



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



VOL. XLII No. 54A - 1:30 p.m., MONDAY, MAY 3, 1993

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 3, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Darcy C. Bialas, Keith W. Wark, Barry L. Dowsett and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Sandy Murray, Donna Ilerbrun, Brian Kiliwnik and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Arlene Motuz, Val McFarlane, Linda Masters and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ken Parenteau, Rick Burgess, Bonnie Hartley and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Myrna Swalm, Janet Kellow, Leesa Mackie and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lillian Strahl, R.E. Lee, S. Wiebe and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mrs. Carstairs). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

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

WHEREAS the Misericordia General Hospital has served Winnipeg for over 95 years; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia General Hospital has a long record of dedication and service to its local community and the broader Winnipeg community; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia General Hospital is identified by the residents in the surrounding area as "their hospital"; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital plays an integral part in maintaining and promoting the health of the community; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital provides diverse services including emergency, ambulatory care, diagnostic and inpatient services, acute and chronic care which are vital to the community; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital is currently engaged in developing innovative and progressive community-based outreach programs; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital is ideally located to be within the "hub" of the health care delivery network for Winnipeg.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Manitoba to consider keeping the Misericordia Hospital open as an acute care facility.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

* (1335)

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

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the theme, "Indigenous People: a new partnership"; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has totally discontinued funding to all friendship centres; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated that these cuts mirror the federal cuts; and

WHEREAS the elimination of all funding to friendship centres will result in the loss of many jobs as well as the services and programs provided, such as: assistance to the elderly, the homeless, youth programming, the socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, advocacy;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Family Services minister to consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Dewar). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

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

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the theme, "Indigenous People: a new partnership"; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has totally discontinued funding to all friendship centres; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated that these cuts mirror the federal cuts; and

WHEREAS the elimination of all funding to friendship centres will result in the loss of many jobs as well as the services and programs provided, such as: assistance to the elderly, the homeless, youth programming, the socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, advocacy;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Family Services minister to

consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

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

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 1,000 young adults are currently attempting to get off welfare and upgrade their education through the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS Winnipeg already has the highest number of people on welfare in decades; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has already changed social assistance rules resulting in increased welfare costs for the City of Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is now proposing to eliminate the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS eliminating the Student Social Allowances Program will result in more than a thousand young people being forced onto city welfare with no means of getting further full-time education, resulting in more long-term costs for city taxpayers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I know honourable members will wish to express appreciation to the Manitoba Forestry Association for the annual tree that they provide to all members here as a renewal of growth and the oncoming of summer and the coming year.

I have a proclamation that I would like to read:

WHEREAS Canada's forests are one of the major aspects of our national heritage; and

WHEREAS our forests provide millions of Canadians and visitors with opportunities for healthful recreation and sport each year; and

WHEREAS these same forests provide protection in our watersheds for soil and crops and form a home for our wildlife and also provide thousands of Canadians with jobs in the forest products industries; and

WHEREAS the losses suffered each year through man-made forest fires are detrimental to the interests of all Canadians; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Forestry Association is well known for its efforts in reminding us of our ever present responsibility for the conservation of our forest wealth and is co-operating in the promotion of a national week focussing attention on our forest resources.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT KNOWN that I, Harry J. Enns, Minister of Natural Resources, do hereby recognize the days from May 2 to May 8, 1993, as National Forest Week in Manitoba and commend its observance to all our citizens of our province.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable minister have a couple of copies of said proclamation? Has he only got the one?—because traditionally in the House, when we make a ministerial statement, we do provide the critics with a copy.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I guess I will thank the minister for having placed a tree on my desk. I will take it home when next I go to The Pas and plant it in my back yard.

I wanted to say that this government somehow continues to claim that everything is fine and all right in forestry, but the facts, I am afraid, tell us otherwise. I think it is time that some of our cabinet ministers on the government side leave their offices and travel to places like Pine Falls or to northern Manitoba to see first-hand what is actually going on in the forests of this province.

Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) were congratulating the federal government for their budget last week, that same budget announced the demise of federal-provincial forestry and mining agreements, and because mining mostly takes

place in northern Manitoba, forestry, and so on, it is northern Manitoba that was a loser in that budget.

