal

level. I am troubled at making a decision that would allow for that kind of a public expenditure and still not offer any long-term future to such industrial undertakings as Carnation and perhaps two or three others like it and the jobs that would come with it.

I am advised that we could create the equivalent of three or four Incos in that part of the province in terms of permanent job creations, and surely that has to be important to all of us. We are talking about the means of creating the kind of wealth to keep our government solvent, to keep our social programs funded, but we cannot deny that opportunity, particularly when we are doing it. We are reducing our exposure to the risk of ongoing difficulties in marketing cereal grains, because every acre that we take out of that crop, that now heavily subsidized crop, is an acre that taxpayers' money can go and be used elsewhere more productively.

I take the honourable member for St. James' (Mr. Edwards) interest in this matter seriously. I welcome it because, quite frankly, it will require a little laying aside of sometimes partisan issues that sometimes divide us, particularly on the sensitive issues that involve the environment. The politicians, regrettably, and it is to our shame, we ride the environmental issue all too often for political reasons and not always fully measuring the consequences of it in terms of the real needs of the people who we are all obligated to serve.

Quite frankly, I welcome this opportunity of suggesting to honourable members that they will be given an opportunity and it will be a very open, public situation. There is no question of the government arriving at a decision and building a structure, the honourable member knows better. We are now in the 1990s. We have environmental legislation, some of the most stringent in the country, to live with.

I am not fully cognizant of the different levels of whether or not this would be a level of a project that would involve the federal government in the environmental hearing process, but very likely, because we are dealing with a navigable stream, among other things. We are certainly dealing with a considerable amount of federal dollars. All of that will have to be laid before the general public at extensive and thorough environmental hearings prior to any final decisions by government that would be made. I will be interested in the conduct of the honourable members opposite and the parties, honourable members opposite, in responsibly trying

to arrive at the right decisions on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

* (2110)

Mr. Edwards: I appreciate the minister's candour in expressing what is obviously troubling him in terms of the future plans for the water diversion to southern Manitoba. The question I have, and it sounds like that is a decision that has already been made, I would not be asking—I realize there is no decision made as to whether or not to take the 20 cubic feet per second, but it sounds to me like that decision, in a sense, the decision to make some diversion has already been made.

The question which remains is: How big a diversion, and how to replenish that diversion to the Assiniboine? That is what I take from the minister's comments. My question is: Is it necessary for the promotion of industry, which we all want, of course, in this province, to divert the water south? In other words, if the water exists in the Assiniboine River, can it not be fed off in locations within reasonable proximity to that river, such that we do not have to go through the diversion project to attract industry down to the Morden-Winkler-Carman area? I am not saying anything against those areas. What I am saying is that the diversion of water will be very controversial, indeed, as the minister knows. He has spoken, I am sure, at length with the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) and others who are directly along the Assiniboine River. Is it necessary for the creation of that industry, the four Inco plants which we would all like to have in terms of employment and creation of wealth in this province to divert water?

Mr. Enns: I just want to come back to a point that the honourable member put on the record, and that is the assumption that a decision has been made.

I want to assure the honourable member that there has been no decision made in this respect. I do not hide from the honourable member my readiness and willingness to accept from the department a recommendation that will result in a decision. Then let me also put on the record that is now fundamentally different to the kind of decision-making process that occurred even a few short years ago.

A decision may well be made by myself and my department in the first instance to go along with a particular project, a diversion of waters from the Assiniboine River. That decision first of all, of

course, has to be supported by my colleagues. It has to become a governmental decision to examine. It is not in the sense of even a few years ago the kind of final government decision. After all, that is what we have environmental legislation for and the statutes.

I can guarantee the honourable member that there will be no commitment of funds, no tendering of contracts or anything else like that, until a licence is achieved for the project. Quite frankly, if the licence is not achievable, then the decision is null and void. That is now the process that we are under. That is a change, quite frankly. I think that is a change that has long been pressed upon governments to undertake that it ought not to be left solely at the will and direction of a proposing department to move ahead.

The Department of Highways should not just be able to build a highway through a particular area because it wants to build a highway. It has to take into consideration wildlife consideration. It has to take into consideration other environmental factors before they can do that.

We find ourselves in much the same situation, particularly with the decisions as sensitive as the use, the allocation or the diversion of water. I do not want to be in any way anything less than candid and absolutely clear about the process. There will be a decision made sooner or later by this department to carry forward for further consideration a recommendation that will either be the recommendation of the acceptance of the report as has been provided to us by the Pembina task force or some revised version of it, enhancement of it, if you like.

Then we would have to prepare ourselves. Prepare the kind of data and expend the kind of money on making sure that data is available, so that an appropriate environmental hearing would have to be undertaken, as my colleague the Minister of Energy and Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Neufeld) will experience over the next 20 months. Extensive and exhaustive hearings are going to be taking place with respect to Hydro's plans for the construction of the Conawapa power station.

That is the process, and that is the process we will be following.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister might just comment on my question,

specifically, whether or not there has been any investigation as to whether or not that industrial growth could be achieved without the diversion of water from the Assiniboine River. That is, is it possible that that same growth could be achieved without the necessity of taking water from the Assiniboine further south? Because if so, it would seem that we do not need to entertain that question the minister posed as to whether or not we need to go beyond the 20 cfs which are required for the human consumption and municipal use and that kind of stuff, if in fact we can achieve the same industrial growth in just a different locale within the province.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, there are a number of issues and problems that are faced by those communities that have a serious water problem. Allow me to cite the Winkler example again which I have already alluded to. We are mining the aquifer that is currently supplying the progressive and aggressive community of Winkler. We are taking more water out of the aquifer than is being recharged naturally, and we are running out of time quite frankly. So that community needs to have water brought to it. By pipeline, by somehow, it has to be brought to it as economically as possible.

Certainly there is a relationship to the use, the marriage of arable land with the application of water through irrigation that again demands that the water be brought to proximity of the land. Again, you can do only so much in piping, and certainly it would be at non-acceptable costs to begin piping water for irrigation use, so we are looking at replenishing or providing for substantial reservoirs which channels of water could be diverted into, from which irrigators could access water from. Not all of the water, not all of the augmented water that in my judgment should be made available in the Assiniboine would be diverted south, and that is in fact very much part of the—well, Madam Chairman, you see, that is my trouble.

You know, I always fall into the traps of dealing with honourable members on a straightforward and candid basis. Here I am discussing some inner strategy of my thinking on this matter. How I am going to work some of the political problems that I have within my own shop, within my own caucus, and before I know it I forget that I am talking to a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, or a member of the Liberal Party. Nonetheless I will carry on in that vein because he has an honest face.

It should be easily understood to honourable members, and I think it is a very legitimate position for the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) to take, to be extremely defensive when he speaks on behalf of his constituents, that, before a drop of water is diverted south anywhere out of the immediate area of use for his constituents and his progressive community of Portage la Prairie, he is going to be adamant that that is not done at their expense. So some of the augmented water that I think is capable of being provided to the Assiniboine has to be there for the use, not to be diverted, there for possible expansion.

One hopes perhaps that some day there will be a new owner found for the now empty and defunct Campbell Soup plant that once employed a goodly number of people in the Portage area, that provided primary producers with an outlet for their vegetable produce often off of irrigated acres within the immediate Portage area.

I certainly do not want to preclude both potential for Mr. Connery's constituents, the member for Portage's constituents and the Portage area. There are a number of options that have to be considered, but I suggest to the honourable member before a great deal can be done there has to be some serious thought given to how one can augment the water currently available in the Assiniboine River to begin with.

* (2120)

Mr. Edwards: I will not belabour this area, but it is very interesting to me to hear the minister speak, and I appreciate his candour. I want to ask specifically in this area and finally on this topic when the minister anticipates coming to the political decision, which is the first step, everyone understands it and I certainly understand it is only the first step, and as we go through an environmental process it may in fact become null and void.

The first step, the catalyst for the whole process, has to be a political decision. It is a decision which is not without risks. Obviously, the minister would be well aware of that, of course, and I am sure that will enter into the mix because it is bound to draw the ire of a lot of people.

Water is an extremely valuable resource to anyone who, and the minister well knows, is in the agricultural industry or indeed lives in rural Manitoba at all. I think we tend to take it for granted in the city,

turn on our hose whenever we feel like it and water the lawn as much as we want. It may add up the bill a bit, but it is always there and we take it for granted.

I think I have had the advantage, even though I am certainly an urbanite now, of growing up in rural environs. In fact in southwestern Saskatchewan, which is probably not unlike southern Manitoba, people were always concerned about where the water was coming from and always concerned about whether or not there would be enough even for the primary purposes, let alone any irrigation purposes. It is a very, very dry area in southwestern Saskatchewan.

In any event, when does the minister anticipate making that political decision and what is the process that is leading him to that decision? If it is an internal process, which he does not feel he can divulge, fair enough, but what is the timing that the minister is looking at in terms of making that initial step with respect to what diversion will be made, if any, from the Assiniboine River? Indeed, in the larger picture, what additional waters will be channelled into the Assiniboine River if any?

Mr. Enns: The honourable member is quite correct. We understand each other about the capacity of arousing emotions when dealing with water. The saying that I have before me is probably also correct: water ain't for using, it is for fighting over. I think J. R. Whitney, that well-known literary scribe from Arizona, said that many years ago when the first irrigation wells were dug somewhere in the southwest. It will be interesting to see how that reads in Hansard tomorrow.

I expect, Madam Chairperson, to be making some of those initial decisions within the department relatively shortly. We are well aware that the calendar of events is building for our friends on the environmental side, having a number of very major issues being put on their plate. It is in my interest. Certainly, in speaking for the 15 communities that participate in the Pembina task force report, they are anxiously awaiting at least the initial steps to be taken which would enable environmental hearings to begin. So there is some urgency from my part.

I have asked my officials to have a decision or have a recommendation for me that I can begin to discuss with my colleagues within the month. It would be my hope that perhaps during the course of the summer months, we can firm up further decisions as to modifications of the report that we

have received. The enhancement—I cannot really speculate on what that will be at this time, but it is my goal to be in a position to be able to have some firm define a project that could be submitted for environmental hearings, hopefully commencing late fall or the coming winter months for their consideration.

Mr. Edwards: How many positions of the 231 that were cut came from the Water Resources branch?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, honourable members will appreciate that among the reorganization, the engineering construction division was brought together with the water resources group headed by Mr. Whitney. So I will give him the figures that are kind of inclusive of those two organizations.

There were, in fact, some 36 positions reduced out of Winnipeg involving engineers, technicians and clerical, all from within the city of Winnipeg. There were an additional five positions, I might add, before somebody asks me. These positions had been indicated as candidates for decentralization in the communities of Lundar, Niverville, Roblin, Altona—again, engineers and technicians that were dropped from the department.

In addition to that, I gave you the first breakdown of 36 Winnipeg positions. Now there are 12 rural positions that were cut in the communities of Neepawa which suffered a reduction of five; McCreary, three; Dauphin, two; Minitonas, one; Beausejour, one. Then there were a number of positions, 59 positions, located in numerous areas where there was a reduction on the work schedule from 12 months to nine months that amounted to a further 15 positions or a total of 68 positions that were deleted from the combined Engineering and Construction Water Resources branch.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, on a final note in this area for me, because time is racing on, the minister signed an Order-in-Council dated March 20, 1991, which allocated certain funds out of the Special Conservation Fund. The Special Conservation Fund, as the minister knows and recounts in his Order-in-Council, is to make grants to nongovernment organizations and groups for projects which foster and promote the principles of sustainable development at the local level. The one grant which interested me was No. 9 on attachment (a) to that Order-in-Council to the Pembina Valley Irrigation Association for the construction of

irrigation water storage facilities. There was a \$15,000 grant given to them.

Madam Chairperson, given the grave environmental concerns of rural Manitobans all over the province over water diversion for the purposes of irrigation, including the concerns of the member for Portage la Prairie, why has the minister undercut those environmental studies by, in effect, promoting irrigation and approving and paying for further irrigation facilities through this grant? How does that square or how did that come within the criteria of fostering and promoting the principles of sustainable development at the local level?

* (2130)

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I am more than pleased to provide some further information with respect to this particular grant. It happens to provide a group of young and energetic farmers in the Winkler area who, I might say, are faced with a question of losing valuable contracts because they cannot irrigate.