While the federal government budget was mostly a smoke-and-mirrors pre-election maneuvering, there are special cuts which will affect northern Manitoba especially.

Over the past five years, mutual development agreements have already been downgraded significantly in Manitoba. The previous NDP government negotiated a \$24-million mines agreement for five years, \$14 million of which was federal money. In 1991, the current government signed a similar agreement for a joint \$5-million agreement. Last week, the federal government announced that there would be no new forestry or mining joint agreements.

The forestry industry in this province is in terrible shape already. We are concerned very much on this side that the province will not pick up the added cost for forest management. We have a major task just restoring the forests to the shape that they were in before 1989.

I want to close off by saying that we have to do something with Repap. We have to do something with Pine Falls, and, also, we have to do something with the Clearwater Lake Nursery that was slashed by the government a year ago. Thank you very much.

* (1340)

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if, at the outset, I might recommend to the minister that he also share some of these trees with city councillors. It would be an opportune time, I think, to share the trees.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, this is another National Forest Week that we are celebrating in this province and across this country and, of course, I want to join with the minister and with the Forestry Association in the sentiments expressed in the proclamation. I only wish that those sentiments were reflected in the government's and this minister's actions from year to year as we assess it.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to belabour the points I have made in prior years because they all still apply this year. Nothing has changed in the government's agenda. Now, there is an opportunity with a new Parks act, which we are all looking forward to, to perhaps salvage some of that reputation on the protection of forests, but as we learned with the Nopiming forest decision and this government's

summary dismissal of the recommendations and the findings of that report, this government's actions never match the words and the rhetoric in things like this proclamation. I look forward to the day that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for the Department of Education and Training for the '93-94 Estimates expenditures.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): I would like to table the 1992 Annual Report of the Manitoba Telephone System.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 29—The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), that Bill 29, The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Act (Loi sur le contrôle des substances intoxicantes et les mineurs), be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the Garden City Collegiate, twenty-five Grade 9 students under the direction of the Mr. Gary Jackson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

On behalf of all members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

The City of Winnipeg Infrastructure Renewal

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Mr. Speaker, last week and throughout the last number of years, dealing with discussions on the city of Winnipeg, all groups have come to a consensus that infrastructure renewal must be the No. 1 priority for capital projects of the City of Winnipeg. In fact, 20 groups came together last week at the Chamber of Commerce and again reiterated the priority of infrastructure renewal, particularly when the city of Winnipeg is stagnated in terms of its growth, and that much of the present infrastructure requires renewal.

Mr. Speaker, we are in receipt of a copy of the letter—and I will table it—that the government issued to the City of Winnipeg, outlining a number of specific capital projects in their \$96-million capital program for the next five years.

I would like to ask the government: What was the criteria that the government chose to make specific decisions on specific capital projects for the city of Winnipeg?

* (1345)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Firstly, let me say that over the five- or six-year period, there is a \$96-million capital commitment to the City of Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, \$30 million of that \$96 million is entirely at the city's discretion to deal with as they wish. Of that \$96 million, a further \$40 million deals with infrastructure replacement, entirely at the city's discretion, to do with as they wish. The last \$26 million of the \$96 million is based upon a review of city projects by the provincial government and for which the provincial government has input related to individual projects.

On November 26, Mr. Speaker—and I will table a letter from Her Worship the Mayor—outlined a number of projects from which the province could be expected to choose. These were high-priority projects for the City of Winnipeg. That letter outlines, I believe, every single project that we outlined in our letter of April 23, I believe with the exception of one project, the Charleswood bridge.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister the criteria of the specific decisions. We have reviewed the letter of the minister of April 30: \$13 million for the Charleswood bridge; \$1.7 million for Kenaston Boulevard; \$1.3 million for Wilkes; \$2.2 million for a St. Anne's Road project.

Mr. Speaker, there is a further \$1 million for the La Salle bridge, which we consider to be part of the

Pembina corridor and not part of any Conservative constituency.

When we look at the total of \$24 million to \$25 million, some 75 percent is allocated in ridings held by the present Conservative members. I would like to know, what was the criteria used by the government for those decisions?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I should perhaps draw the member's attention to the fact that when he was Urban Affairs minister, the Leader of the Opposition approved a certain bridge in the north end of Winnipeg. I would not want to attribute any political motives to the approval of that bridge, but I want to tell you that the letter I just tabled from the mayor outlines every single project except the Charleswood bridge. That is what the city wanted.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) never raised concerns about our projects because they were city-wide—sewage treatment plants, infrastructure renewal, some 85 percent.