They came to the department with a novel idea of capturing some of the runoff water, in dugouts, that flows through the area in the spring. These are relatively small, on-site, on private land holdings, the kind of water use, I might say, that is probably the most benign or the most acceptable. It is when we as a province allocate ground water sources for irrigation that there is a greater concern, and understandably so, from surrounding areas and other users as to whether or not that is appropriate use, but one can hardly argue, in my judgment—and I was prepared to underwrite a small measure of this program.

There is a group of a dozen or so potato farmers in the Winkler area who petitioned a fund for accessing this fund in this way, that enables them, certainly from a sustainable point of view, to maintain a diversified form of agriculture using water that is surplus and running off through their district. I have not had an opportunity to discuss with staff, but it is my understanding that they had made some application to be able to tap into or pump out of some of our provincial waterways, which are running water in the spring, for only a short period of time, mind you, but before this water all gets away and out of the area, they tap some of that water into these private man-made kind of dugouts on their property, and it provides them for limited irrigation on their immediate land, farm. The dugouts generally run

dry by about mid-August or even before, the director advises me, but it has served the purpose.

These were experiments, if you like, in seeing to what extent that kind of usage of surplus and surface water could be used. Quite frankly, if that could be utilized in a greater way, then perhaps the other kind of major projects, diversions of major waterways, would not be necessary.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I feel obliged to comment that it strikes me that may be a very valid allocation of funds and a very valid goal of those energetic farmers in that area, but I query whether or not it should be a grant out of the Special Conservation Fund.

Madam Chairperson, the word "conservation" denotes preservation, denotes enhancement of natural resources, and if you look at the other grants that were given, that is borne out. There is a construction of portable fry-rearing pens for fish futures. There is riverbank clean up. There is an enhancement of forest firefighting capability for the Booster Lake Cottage Owners' Association. There are buildings to hatch and brood Bohemian pheasants given to the Hartney Game and Fish Association, all promotion of the natural resources, not promotion of economic viability of any particular industry.

That may well be a valid purpose, but not out of a conservation fund. The word "conservation" surely denotes something other than the promotion of economic activity, even if it is benign towards the environment, even if it does not adversely affect the environment, which is what the minister seems to be saying: That is not a major problem; they were taking water away which was environmentally benign; it was not a hazard.

Surely conservation speaks towards enhancement, preservation, conservation of the natural environment, and almost every other grant given here fits within that criteria. The construction of irrigation water storage facilities, as the minister describes it, does not, patently does not, it would be my suggestion. What we do not want are economic stimulation funds going out under the head of special conservation funds. Surely there is a distinction to be drawn.

I do not say that there should not be some economic stimulation funds available. They are already there. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) amongst others, has

programs available, funds available. There is an Environmental Innovations Fund available for those in the environmental area who want to make innovative moves.

To have as the primary goal of a grant out of the Conservation Fund the enhancement of an economic activity does not seem to me to be consistent with the principles of that fund and even as described in the Order-in-Council here. Can the minister comment on what he sees as the goals of the Conservation Fund and whether or not he sees this Conservation Fund, as clearly he does—and I guess I am just asking for a confirmation of that—also being available not specifically for conservation or enhancement of natural resources but available for the enhancement of economic activity?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, sustainable development means that development is still possible, but in a manner not injurious to our environment. What better way to intercept a little bit of fresh water on its rushing headlong into the salt waters of Churchill, to capture it into a potato, to send it to Carnation and provide 450 jobs, and then to experience that great cultural experience of all Canadians and dine out at McDonald's and eat the french fries there that provide for greater development—surely sustainable development as it can only be practised by our potato farmers in Winkler.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I hardly know how to respond to that. Actually it is with some regret on a personal note that I mentioned to the minister that in fact it appears to be quite a cultural thing to go to McDonald's and my children, pretty well the first words they learned were McDonald's. It was a great shock and concern to me, but that seems to be the way of the world these days.

In any event, whether or not that is a good thing or not, we agree that Carnation creating jobs is a good thing. I have already said that. It is a good thing. I am happy that they are going to invest in the province.

I would like to know the environmental cost of diverting water in order to appease them and have them come here. The question I pose to the minister is whether or not the Conservation Fund is open for applications from those seeking economic advantage as a primary goal for themselves or for others or for their community, and the only sustainable development criteria being that it is not

a damage to the environment, that is, it does not necessarily have to promote or enhance the natural environment, it just has to be benign and economic advantage can be the key criteria for the allocation of the grant, because that appears to be the criteria that would have been used to approve this irrigation water storage facility.

I might also add, perhaps would be the criteria used for the construction of a boat launch for the Deloraine Game and Fish club. I am not sure how a boat launch adds to the conservation of our natural resources. I am sure that they are going to make great use of that boat launch. The Deloraine Game and Fish club, I am not sure, should have received \$3,500 out of this fund for that purpose. It does not seem to me to have a heck of a lot to do with conservation. Maybe the minister can enlighten me on that.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I appreciate that, as one certainly expects, any expenditure of public funds will come under an appropriate and proper scrutiny by members opposite. I am confident that the projects listed that the honourable member is reading from meet the kind of criteria that we established for ourselves for the eligibility for these funds.

There are several other criteria that the honourable member has not alluded to. He has correctly read the preamble of the importance of the conservation aspect of it, sustainability of it, but we also look very much to the opportunity of using these funds to allow the different volunteer organizations throughout the province who often come to the department, come to some of our officials, some of our Wildlife people, and say they would like to undertake some. They would like to get in on the business of helping out in some small way in their immediate area to improve a local situation, environmentally speaking, conservationist speaking.

* (2140)

So it was on that kind of a situation where the department, as a result of, quite frankly, some initiatives taken by my own branch, in the Wildlife branch, that I had spent a pleasant hour or two in the Narcisse area at the snake dens, where we gave a local association, a group of concerned citizens who were concerned about the amount of harvesting, amount of illegal picking of snakes and selling them that was taking place that led this

minister in the first instance to place a moratorium on that activity. Then to be persuaded by that group and along with officials from the department that a relatively small grant would go a long way, and with local labour to provide a more protected environment for these, what have now really become internationally renowned snake dens as a result of these stories that have been published about them in such magazines as the *Geographic*.

I was very proud of the allocations of funds, relatively modest, what they parlayed that into. So in many cases, in reference there to a boat launch for Deloraine community, it may well have been part of a general renovation, reclaiming if you like, of a recreational area. I know that maybe next year the honourable member will note that I provided a similar grant to one of the service clubs along the Red River where they want to enhance some portion of the river frontage. That includes enabling some of the seniors from a nearby senior citizens home to be able to enjoy the riverfront, enjoy on a fine summer's evening to be able to walk down, perhaps sit down on a few benches and enjoy the natural environment and splendor.

Madam Chairman, that may or may not from time to time be stretching the bounds of the criteria that we ourselves established for ourselves in the allocation of funds, but I am aware that whenever that happens some member will stand up and draw that to the attention of myself and/or indeed to the general public, and I will be held accountable for it.

I am satisfied that that is one of the sunshine parts of my department. Any one of my branches could use all of the half a million dollars that were provided to us in this, for very legitimate programming of their own. I do not dispute that, but the decision of government was that we wanted to apply these monies wherever possible in connection with community efforts and volunteer efforts, very often, to make a \$10,000 grant into a \$20,000 or \$30,000 or \$40,000 project because this was used as seed money under which a support group, a volunteer group would hold walkathons and would hold raffles, or would raise some other monies.

That is precisely what has happened. This half million dollars has, in fact, generated considerably more in actual program expenditure in a wide variety of projects covering the length and breadth of this province, from improving spawning grounds on a creek, a tributary to Paint Lake in Thompson, to the building of small water retention dams in the

Deerwood soil and conservation area, to the boat launch in Deloraine and to the snake pits of Narcisse.

Madam Chairman: Item 4.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$115,500—pass.

Item 4.(b) Water Licensing and Approvals: (1) Salaries \$450,300—pass; 4.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$33,000—pass.

Item 4.(c) Water Management: (1) Salaries \$2,245,700—pass; 4.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$264,000—pass; 4.(c)(3) Waterway Maintenance \$3,867,600—pass; 4.(c)(4) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$55,000—pass.

Item 4.(d) Hydrotechnical Services: (1) Salaries \$947,800—pass; 4.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$835,300—pass.

Item 4.(e) Regional Management: (1) Salaries \$3,275,800—pass; 4.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$1,007,600—pass; 4.(e)(3) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$260,000—pass.

Resolution 107: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,110,000 for Natural Resources, Water Resources, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1992—pass.

Item 5. Parks (a) Administration: 5.(a)(1) Salaries \$666,300.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, we have just heard a lot about how important the potatoes are for southern Manitoba. Something that is really important to northern Manitoba is tourism, and when we get tourists in northern Manitoba they have to make use of our parks. I am quite concerned with the number of people who have been cut from the Parks staff, and concerned as to what the conditions of these parks are going to be. Are they going to be retained in a state that will be suitable enough for our tourists to come back to them? Because there is a shortage of staff, particularly in the far North, in the Lynn Lake area and Flin Flon, Leaf Rapids, those areas, I understand there has been quite a bit of staff cutting. Have there been any studies done to look at the effects of these cuts as to the quality of the parks that will be retained, and as to what impact this is going to have on our tourist industry?

Has the department looked at all at the safety aspect of it? We hear about the tourist season and the long weekends where enforcements have to be brought in to control rowdiness and that type of

thing. Has the department looked at that area? What is going to happen to tourism? Is tourism going to go downhill, because the Parks staff is not there to maintain the quality? If the minister could tell us how many people have been cut from Parks staff, the people who will be maintaining them.

In his opinion, was this a good move to reduce the number of people on staff when tourists are the ones who use these parks the most? Tourism is something that this government, I hope, is trying to promote, so that people from out of the country, from throughout Manitoba, can enjoy the beautiful resources that we have throughout rural Manitoba, particularly in the North. Those staff people are particularly in the northern part of the province where, I believe, the cuts are the most severe. I would like the minister's opinion as to whether this was a good move and what he thinks the impacts will be.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, the member asked me a question whether this was a good move or whether it was not. I do not want to repeat myself, but let me indicate that certainly my Parks Director, who I am pleased to introduce: Mr. Gordon Prouse, who has joined us, and Mr. Harvey Boyle, who had been with us previously, is here again in his role as the Director of Regional Services. The two are intertwined in the sense that Regional Services provides many of the services in the parks under the direction of Mr. Prouse.

* (2150)

Certainly, the case can always be made that with additional staff we can provide a better and a higher degree of maintenance and service throughout our park system. Our park system is being taxed. The plant is growing old. We have difficulty in maintaining the level of maintenance throughout the system. By that I mean just the regular painting, repair and renovations that are required, plus the kind of ongoing request that we have in different areas for improved facilities, better showers, better washroom facilities to those that are existing. We do the best we can.

The very simple fact of the matter is that this branch suffered the same general reductions in staffing positions that they were asked to come up with as a result of the dollars that were being allocated for the operation of Parks this year.

I can give the honourable member the figures as to how the branch was impacted. In the head office

operation there were some 10 positions reduced, three clerical and seven technical. I would take it that those positions were mainly out of the Winnipeg office. In the operations end of it, there were some 61 positions affected. In addition to that, beach patrol was cut back to only the high, intensively used areas such as Grand Beach, and that is it, I think, just at Grand Beach.

Departmentally, there were an additional 53 staff positions affected. The total number of staff positions impacted were some 146, if I read this right. That again has a considerable amount to do with work reductions from 12 months to nine months which make up some of this figure. Total number of staff positions given up by Parks, though not necessarily entirely but by the work reduction from 12 months to nine months, was 71 positions.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you for that information on the number of positions that had been reduced and I still reiterate that I am concerned. I asked the minister's opinion on how valuable he thinks tourism is to Manitoba, whether it is an industry that is worth saving and what impact these cuts to the Parks area are going to have.

Were there any studies done to look at this before these cuts were made or was it just a fait accompli, these positions were going to go no matter what impact it had on the industry and also the safety aspect of it? There is a safety concern in many parks and these are the people who I believe will be there first hand to help the people or deal with problems. Have you looked at the impact on the industry?

Mr. Enns: I am aware of it, yes.

Ms. Wowchuk: You are sure of it?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, let me reiterate what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), indeed the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and others, have said on a number of occasions.

There was a fundamentally different approach taken to the development of our Estimates this year. Certainly neither the Minister of Finance nor any of the government ministers are in any way attempting to confuse or cloud the issue. It was not a question of taking a study and deciding what we would like to do or indeed what would be nice to have and then see how much money it would take to do it. It was the stark realization of how much money the government had to spend that made the decisions. These are the effects that we are faced with in

respect to how best we can carry on in the operation of our Parks system.

I am satisfied that in many instances we will have to find, and are looking, about ways of how we can improve what we are doing. There has been a general, I suppose, criticism made, particularly within—not just within the Parks branch but in general services provided by my department that we have reacted all too often with trying to spread ourselves too thin and subsequently not doing as well as we could in those areas that we have prioritized and identified. That has been some of the situations that Parks branch has faced in the maintenance and the operation of a number of smaller facilities scattered throughout the province, including the North. Certainly some of those, as has been started, quite frankly, when the previous administration was in office—I looked to divestiture of some of these facilities, seeking out opportunities where either individuals or community-based organizations could, in many instances, and were willing to take over the responsibility of a wayside park or a camping facility and be able to put more resources into it than we were able to from within the Parks branch.

We have the additional responsibilities of and the primary responsibilities of ensuring that our major facilities, whether it is Bird's Hill, whether it is Whiteshell, whether it is Spruce Woods, are maintained and operated at a certain level. When the community of Cranberry Portage came to us a year and a half ago, and said, you know, we could do a better job at operating the camping facility that you have in our community. Why do you not give it to us and let us operate it? Parks officials sat down with them. There were some negotiations taking place about some equipment that they wanted to retain for themselves. They wanted an appropriate lease arrangement that gave them security.

I had members of the Cranberry Portage council in my office just a little while ago on another matter. I took the occasion to ask them, how is the facility? How is the campground operating? They were very pleased with it. Their visitations are up. They were able to throw some additional monies in that we would not have found within the priorities of our own department to help improve, help paint, and help fix up some of the facilities. They probably had available more protracted hours and staff to receive visitors. I do not know. Whatever the occasions were, it worked very well.

The important element is that the facility be maintained for the use of tourists, for the use of visitors to the province, as well as local residents and that opportunity not be lost to Manitobans.

The member has asked several times, what do I regard about tourism? Of course, it is important. It is an extremely important income earner for the province and for many individuals who thrive in the tourist industry in the province of Manitoba, not just in the North but throughout Manitoba. It would be my hope that we will continue to place every emphasis on visitor services and visitor comfort.

It would be of interest to honourable members to note that we have upwards between five and six million visitations to our Parks system during the course of a year, and these people need to be looked after. They need and they demand clean washrooms and other facilities. Certainly, I could always use more resources to do a better job of it, but I am satisfied that by concentrating on what we are doing, we can accomplish the job to the best of our ability.

It is certainly my hope—you know, I lose no opportunity. I take the opportunity right now to impress upon my colleagues, those of them that are here, that the plant is aging and some catchup funding will have to be found in the future. We hope that some of these reductions that the department has suffered this year will be re-examined in future budgets.

Indeed, I think that is the position of both the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of the province. In fact, that is the general attitude of this government. We believe what we are doing has to be done for this time, that is, commensurate with our capability of paying with what our income situation is. Certainly, I would like to hold out to my Parks branch that when the income situation improves in the province, we will be able to share in some of those improved revenues to carry out some of the needed renovations and works in our Parks system.

* (2200)

Ms. Wowchuk: Just going back on what the minister said, he had indicated that we have many parks and we are spreading ourselves too thin looking after them. Is it the minister's agenda to get rid of these parks, to privatize them and let them go from the Department of Natural Resources and not

provide tourists with Manitoba parks to come to when they come to our province?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I do not accept the wording used "get rid of." What I am certainly prepared to do, as in fact was entertained as a policy by the government that was run by the party that she is now part of, we will and we have been directed by Treasury Board to examine those opportunities that may come up and exist where some of these facilities—wayside rest stops, camping facilities—lend themselves to divestiture to either organizations, community groups, perhaps former, past, and present employees who wish to consider taking some on, yes, and outright privatization.

That is a policy that is in place by the department and will be carried out, but in a very controlled way with the criteria being that the facility contained to be there provide a level of service hopefully as good as my expectations, very often better than is currently being made available. That is not meant as a criticism to my Parks employees.

I know what kinds of resources they have available to them, to supervise, to look after some of these facilities. Very often one or two employees have to travel a 30, 40, 50 mile radius looking after two or three campsites and only getting there at each one every second or third day, whereas an individual, a family, a community that makes it their business, is there virtually on a 24-hour basis.

We have a situation at the Lynch's Point, for instance, where we have for many years a kind of family compact. We have had the father working there, the wife working there and a son working there, I understand. They have expressed an interest in taking over that operation. They would like to move what they would call a little bit of an office in the facility. The young son, I believe is married, would live on the facility. That would mean that somebody would be in that facility 24 hours a day accepting late night visitors and things like that, which my Parks officials cannot be expected to do. Furthermore, they would be prepared, if they had a private interest in it, to spend the \$25,000, or \$30,000, or \$50,000 or \$100,000 to improve the facility.

The facility, for instance, that we privatized last year, just west of Portage, Norquay Park, they are now talking about putting in a major swimming pool in that area, which certainly will be a comfort and a relief to the tired traveller when he pulls off the

Trans-Canada after coming from dusty Moose Jaw or Swift Current and he pulls into a fine facility that he can rest up before he tackles the traffic of this metropolitan centre of Winnipeg.

Mr. Cliff Evans: I would like to ask the minister what the policies are within the Parks branch. I have a notice here that people in this constituency are under the understanding that there would be no development of any kind within the boundaries of the Grass River wilderness park. Can the minister enlighten this House on the proposed project and development there?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I can certainly forward to the honourable member the management plan, setting out the conditions of operations for the Grass River Provincial Park, and there are very specific zones indicated that allow for development, that allow for mining, that allow mineral extraction, that allow for logging. Members should not confuse, you know, these kinds of situations. It is a clearly designated zone within the park that allows for that kind of activity to take place under the current management regime, a regime, by the way, that certainly six years, seven years of the New Democratic Party government did nothing to alter, or in fact may have even been established during their period of office.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I assume that we are asking any and all questions in the Parks area under this heading.

Madam Chairperson, the minister received a letter very recently from the Royal Life Saving Society of Canada, and we were fortunate enough to be provided with a copy of that letter. It had to do with the elimination of the beach safety officer program at six of Manitoba's beaches.

What struck me about this correspondence was that the last paragraph recognized the fiscal restraint the government is under, and I think that the minister appreciates that, I am sure, when people write in and say, we recognize times are tough, we are not just asking for money, we recognize that there has to be some cutting back, and then said: We would be willing to meet with you and/or your representatives to discuss alternative solutions to this issue. Could there be any more responsible approach to a deletion of a program than that? Here are some interested people who want to sit down with the minister and presumably have some alternative solutions to deal with the

problem and have, in the prior sense, recognized the fiscal restraints of government.

Has the minister sat down with them, given that we are into the season when the beaches are open and are going to be increasingly used, as we move into the summer months when the children are out of school? It would seem prudent and wise for this minister to sit down with this group immediately. Has he done so or has he made arrangements to do so given that he received this correspondence some three weeks ago?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, allow me to take this opportunity, and I will come directly to the member for St. James' answer, but, you know, I am aware that the removal of what we call the beach patrols from different facilities has caused some concern by honourable members. It has, indeed, from different members of the public. I acknowledge having received a number of letters on this issue, but it is a difficulty, you know, that the department has always had.

I do not want to say too much about an incident where we had an unfortunate drowning last year. That is a matter that is going to be dealt with in the courts. In fact, the department is being sued, as honourable members may know, but there is this whole question of providing, we call them beach patrols, the general public likes to consider or regard—calls them lifeguards. In a natural park setting, at Grand Beach for instance, on a July 1 long weekend we have a dozen or so lifeguards on two miles of beach with 35,000 people on it, hardly can be construed the kind of lifeguarding that people assume in a kind of a more supervised, constrained area of a pool area in a hotel or another facility. That is one of the problems with the definition of the use.

Other jurisdictions have recognized that. For instance, in B.C., all swimming areas are simply buoyed well, signed and totally unsupervised with no services provided.

In Alberta, lifeguard services are provided only in one park, one of their intensive-use parks. I assume it is something perhaps similar to our Grand Beach situation, which we continue to service.

In Saskatchewan, lifeguard services were removed in the mid-'70s. All beaches are simply signed as being unsupervised. Select beaches offer swimming lessons, emergency response and public safety information on water safety.

The Ontario beach patrol program is offered at only one high-use beach, just in the proximity of Toronto. All other beaches are simply signed as unsupervised.

* (2210)

In the Riding Mountain National Park, lifeguard services were terminated this year. The main beach is posted, again, as unsupervised. This has been done, not just because of overall government restraints, not just in this jurisdiction but across the country, but also partly because of the concern that we have had. It is a safety concern, that the mere presence of a beach patrol gives some people the impression that there are full lifeguarding services available, that parents can leave children unattended because there is somebody on the patrol. Well, that is not fair to the kind of beach patrol that we can provide.

You cannot equate lifeguarding, say at Sargent Park Pool, where you have a controlled area and you have five lifeguards sitting on towers being able to supervise and know at all times who is swimming in clear water that they can see to the bottom from the surface, to somebody sitting back even on a tower on a beach at West Hawk or at Grand Beach trying to exercise some supervision over hundreds and thousands of beach users.

In the minds of some people, we were providing lifeguard services. In fact, that is some of the criticism in the court case that the department will face. We went through a lengthy inquest on the question about where were the lifeguards when this unfortunate incident took place. So there is a deliberate attempt obviously made by jurisdictions, not just our parks jurisdiction but throughout the country, to avoid leaving the impression of false security, by removing and making it clearly known to the general public, who may use the beaches from time to time, that they are unsupervised and that supervision of particularly young children is very much the responsibility of the persons who bring the children to the beach.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister might answer the specific question with respect to the Royal Life Saving Society of Canada, whether or not he has met with them, whether or not he intends to meet with them. As I say, they say they have alternative solutions. I am sure he would be interested to hear them. I certainly would.

Mr. Enns: I apologize. I inadvertently forgot to address that specific question. Yes, I am very much aware of the organization that he refers to. They have written to us. They, along with the Canadian Red Cross, have participated with our people in developing different swimming information and construction programs from time to time on some of our beaches. I would certainly like to explore with them whether or not there is an opportunity for having that organization provide some kind of service of the kind they would be capable of, is one that I am quite prepared to examine.

It goes without saying that there would be some dollars involved, but I am prepared—in fact I have asked senior department people to possibly examine whether or not they could provide, or whether or not we could develop, some kind of a program, but bearing in mind that we are not desirous of again getting into the lifeguarding business. That would be our fear if we simply kind of contracted out to them those responsibilities that our beach patrol had.

I will certainly undertake to further investigate the matter of involving these two very worthwhile organizations, particularly the Royal Life Saving group, whether or not they can be helpful to us in offering some of their services to users, particularly in the high-use season when our children are out of school enjoying the beaches of our parks, and I will undertake to do that.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response. I trust that he will be meeting with this group soon, if he has not already, because clearly they appear to have quite responsibly come forward. They do mention, as I say, alternative solutions and so perhaps that is what they are talking about, about what the minister suggests. I am sure he will want to find out.

Next, I was speaking earlier with the minister about a grant which was given out of the Conservation Fund for the construction of a dock at Deloraine.

I also received correspondence, as did the minister some time ago—this was back in March of this year—outlining the grave concerns that cottagers on the Big Whiteshell Lake had. I do not want to belabour this point, but I received quite a lengthy letter from people who have been on that lake for sometime, in fact 27 years, and they have always enjoyed the use of a public dock.

Apparently, last year that dock was removed. It was deteriorating and a new dock was not built. They are suggesting, in lieu of the construction of a new dock, perhaps some alternative solutions which appear pretty minimal and reasonable, given that there are back tier lots which do not have direct access to a waterfront or are not on a waterfront.