I would like to ask the Premier, what was the criteria for selecting the projects, some of them located in the Premier's own riding? That, in itself, should not disqualify people. I would like to know why 75 percent of the specific capital projects agreed to by the provincial Conservative government are in ridings held by the provincial Conservative Party. What was the criteria, given that everybody now, with stagnated urban population growth, has agreed that infrastructure renewal should be the No. 1 priority for the city of Winnipeg renewal?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the honourable Leader of the Opposition cannot understand what the mayor said in her letter.

What the letter said was that there are certain projects the city wanted to see. We chose all but one of those projects. That one project happens to be a major construction project, the Charleswood bridge, that has been in the works for 30 years. It is not something that happened overnight.

Emergency Room Physicians Patient Safety

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, all last week the government stated that everything was fine in the emergency rooms. Yet, we have heard and read stories which indicate, by the proponents of those stories, that patient care may have been compromised, and that there may be in

fact bed shortages at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital.

Can the minister assure this House that no patient who attends in an emergency room will have their care compromised in any way whatsoever?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I know my honourable friend from time to time does not necessarily preambule his questions accurately. This is no exception.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated at all times last week that the system, despite difficulties, was coping with the withdrawal of the emergency room doctors, not the preamble that my honourable friend put on the record.

Further to the weekend experience at the two teaching hospitals, there were difficulties in managing, but, Mr. Speaker, the system did cope. Individuals needing care received that care quite clearly, Sir, though not as expeditiously as they may well have done had the system not been struck over the weekend.

* (1350)

Negotiations

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, negotiations, I understand, are resuming. The doctors say they had an agreement and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said, I believe, on open line that they were very close to an agreement from the government's end.

Can the minister, in very simple terms, outline for us today where the impasse is in terms of the agreement the doctors say they have and the agreement the government said they were close to having?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what will be further fleshed out today and tomorrow in ongoing discussions and negotiations, and I am sure my honourable friend in the tradition of a labour-supported party would not want one side negotiating in a public forum such as the Legislature.

Mr. Chomlak: I would have preferred a settlement, Mr. Speaker.

Mediation

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): My final supplementary to the same minister is: Trust is a key factor in negotiations. Last time there was a dispute of this type, the government brought in, I

believe, Wally Fox-Decent to arbitrate and mediate. Will this government, if the agreement cannot be reached tonight, consider bringing in someone of that stature to try to resolve the matter?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would not want to presuppose that discussions which commenced today and will be ongoing presumably until a settlement is reached—I would not presume, as my honourable friend may well be predicated to do, that they are doomed to failure.

I think everyone would be well served by a resolution of this dispute, and I am optimistic that the discussions that commenced today will lead to that result, Sir.

Emergency Room Physicians Update Report

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

We are one week into the strike by the EMOs, and I would like to ask the minister to give us an update on any major problems over the weekend at local hospitals because of this strike.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): As I indicated in an earlier answer to the previous questioner, both Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface reported increased volumes as one would expect, and in certain circumstances, individuals presenting for emergency care had to wait longer periods of time than one probably would have expected them to wait under more normal circumstances. Despite having Grace Hospital closed completely yesterday, the system did cope.

There was one area of difficulty and that was in the absolute number of stretchers that the two teaching hospitals have, and that has been a difficulty from time to time. However, I am led to believe that the admission arrangements that I have explained on a couple of previous occasions with the community hospitals are working reasonably well.

Patient Safety

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, the story in the media indicates there were some serious problems at Health Sciences Centre, and one of the physicians was quoted as saying it was good luck there were no disasters.

Can the minister tell us what the minister's department is doing to ensure that the quality of care will not suffer during what has been the perception for the last 48 hours?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I was just checking some of my notes. As I indicated, the Health Sciences Centre indicates that they were very busy over the weekend and, with the time constraints, as I indicated earlier, some individuals may not have received care as quickly as normal circumstances may well have dictated.

I think one could understand that, but we are told by Health Sciences Centre officials that the department currently is busy but manageable, and there are no concerns about the quality of treatment being provided today.

* (1355)

Resolution

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health assure the people of Manitoba that this issue can be resolved as quickly as possible to make sure we do not run into another weekend?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, that would be, I think, a reasonable expectation of government's approach to these discussions.

Manitoba Environment Council Elimination of Volunteer Positions

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba governments of different parties have benefited over the years from advice and input of the Manitoba Environment Council. These have been experts who have been largely volunteers who meet and advise the minister, and this government does not seem to realize that you have to pay for expert advice and they do not seem to want expert advice on environment issues particularly.

I would ask the Minister of Environment: Why is the minister eliminating the 50 to 100 expert volunteers involved in Manitoba Environment Council? Does he not like the advice he has been getting?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am quite interested in the advice that I receive from the council. That has nothing to do with the decision we had to make regarding funding.

The fact is, the grant of \$50,000 to help manage the affairs can in fact be partly replaced by the fact that we are prepared to continue with them in terms of space, in terms of secretarial support. It has been a very open and ongoing process. The member for Radisson attended the advisory committee on Saturday, and I am quite prepared to continue to receive advice.

Assiniboine River Diversion Intervener Funding

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): But, Mr. Speaker, if you want expert advice, you have to pay for it.

Given that under Regulation 210(92) from The Environment Act providing for the minister to set up a scheme for environment assessment hearing cost recovery, when will such an intervenor funding scheme be announced for the Assiniboine diversion for the hearings that have been set, so that we can be assured that the best possible information can be presented to the Clean Environment Commission?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I see the member changed her tactic rather quickly when she realized that for the regular attendance I am receiving at the Manitoba Environment Council, it is costing me about \$2,000 a piece per year to hear advice.

I intend to continue receiving advice from that group and hope that the experts, some of whom are part of that council, will continue to provide us advice. It is their knowledge and their input that we need.

In regard to the funding of projects for intervenor status, that has a regulation that allows us to provide that for certain types of processes, and this has not been deemed one that we felt required that additional input.

Information Gathering

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, members of the council are very critical of this project, and they are not happy with the decision this government has made.

I ask the minister: How does the minister expect to get expert data on the Assiniboine diversion given that there are less than two months before the hearings begin? How does the minister expect that

the most correct and well-put-together information on this very controversial and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question.

* (1400)

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people who are collecting data for presentation to the commission. I have very high regard for the people who have been hired on behalf of the Assiniboine River Protection Committee. I believe that their expertise will be valued at the hearings.

Frankly, on both sides of the issue, there is a considerable amount of expertise being brought to bear, and I would suspect that all of those questions that are now being asked and some concern being raised, that they will be aired and fully addressed at those hearings.

Social Assistance Child Care Subsidies

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Family Services has reduced the number of subsidized child care weeks for a job search from eight weeks to two weeks, this in spite of the fact that he and his staff have done no research on the number of weeks it takes to find employment. Numerous parents who have phoned me have said that during a recession, two weeks is not enough time to find a job.

Can the minister tell us why in Manitoba he has reduced the number of weeks from eight weeks to two when in Saskatchewan after an initial reduction, they increased the workweek search for subsidized child care from two months to four months? Why this change in Manitoba?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to compare our daycare system with that in the province of Saskatchewan. I have indicated before that in Manitoba we spend some four times as much of our resources on daycare. We have increased the number of spaces dramatically by about 3,000 since we took government. We have increased the budget and have many more subsidized spaces now than we had before.

We have had to make some adjustments to the system this year, and we would indicate that we would give individuals who are having some

difficulty a chance to talk with departmental staff. I would assure you that they will get fair treatment.

Mr. Martindale: It is obvious that the reason the systems are different is that Saskatchewan had a Conservative government during the 1980s. That is the fundamental difference in the systems.

Mr. Speaker, why did this minister decrease the job search time in Manitoba from eight weeks to two weeks, when in Alberta the job search time can be expanded to three months or four months if the parents provide proof of searching for a job and depending on parental circumstances? Why is it up to four months in Alberta and two weeks in Manitoba?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The enhancement of child daycare in Manitoba has improved dramatically since we formed government in 1988. At that time, the budget was something like \$26 million or \$27 million. Now it has increased to nearly \$50 million.