What arrangements has the department made to deal with concerns of these people who purchase these cottages clearly on the understanding that there was a public dock available, and to suddenly have the existing dock removed after all of those years, with no alternatives put forward, whether it be clearing some of the boulders from the beach area so the people could at least beach boats or whatever? Has there been any discussion with the cottagers on this lake and any solution achieved?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, the honourable member touches on a point that sometimes involves me in some of my more serious disagreements or discussions with senior members of my staff. A dock, like the one in question, gets damaged with age and maybe ice, and then a recommendation comes that it is no longer fit for use. It is dangerous and could put the department in a libelous situation. The member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) would know what that is all about in this litigious age that we live in.

Regrettably, I look at it or a bridge that spans a particular archway over to other campgrounds, and I kind of press my people, is that bridge really not safe anymore? Is that dock really not usable anymore? Again, we have a unit. We have a group that assesses risk. We have to be cognizant of the fact that, through the department, the general taxpaying public exposes itself to serious financial liability should people injure themselves on structures that we allow them to use and have public access to, perhaps knowing and having on our files somewhere an engineering study or a document saying that facility should be taken down, that facility should be roped off or that facility should be removed entirely so as to avoid any possibility of that kind of liability.

That was the situation that happened to the dock that the honourable member refers to at the Big Whiteshell. I have a brother on that lake and he, in a very personal and direct way, reminded me of the removal of that dock and what some of the residents in the cottages in that area felt about that move. I am advised by my deputy that staff has met with a

group of concerned cottagers on the Big Whiteshell, that it is fiscally not possible to replace the older structure, the substantial structure that was there, but we are certainly prepared to entertain some alternative that may be within the budget capabilities of the branch to still provide some kind of docking facilities with the members. That meeting just took place in the last week or so, and we are hopeful that some resolutions of the problem will take place fairly soon.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I certainly hope that some solution can be worked out with these cottagers. They ask, if nothing more can be achieved in respect to the dock, simply to have an allocation of an adequate boulder-free piece of land within reasonable proximity to their cottages for the dockage of their boats. It seems to be a reasonable request and would not require any fiscal expenditure to provide that.

* (2220)

In any event, moving on, Madam Chairperson, I want to raise one other issue with the minister on this Parks area and that is correspondence which I again received and the minister received back in February from the Winnipeg Cycle Touring Club. They pointed out some interesting things about group use of our parks and compared it to some other jurisdictions, most notably the United States.

We did not come out looking that good, at least in their eyes. One of the things they indicated is that group use, we charge \$7 per tent. In fact, you get far less services on those group use sites than you do on the private sites where you pay \$7 per site and you may put up two tents. So in fact you would appear to be paying more for the group use which does not make a lot of sense given that you do not have access to anywhere near the same facilities that you do on some of the personal private sites.

Secondly, and perhaps the minister can address both of these concerns in his response, they also raised the question of the lack of policy regarding which groups or organizations must pay for the use of the group use facilities and which do not. There apparently has been a practice of exempting some nonprofit groups. I understand that is over.

Are there any exceptions to that or do certain groups get nonprofit status and some exemption from the fees, or is that practice over? Perhaps the minister can enlighten me on that.

Mr. Enns: To answer the honourable member's last question first, I am advised by my Parks director that there are some, not very many, exemptions still made to nonprofit organizations when they make a special appeal, but I am told that practice is declining.

I would have to say to the honourable member that certainly our regime of fees and charges is open to scrutiny and comparison at all times. It is surprising the number of people who will take the time to write the minister directly a note saying they have just come through from a trip from so and so, and they will let me know whether they think our charges or our services are in step or out of step. I have to accept the member's and the letter statements as to what they experienced in other jurisdictions. I assume them to be in the United States.

I will ask Parks officials to examine that particular aspect whether or not if you take on a site rather than a group use one and can put two or three tents on it, that is one way of getting a tent up for \$2 or \$3 versus paying the \$7 the other way. That seems to be somewhat skewed, but I do not have any immediate answer for him other than the fact that the sites obviously were used for the more serious and permanent campers coming on to camp for awhile, whereas the group use areas were specifically designed just for the casual attending.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I just have one issue that I want to ask the minister about. There is concern that things that were acceptable in terms of environmental destruction awhile ago are becoming less and less acceptable. One of the areas of concern related to parks is that deforestation is affecting parks in Manitoba. I know that there is an agreement with Repap which takes in some one-fifth of the province, and that there are a number of provincial parks and national parks in that area, and that those parks are going to be subject to some clear cutting, some logging.

One of the things that is also happening is that, even though there may be agreements with Repap to stay away from the parks, some of the smaller logging companies are, as they see it, being forced into the parks. I would ask the minister what kinds of agreements are being made between the department and the various logging companies to ensure that Manitoba's park lands are protected?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I am well aware that attitudes are forever changing, as they should in society, generally speaking. What was an acceptable practice 10 years ago, 20 years ago or today may not be viewed as acceptable practice tomorrow or in the coming years. In Manitoba, we have had a moderate recognition of certain continued resource use within our park system. Not all park systems—we have, I suppose, the one principal park, the Atikaki park, where the designation is such that resource extraction including lumbering and logging is not permitted in that million-acre park facility. However, in other facilities, limited and controlled harvesting of trees is permitted.

I would have to say, Madam Chairperson, that it was permitted in such a way that it has not disturbed the general public's use and enjoyment of the parks as a recreational resource, as an esthetically pleasing place to spend some time in. The honourable members—you know, the practice of clear cutting certainly would not be entertained or be acceptable to any park's situation in the province.

The honourable member asked me, how can I ascertain that is the case? She simply has to accept what has, in fact, been the practice, not just by this minister, but by previous ministers, by previous administrations that have had that same policy in effect over the years.

As I said at the outset in response to her, there is in this government, and my department is acutely aware of, a very marked increased concern and awareness about how parks generally are managed and are going to be managed in the future. This aspect certainly is a major part of that concern. I do not know whether the member was in the Chamber when I indicated earlier that steps have been taken, that there will be a major review of Parks issues commencing, hopefully, I cannot be too clear about the dates this fall and into early winter, that will involve these very kinds of questions about the level of development, nondevelopment, the level of resource extraction that should or should not be allowed within our Parks system.

I am asking the officials to, at the same time, incorporate our opportunities of how we can respond to our commitment to the Endangered Spaces Program because there are some instances in some regions of the province that would fall within that program, where if we further designated a portion that currently is parkland as part of the

Endangered Spaces Program, that, of course, would afford it still greater protection by such designation.

This review is going to be an extensive one. As I say, I anticipate that we may be in the position and involve a considerable amount of public consultation. I am hopeful that that can commence in the fall and, perhaps, into early winter. The goal is that it would lead to an entirely new and modern Parks Act for Manitoba.

Madam Chairman: Item 5.(a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$666,300—pass; 5.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$197,600—pass.

5.(b) Park Planning: (1) Salaries \$515,500—pass; 5.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$216,400—pass.

5.(c) Technical Services: (1) Salaries \$121,100—pass; 5.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$24,800—pass.

5.(d) Parks Operations and Maintenance: (1) Salaries \$7,744,400—pass; 5.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$2,880,100—pass.

5.(e) Visitor Services: (1) Salaries \$392,600—pass; 5.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$76,900—pass.

5.(f) Grant Assistance \$130,000—pass

5.(g) Regional Park Management: (1) Salaries \$327,100—pass.

5.(g)(2) Other Expenditures \$69,000.

* (2230)

Ms. Cerilli: I just thought of another question. I would like to ask the minister to perhaps table or send me a document without going into a lot of detail right now, maybe to give a general answer now. I would like to get a sense of what kind of herbicide and pesticide spraying is done in provincial parks in Manitoba.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I would certainly undertake to provide that information to the honourable member. The information that the Parks director has just informed me now is that a great deal of that comes now under the jurisdiction of the Environment. It is consistent with what is currently licensed under The Environment Act, but in terms of the actual chemicals that are used, I will ask the Regional Services parks people to provide that information to me and provide that to the honourable member. I am assuming she is asking

the types of chemicals in use and possible areas where the application takes place from time to time?

Ms. Cerilli: To further clarify, I am also interested in finding out who is doing the spraying, if it is being done by Government Services or if it is being contracted out, a report on that as well.

Mr. Enns: Yes, Madam Chairman, we will undertake to provide that information to the honourable member.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just have one further question, as well, before we are done with the Parks branch and that is, the minister had indicated that if you want something done, it is very important to lobby and get your message to the minister. I know that the group from the south part of Duck Mountain has been wanting to get electricity into that area for a long time. They have lobbied the minister—(interjection)—yes, the Blue Lake area and Singush Lake area. Can the minister inform us at what stage that is at and whether these people can expect electricity within the very near future, within the next year or so?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I am aware of the request. I am aware it is of some long standing. It awaits some action on the part of the branch at such time that we have some more funds available. It is just a matter of funds being made available to the department to carry out some of these requests.

Madam Chairman: 5.(g)(2) Other Expenditures \$69,000—pass.

Resolution 108: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,361,800 for Natural Resources, Parks, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1992—pass.

6. Lands (a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$149,100—pass; 6.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$26,000—pass.

6.(b) Crown Lands Administration: (1) Salaries \$695,200—pass; 6.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$181,800—pass.

6.(c) Regional Management: (1) Salaries \$331,800—pass; 6.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$87,100—pass.

6.(d) Crown Lands Registry: (1) Salaries \$285,400—pass; 6.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$166,900—pass.

Resolution 109.

Mr. Enns: Not to delay my Estimates, but I would like to just put on the public record the appreciation on the part of certainly myself and my government and that of many Manitobans for the long, dedicated services of one Mr. Bob Winstone, who a short time ago took retirement. Mr. Winstone served the province in many different capacities, originally in the Department of Agriculture, but for the last number of years as director of our Lands branch. We wish him well in his retirement.

Mr. Ross Thomasson is with us and is obviously managing the branch very well. If we do not have any burning questions to ask of Lands branch—thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Resolution 109: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,923,300 for Natural Resources, Lands for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1992—pass.

Item 7. Forestry (a) Administration: 7.(a)(1) Salaries \$245,400.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chair, just a few questions on this department. The Interlake Loggers Association had been dealing with the minister's office and also with the Forestry department regarding requests to have better communication between the Forestry department and their organization.

I had written the minister a letter, copying the director and the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) on this. They had quite a few concerns. I do not have the letter right now, but they had quite a few concerns in the way they felt the area was being handled by the Forestry department as far as their quotas and as far as being able to have investigations and inspections out in the cutting areas that were allotted to them, and with the forest fire of '89 they have great concern. The Interlake Loggers Association has great concern as to being able to harvest proper, good quality wood for their livelihoods, for their businesses.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Can the minister tell me what he and his director have done in accordance to help the Interlake Loggers Association with their problem?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, I certainly recall meeting with the individuals described by the honourable member for the Interlake.

Mr. Acting Chairman, and you, sir, are aware of some of the ongoing difficulties that individuals have, quota holders have in respect to arranging their affairs in such a way that suits them. There are, of course, conflicts. There are obligations that the department has to the resource in the first instance in its allocation procedure. There are contracts and obligations that we have to other users very often in the same area. I know that that particularly sometimes gets difficult to resolve when there is a principal user in the area, or several principal users in the area, that for one reason or another—sometimes it is because we, as a branch, are pressured by my colleague the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) who, wishing to promote economic development in the province, asks our department to allocate to a particular operator, such as the Palliser people, considerable quantities of wood. That then sometimes makes it more difficult for my department to respond to the many individual and other quota holders in the area.

* (2240)

Much the same situation exists in the north Interlake. There have been some changes as a result of some of the southern lands that have come into the Repap agreement, although not specifically in the area that the honourable member is talking about.

We have other management concerns that are brought upon the branch as a result of such things as the terrible experience that we have had with the fires. We are certainly, from a resource management point of view, wanting to ensure maximum salvage of burnt out timber areas, so we tend to deny some of the green cutting rights. Something like that, where, when and if salvage timber is available, we try to work out arrangements with individual quota holders that takes into account—of course, this wood is available to them for considerably less dollars than is the green standing wood.

I have asked Forestry to address some of these issues. Some of the issues we simply will not—some of the particular complaints that the members had were that they felt that there was an overzealous degree of inspection or of policing on the part of some of the Forestry people, that they were being unduly harsh in determining what constitutes waste and whether they were keeping within the letter of the regulations as prescribed

under The Forest Act. Those were some of the common complaints that the honourable members brought to me. I continue to meet with those people from time to time. They were in not so long ago with some further issues. I will do my best to try to work out a co-operative arrangement with them.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Acting Chairman, I think that I would like to clarify one of the issues that the quota holders did have, and that was the unavailability of getting the inspections out when the quota holders had completed their area of cut. Their concern was that some of them would have to wait until the inspector was available as such, or was able to come out as such, instead of being when they were ready and done with their quota for that area. They had to wait for the department to come down and inspect the area. I think that is one of the areas, besides the normal and usual complaints that they may have had.

Their concern was they were finishing up, and having staff sitting around doing nothing or sending them home waiting for the inspectors to come by and say, yes, everything is fine and dandy, go ahead to this area or to that area. This is one of their major complaints. Is the minister's department doing something about that?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, we certainly are attentive to whenever these kind of issues are raised. I have to indicate to the honourable members that there are numerous responsibilities that he is assigned to, staff, forestry. Again, like other divisions within the overall branch, it has received less staff, not more staff, and they are asked to do a great number of things.

The practice has been to try to carry out these kind of field inspections with respect to quota areas that have been harvested on their kind of routine calls within the area. I will ask the staff to make note of this specific concern again raised by my friend the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) and make doubly sure that we try to improve our time in terms of responding to that kind of a specific request.

Mr. Clif Evans: With the Repap situation—and Repap will have a fair area within the Interlake—I would like to ask the minister whether the cutting rights and the contracting out will be done by Repap? Will they have a choice of who they contract to work for the cutting or will the local quota holders be able to get first bid or be able to bid on it,

what is the process? Will the quota holders within the area be able to bid for the jobs?

Mr. Enns: One of the benefits, of course, of being an independent private quota holder is that you can sell to anybody you choose. The fact of the matter is that many of them have found firms like Repap or Abitibi in the eastern portion of the province very, very acceptable and steady market opportunities for their products.

In addition to that, I can assure the honourable member that I have had several discussions with the senior management people at Repap, and they are more than anxious to work with, in a co-operative way, the independent quota holders, in whatever area they have to deal with them.

I appreciate that there is an adjustment, particularly in the Repap cutting area, for many independent quota holders to make. It has worked itself somewhat differently in the eastern portion of the province with our other major forestry operation, the Abitibi people. They have already been there for a longer period of time and everybody seems to know how the system works.

There is also this situation—I think it is fair to comment on it—that for many years the forestry operation in The Pas, of course, was a government-run operation, and the fact that that is now in the hands of a private corporation, it takes some adjustment that individual quota holders, who perhaps felt a little easier than dealing with government and/or a government-run operation, now are not quite as willing to work with Repap in some of these situations.

I am advised by Repap that they are under corporate instructions, if you like, to do everything possible to come to satisfactory working arrangements with respect to supply, with respect to being able to bid on contracts for supply by the existing quota holders in any given area.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Chairman, the forestry industry, the logging industry is very important to the Parkland area. As the member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans) has indicated, the situation is that many small operators are operating in the area. These operators have managed the forest very well, doing selective cutting and providing a lot of jobs for the area.

One operator who has been brought to the minister's attention by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) is Mr. Britcher. Mr. Britcher has been a

long-time operator and is now in danger of closing down because he cannot get the required amount of quota. Has the minister looked into this situation? Is the Britcher case going to be addressed in such a way that he can continue to operate and provide employment in that part of the province?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, it is, in my judgment, very much a decision that Mr. Britcher will have to arrive at on his own. There is nothing preventing him from buying a product within the area. I am well aware that he has provided a sound, moderate-sized business operation for a number of years. I am certainly prepared to acknowledge the importance of his operation in that area.

* (2250)

I am also aware, as previous administrations and ministers were aware, that the question of further allocation is a difficult one for the department to address inasmuch as the Britcher family, of course, gave up certain quotas, sold quotas that they at one time had. They were called Dominion timber berth rights that they chose to give up for whatever reason.

Again, you know in some of these situations—I have met with another major operator a little further north but also in the Parkland area that knows of the Prendville people that harvest selected timber for mainly post, wood and logging production. I am not satisfied that everything has been done to sit down in this instance with the Repap people and arrive at a satisfactory agreement.

I am advised by my Forestry branch that Repap is quite amenable to providing the kind of timber that the Prendville operators are seeking. I am now putting the two together, and I am hopeful that they will be able to work out within themselves a satisfactory agreement, a five-year agreement, that gives them some security of supply, that satisfies the Prendville people who employ upwards to 200 people, not just in that operation, but in Neepawa in their wood preserving plant. They have a lathe and lattice plant here in Winnipeg that employs people, along with the people that they employ at The Pas, because that is important to us.

I have not given up, let me put it this way, on the idea of coming to some arrangement that would see the Britcher operation be able to continue operating.

Ms. Wowchuk: I appreciate that because I think that it is a very important operation, as are small operations. I know that Mr. Britcher did, for

whatever reason, let his quota go or sold it off. In hindsight it was not a good decision, but there are jobs that are at stake. Maybe he was ill advised in his sale, whatever it was. But in the interest of time, I will not go into specific other cases because I have a few other small operators who are concerned that I would like to bring to the minister's attention.

One of the things that is a concern is small operators in the area are having a bit of a runaround as to who is really in charge. Is it Repap that is in control of the quota right now? Is it still Natural Resources that is in charge? They are told to go to Repap and then Repap does not have the licensing. What is the status? Who is in control of that area at this time of allocating quota and areas where people will be cutting? Is it Natural Resources or Repap?

Mr. Enns: It has been obvious to me by some of the information, letters that I have received from that area, and that is what I alluded to, that there has been some difficulty in this transition period. It is our intention, and quite frankly under the agreement we have, to ensure that Repap interests are not compromised in the allocation within their overall cutting rights. Very often that is done along with the advice and assistance of our department.

It is in our department, our Forestry department, that will in the final analysis be responsible for the supervision and/or inspection or regulation or indeed settling disputes as they may well occur from time to time. That quite frankly, and I acknowledge it to the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), is not functioning as smoothly as it should. She is correct in bringing it to my attention.

I am happy that the senior people in my department are hearing it directly from her, but to answer the question specifically in the region that she speaks of—and I had Mr. Jonas in my office some three or four weeks. He is the operating general manager—I do not know exactly what his title is—general manager of the woods operation, and we discussed at some length this very issue with him.

You see, it is important to me as a member of this government, it is important to me as a politician, that the relationship between Repap and the independent, private quota holders is an acceptable one, is working. I made that very plain to Mr. Jonas and he indicated to me that there is no reason why it ought not to work. In fact several meetings have been taking place in the last little while with our

Director of Forestry, Mr. Dave Rannard, who unavoidably is not with us today. He is out of the city and could not anticipate the progress we are making on my Estimates and be back for it tonight.

Ms. Cerilli: I am wanting to ask some questions with regard to the approach that is being taken with this government and Repap in dealing with the logging of Manitoba's forests. The more I learn about this issue, the more I cannot believe the rush that this government seems to be in to go ahead with the deforestation of Manitoba.

The first question I want to ask the minister has to do with the awareness and research that is going into learning more about what we are doing before we move even further into clearing the forests in Manitoba. We know that the number of trees that are being cut down far exceeds the number of trees that are being replanted. We know that there is extensive flooding and erosion that occurs from the cutting down of forests in Manitoba. We know that we are destroying a number of plant ecosystems and wildlife ecosystems. Animal habitat is destroyed which affects the wildlife in the area. We know that deforestation increases the greenhouse effect and increases the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

I would ask the minister what kind of research is his department doing to make sure that we know what we are doing in the province? What kind of research is being conducted in co-operation with the logging and forestry companies that have the rights now to so much of the province? What kind of agreements have been made so that we can ensure that there is some kind of planning and research before deforestation continues?

Mr. Enns: One is tempted, and certainly I am tempted, because I would dearly love to debate some of the issues that the honourable member raises. Whether or not there is global warming taking place is, for instance, very much a question of debate, not scientific fact, but I will not avail myself of that opportunity. That is not myself saying it, that is noted climatologists like Professor Ball at the university saying that. There were a number of assumptions thrown into the honourable member's questions, and I simply want to put on the record that my not immediately responding to them does not involve acceptance of them.

Forestry Canada will conduct forestry research to improve the success of forest management

activities and will ensure that the latest forest technology is explained and delivered to the forest community.

* (2300)

The department will also expand its programming to assist Indian bands and private wood lot owners to improve forest practices and expand benefits from their forest lands. I am reading from an extraction of part of the arrangement that involves federal Canada in our new forestry agreement that determines the kind of management practices over the next five years.

Most importantly, Mr. Acting Chairman, is that by coincidence of their licences running out and the application renewal at the same time, both of the major forestry operations in Manitoba, Abitibi-Price and Repap, are scheduled for extensive, intensive environment hearings—Repap for the purpose, of course, of examining their application for the Phase II expansion of their project at The Pas involving quite a change from what is currently taking place at Repap with their mill, changing of the mill to a fine paper mill to a bleached product which will raise all the environmental questions that I know the honourable member is concerned about.

Abitibi-Price, because they are in the process of applying to us, the Department of Natural Resources for another five-year forestry management program, now fall under the new and enhanced environmental laws, by the way, which never happened under previous administrations, never happened certainly under NDP administration. The forestry operations in Manitoba were totally ignored, environmentally speaking, by the NDP administration, but this government will force upon those companies and pose on those companies the most stringent set of environmental hearings that they have ever gone through.

So I am not going to take up members of the committee's time at this time, but simply to say that it is my understanding now that a framework and a panel has in fact been struck for the other important environmental hearings that will be taking place in the province involving the Conawapa Hydro generation stations, that we will be directing our attention to setting up yet another panel and situation to hear the applications of both Abitibi-Price and, of course, the Repap proposal in what I am sure will be lengthy, extensive and thorough examination of forestry practices in

Manitoba, at which time certainly the honourable member and other members that express similar concern will have every opportunity to express these concerns.

As a matter of fact, they are going to have something more because of the progressive nature of this government. They are, for the first time, going to have available to them intervenor funding which they never had before, so that we will ensure that those who have a concern about this not only have the opportunity, the rights, the privileges to examine at great length, they in fact will have the money to hire experts, to fly down to Chicago and find out what is happening in forestry production down there. They will be able to bring them up here at public expense, Mr. Acting Chairman. That is because this government cares about what happens to our resources.

Ms. CerlIII: Mr. Acting Chair, I appreciate that the minister will keep his answers as brief as possible and to the point so that we can all go home at the most reasonable hour possible. Thank you.

I am concerned about the way that the yearly cuts for logging in the province are determined. Can the minister explain what research is done before this maximum yearly cut is determined? What environmental considerations are taken into account before that is determined? Generally, what is done before that is determined and, for this year, what area in the province is up for cutting?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Chairman, the member really and truly is challenging me. She asks me questions of such a broad nature, and then at the same time tells me that I have to reply with one- or two-word answers. That truly is a challenging task.

I can only say that we do have fairly sophisticated inventory information available to us that is worked in with the requirements of the user of the forestry operations. We know where the mature forest stands are. We have to dovetail that in with my colleague the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) in terms of his capacity of providing or helping to assist access roads, if called upon under the agreement, or indeed whether the private company is providing those access roads, but it is not possible for me to, other than in this general way, respond to that kind of a question.

Again, and it is not copping out of providing her with more detailed information at this time. It really

is a fact though that this is precisely some of the detailed kind of information that is currently being readied for public presentation to the environmental hearings that I referred to and alluded to just a few moments ago.

(Madam Chairman in the Chair)

Ms. CerlIII: I would be interested to know if this process has changed over the years as well. I am open to getting any kind of report the minister can send my way, but I am interested in finding out if there are plans to change that process since there is some research going on right now. What are the changes going to be in determining what will be the yearly maximum cut, given our rapid and increasing awareness of problems with deforestation and our increased environmental awareness?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, we authorize the cutting of mature wood based on the calculated inventory in a given area. We base our allowable cut again on the premise of overall sustainability. That is why in Manitoba often the case is made that, particularly, for instance, with the cutting area that was granted to the Repap operation, when they say we have given such a big portion of the province away, a fifth of the province's land mass to one company. That is very true, but why was it done? To answer her concerns, to answer the concerns of people like her, to ensure that we were not raping the forests, that we were not deforesting northern Manitoba. We were ensuring that the operation at The Pas can be sustainably harvested in such a manner that a hundred years from now the same amount of forest is standing. The only difference is that it is likely to be better forest. That is why the large land mass area—if we were asking a mill producing 500 tons of pulp and employing 500, 600, 700 people to operate in the Porcupine mountains, well, of course, we would denude that in a very short order. Five years, 10 years later, there would not be a tree standing in the area and you would have a desert, but not in the way it is being operated.

Again, I am quite prepared to argue with the honourable members, but I do not think it is the time and place in the course of these Estimates—simply to say again, and I will repeat again, she should prepare herself and she, I am sure, will listen with interest to what takes place at the hearings that I have alluded to now on several occasions.

Ms. CerlIII: Madam Chair, we have a lot of trees to plant, a lot of forests to grow back if we are going to catch up.

I have two other areas I want to address. One is again related to the negotiations with Repap. I was trying to see if there are any negotiations with Repap to ensure that there is research, but I am wondering, when the agreement was made with Repap, was the issue of recycling addressed? Was there any discussion of Repap being involved in ensuring that wastepaper from Manitoba would be able to be recycled in Manitoba, because Repap would have a responsibility to help pay for and supply that kind of machinery and facilities?

* (2310)

Mr. Enns: I can tell the honourable member that the Repap operation is involved in the recycling and reclaiming of paper. They are currently utilizing a significant portion of it, not just from Manitoba but including, I am told, from some of the immediate northern states like North Dakota, and some from Saskatchewan. They are in the process of making a difficult decision, whether they should go to that further, more expensive step, which would be a de-inking process which enabled them to recycle considerably more. There is a limit of unde-inked salvage paper that they can use in their current production methods. If they wish to expand that, then they have to make a corporate decision to invest considerably more dollars.

I am not aware of any conditions, with respect to recycling, attached to the Repap contract or sale. I was not, quite frankly, party to the negotiations of that sale. The member would have to ask perhaps more directly the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), who was the lead minister in bringing about the sale, if there were specific conditions of this nature attached. I am not aware of any existing obligation on Repap with respect to recycling.

Ms. CerlIII: I would hope the minister would agree, that kind of an agreement, as we turn over the cutting rights, that we would have an opportunity to have the industry have some responsibility in recycling, and that would be something that would happen in the future.

With respect to the Repap deal, can the minister tell the committee the amount of loan guarantees, the amount of tax credits, the amount of grants to Repap that were part of the agreement? How much

public money is going to Repap to help finance its cutting down of trees in Manitoba?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, neither I nor my officials have that kind of financial and fiscal information. That is properly housed in the Department of Finance. I would invite the honourable member to ask those questions of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) during the examination of his Estimates, or indeed in the course of the ordinary Question Period in the House, although I appreciate that may not always be as accessible to ask a series of questions that you would like to ask.

Not to avoid the question, it is just that the Department of Natural Resources as such does not have that information either at the official levels and neither do I possess it.

Madam Chairman: Item 7.(a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$245,400—pass; 7.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$5,000—pass; 7.(a)(3) Grant Assistance \$26,000—pass.

7.(b) Forest Management: (1) Salaries \$663,300—pass; 7.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$150,300—pass.

7.(c) Silviculture: (1) Salaries \$886,100—pass; 7.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$2,971,500—pass.

7.(d) Forest Protection: (1) Salaries \$613,400.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I want to ask the minister about Dutch elm disease and his intentions with respect to the control and elimination of that disease in Manitoba. Can he give members an update on what the programs will be this year, what cuts have affected the Dutch elm disease initiatives and generally what he feels the prognosis is for the control and elimination of this disease in Manitoba?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I am pleased to provide some additional information with respect to the Dutch Elm Disease program.

Firstly, let me put it on the record that the program has for a number of years been funded through the City of Winnipeg at a level of \$350,000. I acknowledged, my department and this government, partly because of the additional stress that the trees were facing as a result of the three or four years of drought, that we should double that increase last year to \$700,000, which was done.

It is with some regret, but also some knowledgeable advice from people involved in the

maintenance of the city forest program and general tree protection program that it follows, that with the return to somewhat normal in terms of moisture, some of the stress has been relieved on the trees. The program coming back to its original level of funding of \$350,000 is not enough, but certainly will enable the program of the City of Winnipeg to carry out a pretty respectable control program with respect to Dutch elm disease.

Again, Madam Chairperson, this is the kind of program that I certainly would expect to keep a sharp eye on. If budget and economic situations allow, it would well be my intention to review in the coming year to see if we could not re-establish it at a higher level. What the reduction has been is simply to the level that it has consistently been throughout the Pawley years, for instance, of around \$350,000.

In rural Manitoba, there has been some reduction in terms of the expenditures as well. A number of letters have gone out to the rural municipalities that indicate a similar reduction in the overall monies available to them for this program.

Mr. Edwards: Can the minister indicate how many of the rural cost-sharing communities have been cut from the Dutch elm disease program?

Mr. Enns: Staff advise me that we could perhaps provide that for him. They do not have it available with them right here partly as a result of Mr. Rannard not being with us, our chief Forestry person.

Madam Chairman: Item 7.(d) Forest Protection: (1) Salaries \$613,400—pass; 7.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$1,277,800—pass.

7.(e) Forest Operations: (1) Salaries \$1,056,100—pass; 7.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$262,800—pass.

7.(f) Canada-Manitoba Partnership Agreement in Forestry: 7.(f)(2) Other Expenditures \$2,750,500—pass.

Resolution 110: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,908,200 for Natural Resources, Forestry, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1992—pass.

Item 8. Fisheries (a) Administration (1).

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chairman, I just have one or two questions on the Fisheries department. Of course, I would like to get back to our favourite topic that has been discussed, debated here in the House

now since budget day, and I just wanted to make some comments on the minister's comments that he made last week regarding the subsidies and the importance that this subsidy, the cut in it, has resulted in many of the fishermen in Lake Winnipeg and throughout the North going through some tough times with this cut.

It may not seem like a lot to the minister's department in putting a ceiling of \$250,000 and cutting about \$110,000 to it, but it has left a lot of fishermen not knowing exactly what they are going to be doing when it comes to the whitefish industry. I am just wondering and would like the minister to tell this House. He told me about a month ago, I guess, that he was going to be going to Ottawa to discuss with the minister in Ottawa and to see whether the minister there would assist the province with some funds to be able to help this freight assistance for the fishermen. Then I find out just last week that he says, again, he is going. Now it has been at least a good month that he said he was going to go.

* (2320)

I would like to know exactly when the minister is going and, given the fact that he may be unsuccessful with this minister, will he then consider finding the funding within his department and helping these fishermen? I am sure he has been lobbied, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has been lobbied, to get the full amount of the subsidy back into that department. Will the minister tell me exactly when he is going and what exactly will he do if he is unsuccessful in Ottawa in receiving any assistance?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I want to clearly indicate that I am only too well aware that while the overall sum of money in global terms does not appear to be all that much, it is extremely significant to the fishermen involved. I am very mindful of the difficulties that the whitefish fishermen, particularly in the northern part of Lake Winnipeg operating out of Gimli, what they are facing.

Coincidentally, I have just today sent a formal request letter to the new Minister of Fisheries, the Honourable Mr. Crosbie. The honourable member will recall, since the first time I spoke to him, there has been a change in ministers. Mr. Crosbie was a newly appointed Fisheries minister. I have had difficulty, quite frankly, in making satisfactory arrangements in meeting with him. I do not know

whether I will be successful. I think it is worthwhile making an attempt.

I regard fishermen the same way as primary producers, that grain farmers are in. When Ottawa recognizes the difficulty that the grain grower is in, they announce a program that is applied to all provinces, proportionately to Alberta, to Saskatchewan, to Manitoba.

Some of the members will recall that the federal government announced a major \$500 million support program for the fisheries industry. Principally the problems were, and I understand that on the east coast, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia where full towns were faced with the extreme difficulty where closure of plants and processing plants were being closed and so forth, they announced this program to help out the difficult economic situations on the east coast fisheries. I maintain that is not any different than Minister Mazankowski for Agriculture announcing a special grains payment of \$400 million or \$600 million to recognize the difficulty the grain grower is in on the Prairies.

If I could get a relatively modest amount, \$250,000 or a quarter of a million dollars, to provide the same level of support that, for instance, my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) gets in the GRIP program for our Manitoba farmers in support payments for growing wheat, then I could offer the fishermen of Manitoba a reasonably acceptable freight assistance program.

In fact, it would be better than we have ever had. The maximum payout under this program was in the order of \$400,000, \$430,000 or \$440,000, and it is now capped at \$250,000. If the federal government would match our \$250,000 with \$250,000, we would have a half-million-dollar program that we could offer to our fishermen, and that is why I am not giving up on the prospect.

If we can arrive at something, of course records are being kept, payments can be made retroactive as a result of the records of harvest through the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. You know, they can be included into a final payment for any fish caught.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chair, it seems to me, and I think a lot of members and to all of the fishermen, that this ceiling of \$250,000 and a cut of \$110,000 or \$120,000—you say \$250,000 that you perhaps

will be asking the minister for in Ottawa is a pittance or a small amount.

Well, I think the fishermen in Manitoba and a lot of people think that cutting a pittance of \$110,000 has caused a lot more problem for the fishermen in this province, and within the industry. I believe that the minister's department, his own department his own staff and a report that we have, insisted that the subsidy not be cut, that it was not beneficial to the fishermen for the subsidy to be cut.

So perhaps the minister could reinstate within the budget that \$110,000 and still go to the federal government and try and get some funds from them to even make the assistance more attractive for the fishermen. Like I say, I feel that for \$110,000, this minister's department has caused a lot of hardship and created a lot of uncertainty within the commercial fishing industry in this province and should be accountable for it.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I do not want to argue with the honourable member, and I should avoid quantifying or labelling any size of money; \$250,000 is a lot of money, \$110,000 is a lot of money in my terms, and so let us have that clear on the record.

To answer the member, of course, when taken in isolation, why was that program touched at all? There is a question of fairness. The kind of decisions that the managers in my department had to make, they had to try to make them fairly. We could have retained that money and laid three more people off in a particular department, three more Parks people, three more Water Resource people off. Would that have been fair when you consider the cuts that they have already made?

The budget impacted relatively lightly on Fisheries, as they did in the Wildlife branch, but they were also asked to make a contribution to the overall problems that my senior managers faced in trying to come up with a program. I regret that this was one of the areas that certainly Fisheries people advised me of its impact. We purposely prorated the program to essentially help the most distant fishermen the most—the northern fishermen, the fishermen from South Indian Lake, the fishermen from Island Lake who bring in their product, who have the highest freight charges to bear, and again, simply the application of that formula, you know, made it tough for all the Gimli fishermen because they have the lowest freight costs attached to their

product and therefore received the lowest prorated amount of support.

Madam Chair, the question is not totally resolved yet. I am concerned about it. I know that I am getting constant requests from some of the honourable member's constituents. It is still my hope to see whether or not we can in some way come to some further assistance.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chair, I have many questions in this area that I would like to ask, because the fishing industry is very important in my constituency. However, there is only one that I will ask, and I would like to ask the minister, are cormorant on Lake Winnipegosis being controlled, and if they are, what method of control is being used?

Mr. Enns: No, they are not.

Madam Chairman: Item 8.(a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$222,200.

* (2330)

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chair, I just have to ask the minister to go back to that particular question. We have talked about this many times in the House. Fishermen have raised the issue many times. His departmental staff in the region have told me that they are going to be controlling the cormorant, and that they are going to be destroying the eggs or some other method of controlling them. Now, either plans have changed within the last six weeks or—and I find it very interesting that the member on the opposite side of the House should think this is such a funny issue. His voters, maybe the residents in his constituency do not make a living off fishing so it may not be important to him, but getting back to the minister. His departmental staff have said that there will be some control this year. If you have changed your mind, why have you changed your mind on this matter?

Mr. Enns: It is not a question of changing one's mind, Madam Chairperson, it was a question of not being fully satisfied with the information and with the approach that was being recommended to me by my department. A number of different approaches were being discussed and raised with me. Also, of course, awareness, that if we do nothing that perhaps local residents will take it into their own hands to exercise that control. I am aware of that possibility from happening, but there were suggestions of outright control by means of shooting and otherwise destroying birds. There were

recommendations of a more perhaps environmentally acceptable control method such as exchanging eggs or addling eggs, which means cooking them so they would not produce.

Most importantly, there was, in my judgment, not sufficient time taken to consult with other agencies, including the Environment department, including organizations like the Canadian Wildlife Service that were initially indicated to me as prepared to be participants in looking at a program from a research point of view and getting some understanding of how some acceptable measure of control on these species could be undertaken. That did not come together and, as a result, I made the decision that we would not be exercising any control whatsoever at this time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chair, the minister said that the local people might have to take it into their own hands to control these birds. This did happen in the past and the people were charged. What will be the consequences if these fishermen decide that they have to control the population of cormorants on their own?

Mr. Enns: If they are caught by my resource officers, they will be charged.

Madam Chairman: Item 8.(a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$222,200—pass; 8.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$50,800—pass.

8.(b) Regional Management: (1) Salaries \$1,008,700—pass; 8.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$262,000—pass.

8.(c) Fish Culture: (1) Salaries \$592,000—pass; 8.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$249,600—pass.

8.(d) Fisheries Habitat Management: (1) Salaries \$289,700—pass; 8.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$74,900—pass.

8.(e) Sport and Commercial Fishing Management: (1) Salaries \$310,000—pass; 8.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$80,000—pass.

8.(f) Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance \$260,000—pass.

8.(g) Fishermen's Loan Program - Administration \$442,000—pass.

Resolution 111: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,842,000, for Natural Resources, Fisheries, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1992—pass.

Item 9. Wildlife (a) Administration: (1) Salaries.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, my first question relates specifically to the Ducks Unlimited project at Whitewater Lake. The minister has received correspondence dated May 5 of this year, as I have. That project has raised the ire of the Sierra Club, amongst others, as the department is planning to change the designation of the Crown lands in that area. I raise it in this Wildlife section as opposed to Crown lands because I think it directly relates to the Ducks Unlimited project. I hope the minister has with him any officials he needs to assist him on that project.

Can the minister indicate whether or not he intends to respect the wishes of the Sierra Club and others, I am advised, to allow public hearings on the Ducks Unlimited proposal for Whitewater Lake?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, the short answer is no. I intend to ignore the request. The Ducks Unlimited project at Whitewater Lake is concluded, complete, finished. There is a further consideration that is being given as a result of interest expressed by adjacent land owners and municipal and local governments that, now that that project is concluded, the government should consider establishing a wildlife management area to incorporate the enhanced opportunity for Whitewater Lake, once water returns to it and once more adequate moisture levels return it, to become a desirable waterfowl habitat hopefully with the returning of the waterfowl population to that area.

The incorporating of that, or the transferring of that into a wildlife management area is an administrative matter that the department undertakes from time to time. I have for instance created four new wildlife management areas in my relatively short tenure as Minister of Natural Resources at this time.

At no point in time did Sierra Club or anybody else ask for, nor was it deemed necessary for, their intervention or to have public hearings before those wildlife management areas were declared. One in the Mars Hills area, in the constituency of my friend the Honourable Darren Praznik, the other wildlife areas—there is one indeed in my own constituency, a 15,000 hectare wildlife management area encompassing the Lake Francis marshes.

The designation of a wildlife management area is precisely that. It enables the Department of Natural Resources and our government theretofore to exercise some level of management, some level of control in the future. Not specify, we would not know

what to go to a hearing with, to a public hearing. I mean, we would say that we are drawing that line and calling it the Lake Francis Wildlife Management Area, we have no idea what we are going to do with it.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I bring to the minister's attention that all that was requested by the Sierra Club was that the people in the area, as well as the people who utilize the area, be given the opportunity to learn exactly what this change in designation use will mean and express their views on the situation.

The minister has made it quite clear that he intends no public process to be associated with any designation of a wildlife management area, which I gather he is either considering or has made his mind up to create. However, I would ask that he give proper opportunity for the people in the area to make comment on that and I assume that he has made contact with the Sierra Club accordingly. I will leave that and the minister may want to respond further in addition to answering my next question specific to game ranching.

I have received, and I am not a hunter myself, so I do not have personal experience with game ranching operations or other similar activities, but it has been brought to my attention by a number of sources, and there seems to be quite a lot of concern amongst many Manitobans that the government is heading into a position where game ranching will be allowed, however unfortunate that may be for wildlife stocks around the province, and I have been made aware of the experience in Alberta. It appears to have been quite problematic on many fronts. There appears to have been numerous problems with disease in these animals, and just a general depletion of other stocks as these animals get loose.

In notice from the new Wildlife Act, one of the things the minister indicates he is bringing in is the provision which says that it will allow him to draft regulations limiting tournament hunting. I see that in the new act, but I wonder if the minister can indicate just what his government's position is on game ranching in the province of Manitoba.

*(2340)

Mr. Enns: Just a little further clarification on the initial question asked with respect to the establishment of wildlife management areas. It is the practice of, certainly this government, to only

proceed if there is an agreement, if there is a willingness on the part of local government. In other words, if a municipality at the local government—and often there is fairly extensive public discussions taking place over it—if there is not local support for the establishment of a wildlife management area, then we would not proceed to establish the wildlife management area. There has to be that kind of local support.

It is my understanding that local support is there, and I do want to spend just one minute. One of the reasons why that local support will be there is if we can let some of the traditional land users, some of the cattle users, continue to have some use of some hay and grazing opportunities within that wildlife management area.

If the minister of the day can, under special permit—the kind of special permit that I am seeking in the act, the kind of special permit that all previous Ministers of Natural Resources had that enabled cattle producers on occasion to enter upon a wildlife management area to cut hay to keep the cattle herds from starving, to keep the cattle herds from being liquidated, that is the kind of permission that Mr. Plohman, the member for Dauphin enjoyed. That is the kind of permission that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) enjoyed under The Wildlife Management Act and that, as the honourable member for St. James knows, is all that I am asking for. The only difference is, I am not doing it by the back door by regulation as the NDP ministers did. I am doing it up front where everybody can see what I am doing.

If the local landowners, including the local governments, agree to the establishment of a wildlife management area at Whitewater Lake, and I encourage them to do so, then a Whitewater Lake management area will be established, but not before that.

Now the honourable member asks about game ranching. The government's position has not changed one bit on game ranching. We are not making any moves in that direction, and that is the short answer to her questions.

Ms. Cerilli: I have one question with respect to wildlife research. One of the criticisms I hear often is that, not only in the area of forestry but in the area of wildlife, Manitoba needs to put more emphasis and more resources into research. I would like the minister to do a comparison for me between the

amount of money spent on consumptive versus nonconsumptive wildlife activities in Manitoba, and the amount of research staff and the amount of money being expended into researching gaming versus nongaming wildlife.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I appreciate where the honourable member is coming from. I, in the first instance, want to indicate that we have a good working relationship with organizations outside of immediate government with the Natural Resource Institute at the University of Manitoba. We have a number of ongoing funding programs where we, in fact, provide and get research assistance. For instance, I have asked that institute to help us on a number of occasions. Most recently was to help undertake a study on the effects of dog training on the wild grouse populations in the province. In other situations we avail ourselves to the research that is being done by the Canadian Wildlife Service and by other organizations.

I am hard pressed and I will not try to identify a great deal of research dollars. I have trouble quite frankly in making sure that Mr. Boyle has enough resource officers to carry out the kind of regulation enforcement, law enforcement in our wilds, to guard against poaching of our wildlife, than to have too much money in these Estimates for pure research. It simply is not there.

We have some very excellent staff, people who have international acclaim in terms of their academic credentials in various fields of biology, wildlife biology. We can be well satisfied that we have these people in our service. There is not that kind of money available quite frankly, and it is questionable whether they should be in a department like mine at least. I should not say it is questionable. It would be nice to have it, but we do not have it.

On the other question that she raises, it is a very legitimate question. I, for one, am concerned that greater emphasis is in fact placed on the nonconsumptive aspect of many of our wild game species. I look forward to having that opportunity to expanding that discussion with her on another occasion.

Ms. Cerilli: I would appreciate it again if the minister could send a report my way if the department has done any kind of a study or could compile that kind of research for us.

I want to turn now to one of the issues that is up for debate in the province. I am hesitating because I am not sure where to begin with dealing with this issue because there are, quite frankly, so many questions I could ask the minister. We could spend hours tonight and I assure you that I will not do that.

I have, I think, a few questions though that I would like to ask the minister with respect to plans for Oak Hammock Marsh involving Ducks Unlimited. I guess I would like to begin with the plans that are underway for construction that is to begin this summer and I would like to ask the minister what would be done this summer, if he can answer that, what construction plans for the marsh are underway for this summer and what amount of time is necessary for that construction?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, neither I nor my department are directly responsible for the scheduling of the construction or of the granting of tender documents to any contract. My understanding is that general tender documents are currently either available or being drawn up and indeed will be or are in fact being distributed. It is my further understanding and, quite frankly, I congratulate Ducks Unlimited that they are limiting the response to the \$9.5 million contract to Manitoba contractors only, which ensures pretty good Manitoba content with respect to job creations and so forth of that contract. All of that is contingent upon them getting the final authorization and permits from myself.

Ms. Cerilli: I would like to ask the minister, why has this money gone to Ducks Unlimited for this project when, as he has just said in my previous question, there is a need for more resource officers. There has been a decline in the number of resource officers. Would the money not have been better spent on more programs, more people employed in more programs that are going to help expose people to wilderness and to a natural environment? Would that not help raise awareness, rather than putting the money—what some people think is quite an excessive amount of money, a million dollars—into bricks and mortar, into a wildlife management area?

Mr. Enns: I regret, Madam Chairman, quite frankly, that we have always found ourselves in such a position as we now are, 11:50 p.m., and there is some pressure on both the members that are questioning me, and myself, to contain our discussion on the matter, because it is an important question.

Let me simply make something clear and put it on the record for another time. Ducks Unlimited is not getting a single cent of public money to build their \$4.5 million office building, not a cent. Ducks Unlimited is helping us with \$2 million to build a conservation centre which I could not afford. I could not have the money and the assistance to do. Ducks Unlimited is helping us and will take over the costs which are in the range of \$160,000 to \$170,000, could well be \$200,000 of annually operating it for the long-term future.

That is off the public taxpayers' backs, and we will end up with a world-class facility, with a very nominal contribution of \$250,000 one-time capital grant. That is the only public money from Manitoba in the \$9.5 million venture—\$250,000 plus a guarantee that they will take over the \$200,000 operating expenses of the facility after five years. That is right now, that we are putting into it every year roughly.

* (2350)

So I am really troubled with the opposition to the project. I am troubled when, if I can quote from the current chairman of the Manitoba Environmental Council, Mr. Wayne Neily, who I think kind of exemplifies responsibly the opposition to the project and, no doubt, I will be hearing from him on Thursday night. When he puts in a letter and acknowledges that a major conservation centre such as the one that is proposed is most likely appropriate—that is what Wayne Neily and the Clean Environment Council writes.

He even goes on to say that: In our opinion, the ownership and control of such a facility should be retained by the government, although their operation might be contracted out to an organization such as Ducks Unlimited.

Well, that is precisely the problem. If I followed that advice—in other words, what the people who are opposing me are saying, there is nothing wrong with building a \$5 million, \$6 million, \$10 million, \$15 million building at Oak Hammock. There is nothing wrong with 80,000, 90,000, 100,000, 200,000 people coming to Oak Hammock, because certainly nobody objected. Nobody objected when 50,000 people arrived. Nobody objected when 75,000 people arrived. They are only objecting now because I found somebody else other than the taxpayer to build a building for us.

I want to tell you something. The ducks and the geese and the other birds, they do not know the

difference whether it is private money or government money that built the facility. They really do not know the difference. But I will tell you, we will know the difference because within a very short time we are going to have a world-class facility that is going to encourage wildlife seminars to be held here, of the kind that they hold in Slimbridge, England, in the middle of a wildlife management area. The Wildlife Service of Canada does not really complain because their headquarters is located in the middle of British Columbia's finest wildlife management area, with its 100 permanent staff.

It is hypocritical and it is deceitful and it is wrong, the kind of arguments that I am getting on this issue, and I am getting tired of it, because it is not in the interest of wildlife and it is not in the interest of Manitoba. People tell me that Ducks Unlimited are going to use it to show their corporate donors that here is how we can raise some more money. Well, of course I want them to do that. How do you think they get the \$7 million that they spend in this province every year? They do not send out tax notices like you and I do.

What better way to show the success of mankind occasionally. Here is a marsh that was a dirty, stinking, polluted swamp contracted to a few hundred acres. Government and Ducks Unlimited came together and created the jewel that we now refer to as Oak Hammock. Before that was possible, Caterpillars, bulldozers, machines and men and money created it, and what is this nonsense about this minister wilfully destroying a pristine bit of our heritage? What is this nonsense about Ducks Unlimited, whose entire being rests on their reputation as a premier wetlands conservation organization, that they would do anything to harm that reputation? What utter nonsense. Only a perverted, twisted, out-of-dated, anti-Americanism and anti-hunter sentiment can bring that kind of an attitude to bear.

All I know is that despite the budget restrictions that I am faced with in administrating this department at this time, the facility that we are going to be building together will be forever remembered in this province as one of the highlights, one of the achievements of this government and all those who are associated with the successful development of the project.

I and many to follow will be extremely proud of that facility, not least of all the thousands of school

children who will be able to go through and get some public education in that system, not least of all the international tourists and visitors who will come and see that unique opportunity 20 minutes from an international airport, to be able to transport into a premier marsh setting and actually see not 50, not 100, but 200,000 or 300,000 geese congregate if they happen to come in the staging areas of the fall or the spring. We are arguing about this? We are debating about this? It is utter nonsense.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Chair, I can see that Thursday in the beginning of the committee hearings they are going to be very interesting on this issue.

I think that the minister knows from my second reading debate on this issue some of the reasons that I have become aware of why I philosophically, on a principle basis, would object to the kind of development that is happening at Oak Hammock Marsh, but I will keep my comments brief.

Can the minister explain the amount of money that has come from the Western Diversification Fund for this project? I understand that they rarely give grants and that they have given a grant to Ducks Unlimited for this project. Can he explain the conditions and what was the reason for this fund to make the exception that it did?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairman, I cannot be specific. It is not within my immediate jurisdiction, but I am aware that a very substantial \$1 million-plus has been agreed to be provided to the project by the Western Diversification program. It is my understanding that, in essence, they do so on the strength of its tourism credentials.

The Western Diversification Fund is involved in numerous undertakings that essentially have to do with economic benefits to the western region of the country and certainly, as the member for Swan River pointed out to me earlier on in these Estimates, the tourism industry is an extremely important one and projections have indicated—in fact, the member who is now questioning me has criticized me. She says that is introducing a kind of a Disneyland aspect to the marsh because of the projected level of tourists who will be attracted to that facility.

She is quite right. There will be many tourists attracted to that facility. There are many tourists currently visiting that facility. It is my understanding—but she will have to direct these questions directly to representatives of the Western Diversification Fund or, indeed, representatives of

the federal government as to why and what rationale they chose to support this project to that level.

Ms. Cerilli: I find it surprising that the minister would suggest that he does not have that kind of information. He has gone on record many times talking about how intimately he is involved with this project. It is in his constituency. He has referred to Oak Hammock Marsh the last time we had a discussion on this as his marsh, and I would think that there is an awareness of the details of my question.

Perhaps the minister can answer my next question. I am not sure, given his last answer, but I will try it. Can the minister explain the relationship between the North American waterfowl agreement and the Ducks Unlimited facility at Oak Hammock Marsh?

* (0000)

Mr. Enns: There is no relationship between the two projects other than the fact that Ducks Unlimited of Canada is very much part and a major player in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. They are being used by us in the delivery of the program, particularly that program that used to be referred to as the HELP program, the Habitat Enhancement Leasing Program, where we have set up offices in four rural communities in the southwest, in Virden, in Killarney, in Shoal Lake, and they are actively out trying to attract wildlife wetland habitat land.

The goals of the program are ambitious, a half a million acres of private acres to come under lease or ownership over the next 15 years. That is being carried out. The delivery of that program is being carried out, extensively by Ducks Unlimited Canada personnel, and, to do that, of course, they also have to have the necessary wherewithal, the funds to pay for their own people. It is important therefore that Ducks Unlimited Canada continue in its volunteer fundraising activities. If Oak Hammock and the centre at Oak Hammock is somewhat responsible for ensuring that, then God bless it. That is quite in order as far as I am concerned. That is the only relationship. There is no other direct relationship between the two.

I want to put on the record, just correct the record, the marsh regrettably no longer is in my constituency. It is in the constituency of my honourable friend the member for Gimli (Mr.

Helwer). It was removed from my constituency during the last redistribution.

Ms. Cerilli: Is it true that there will be no additional research done at the marsh that is not already being done—the little, I understand, that is done by D.U.—no additional research done at the marsh in this complex?

Mr. Enns: My understanding is that there is currently underway and has been for the last several weeks and months some very specific study, data collection of the actual site of the construction prior to its disturbance to catalogue exactly and precisely what is being disturbed. That is being done by a committee appointed by my colleague the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), and an assessment of that information will be made. My further answer to her, no, there is not. The project is being proceeded with as planned.

Ms. Cerilli: I am not clear about the minister's answer, but this is one of the key criticisms of the project. We are putting this huge facility in a marsh. Ducks Unlimited has been there for the last 15 years. A criticism of them is that their research is so narrowly focussed on waterfowl that is conducive to or is the interest of hunters and that there is no research being done on any of the other species that inhabit the marsh, any of the other plant life.

That was what was also surprising about the environment impact assessment, the fact that we had this designation of a wildlife management area, and there has been no research so that we understand the natural habitat in the marsh.

Again, I would like to ask the minister clearly if there will be any additional research, new research done in this facility that would warrant moving it from the city to the wildlife management area?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I just simply want to put on the record to indicate that there were no other shore birds and other nonconsumptive wildlife species in the Oak Hammock Marsh to be studied prior to Ducks Unlimited's arrival, prior to their building of the dikes, prior to their acquiring with government's assistance the 8,000 acres that now consists of Oak Hammock Marsh. The shore birds, the waterfowl all came at the same time after that project was completed, much to the great satisfaction of all involved.

It does not always work that successfully. Just because you build and try to improve a habitat of some kind, it does not always follow that the wild will

follow to the nest that we have built for them. It happened to have worked extremely well at Oak Hammock. I am sure, with a world-class wildlife and interpretive and conservation centre in place, that there will be opportunities that will lend and research projects will flow from the very existence of that facility on that marsh.

We are, after all, putting in these—the people who are going to be housed in that building are not all engineers. They are wildlife biologists, they are bird specialists, they are habitat specialists. These are the kinds of people who will be working in that environment, and we will be inviting—and remember the centre is not a Ducks Unlimited operation. The government will be appointing the first chairman of a five-man board of which we will have three people appointed. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess part of the problem with the project is the paternalistic approach that is taken. I realize that Ducks Unlimited has put a lot of money and effort into refurbishing the marsh. I guess there is a sense that the payback is kind of excessive in this case. The minister also talks about the fact that there is going to be an international calibre facility at Oak Hammock, but the point is that Oak Hammock already is an internationally recognized wildlife management area. It is a Ramsare site.

I would ask the minister if he is not concerned about the reputation of Manitoba being at stake, about the fact that he is setting a precedent of putting an office complex on an area that is already designated as a Ramsare site, if there is not some concern that this is going to be foolish as a vast majority of the ecology community, the naturalist community in the province, across the country, is saying that that is a problem. I ask the minister, is he not concerned about that? How is he approaching that? How is he dealing with that, the fact that this is a Ramsare site?

Mr. Enns: I know that within a few minutes I could share with the honourable member a letter that my office just received yesterday from the Ramsare people, looking forward to this facility being constructed, looking forward to us in co-operation with their organization to developing some of these kinds of ongoing research related matters.

Coincidentally, the question of its Ramsare designation has been thrown at me on several occasions. Ramsare people wrote me a letter today

expressing nothing but a real willingness to work with the new centre, not taking any occasion to express any objection to the facilities being built.

Ms. Cerilli: My last question is somewhat related. Why was Dr. Jennifer Shay asked to leave the Manitoba Reserves Board?

Mr. Enns: It is my understanding that Dr. Shay had served on that board for a goodly number of years. From time to time, changes to all boards and commissions are made as would be expected. We have no other interest other than that to indicate. Board members change from time to time, particularly if new aspects of legislation are brought to bear, and that was the case in this instance.

Ms. Cerilli: Did she leave of her own accord, and was she replaced?

Mr. Enns: It was just a question of an appointment, time having been expired and it not being renewed. There are always people who are prepared to serve on these boards and, yes, a relatively new board—I do not know by heart, but I can again bring that information whether the entire board was replaced. It is my understanding that most of the board members are new and are replacing the outgoing board.

* (0010)

Madam Chairman: Item 9. Wildlife (a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$234,800—pass; 9.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$74,100—pass.

9.(b) Game Management: (1) Salaries \$472,400—pass; 9.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$82,700—pass; 9.(b)(3) Grant Assistance \$150,000—pass.

9.(c) Habitat Management: (1) Salaries \$396,800—pass; 9.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$349,400—pass; 9.(c)(3) Canada-Manitoba Soil Conservation Agreement \$528,000—pass.

9.(d) Endangered Species and Nongame Management: (1) Salaries \$332,900—pass; 9.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$129,800—pass.

9.(e) Regional Management: (1) Salaries \$669,900—pass; 9.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$160,600—pass.

9.(f) Wildlife Management: (1) Salaries \$96,300—pass; 9.(f)(2) Other Expenditures \$112,600—pass.

9.(g) Fur and Commercial Wildlife Management: (1) Salaries \$514,000—pass; 9.(g)(2) Other

Expenditures \$324,700—pass; 9.(g)(3) Grant Assistance \$90,900—pass.

9.(h) Canada-Manitoba Waterfowl Damage Prevention Agreement \$469,700—pass.

Resolution 112: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,189,600 for Natural Resources, Wildlife, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1992—pass.

Item 10. Surveys and Mapping (a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$287,400—pass; 10.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$50,100—pass

10.(b) Field Surveys: (1) Salaries \$612,600—pass; 10.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$259,500—pass; 10.(b)(3) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$295,000—pass.

10.(c) Mapping: (1) Salaries \$604,600—pass; 10.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$121,700—pass; 10.(c)(3) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$224,900—pass.

10.(d) Map Distribution and Remote Sensing: (1) Salaries \$508,500—pass; 10.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$375,900—pass; 10.(d)(3) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$185,000—pass.

10.(e) Computer Services and Data Management: (1) Salaries \$443,100—pass; 10.(e)(2) Other Expenditures \$144,300—pass.

Resolution 113: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,702,800 for Natural Resources, Surveys and Mapping, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1992—pass.

Expenditures Related to Capital, 11.(a)—

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chair, I would just like to ask the minister one question on this part of the budget, and if he would be so kind as to have for me a breakdown for the last three fiscal years of what this area in the department has spent on each and every item, seeing that they are dropping over \$4 million in this budget not only this year, what they were going to spend on, but for the last two years.

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I will undertake to provide the member with that information in a very short while.

Madam Chairman: Item 11. Expenditures Related To Capital (a) Acquisition/Construction of Physical Assets \$4,528,900—pass.

Resolution 114: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,528,900 for Natural Resources, Expenditures Related to Capital, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1992—pass.

Item 12. Lotteries Funded Programs (a) Special Conservation Fund \$250,000—pass; 12.(b) Endangered Species Fund \$250,000—pass.

Resolution 115: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Natural Resources, Lotteries Funded Programs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1992—pass.

Would the minister's staff please leave the Chamber?

Item 1.(a), page 126, Minister's Salary \$20,600—pass.

Resolution 104: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,360,600 for Natural Resources, Administration and Finance for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1992—pass.

This concludes the Department of Natural Resources. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): As previously agreed, the hour being past midnight, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Monday, June 10, 1991

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