I point out that we have not changed the regulations with the basic daycare that is provided. We have increased the licensed spaces quite dramatically and have had to make some adjustments in this current budget year, but we will do everything we can to see that those who need to access daycare will be provided with that service.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, the minister is making adjustments without doing any research or having any data.

Why did the Minister of Family Services do no research or even contact Canada Employment Centres and ask them how long the average job search takes? Did the minister not know that the average duration of unemployment in Manitoba in March 1993 was 24 weeks according to Statistics Canada?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about this in the Estimates process in the last couple of weeks and have an opportunity to do so again today.

It is incorrect that we have done no research into this. I have told the member consistently that our budgeting process starts in the late summer, early fall, and that the Child Day Care branch of this department has brought forward a number of statistics where we have had an opportunity to look at the demands on the system prior to making these decisions.

Sexual Assaults Identity Release

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Last week, a very disturbing case was raised in this House by my Leader involving a court-ordered ban on the publication of any information which might identify a child complainant of sexual assault, as well as a ban on publication of information which might reveal the convicted person's profession.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday a news outlet in the city intentionally chose to breach that court order. The Minister of Justice indicated late Friday that his staff would be looking at the issue and reviewing the court order immediately. I believe his statement was that Monday was another workday and there would be an opportunity to discuss this more fully Monday.

It is now Monday. Can the minister indicate today whether or not his office believes the court order was breached by this news outlet on Friday? If so, is his department intending to lay charges?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The first concern of this department and this minister is the complainant in this matter and also the protection of the public. That is our first concern.

To that end, there will be a meeting tomorrow between counsel for the Crown and the accused, the Winnipeg Free Press, the CBC and, because the complainant is of tender years, the Public Trustee, to review this whole matter related to the confusion created by the unusual circumstances that arose between what was said in the courtroom, what appeared on an order and what other people interpreted that order to mean. That matter will also be before the Queen's Bench tomorrow. Once that day is over, we can address the issue raised by the honourable member.

I remind him that the first concern is the protection of the complainant and the public.

Mr. Edwards: Quite so, Mr. Speaker, exactly why the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) raised this last Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, on the same issue, in the interim, while this discussion is taking place, will the minister take this opportunity to have his department communicate with news networks in Manitoba to clear up any confusion which now exists—and it does

exist—about this government's intention to enforce similar such court orders of which there are of course literally hundreds involving all kinds of cases around this province?

Mr. McCrae: I think the news director for the media outlet involved and the honourable member for St. James may enjoy the luxury of jumping to the conclusion that certain things are or are not. We do have a justice system whose function it is to get to the bottom of these things. We will ensure that this matter is very carefully reviewed.

I remind the honourable member that I think the protection of the complainant is the first thing we ought to be concerned about and protection of the public as well.

Criminal Code of Canada Review

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, finally for the minister, given that this case raises the whole issue of exceptions to the normal rule that everything in court is public, will the minister undertake as part of his work this week to have his staff review the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada dealing with these exceptions, giving judges power to impose these exceptions, and provide the critics of this House with copies of that review or some information after that review is done, so that we might jointly decide whether or not to petition the federal minister to make changes, given that apparently in this case those exceptions did not work in the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think the honourable member and his Leader have taken an interest in this case for obviously all the right reasons. I appreciate that.

I will take all of the honourable member's questions into account in the work that is being done on the part of the Crown this week.

National Mathematics Assessment Test Minister's Review

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, on Friday when I asked the Minister of Education about the school achievement indicators program for 13- and 16-year-olds, the minister responded, and I quote: Each province had the opportunity to review the exam and secondly, we will be able to look at

Manitoba in relation to the other provinces across Canada in terms of our math achievement.

I want to ask the minister, after having reviewed the test, does she feel that it accurately reflects the work covered in Manitoba in the mathematics curriculum for 13- and 16-year-olds?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again, in setting up an exam which was acceptable to all provinces across Canada, those which are participating—all but Saskatchewan—it did take a great deal of work; therefore, it has been divided into a number of areas, into five areas, and then there are levels which will be tested.

Some of the material which is being tested on the SAIP exam is also covered in courses other than the mathematics courses. It is covered in areas such as geography and science. Therefore, we believe that Manitoba's curriculum is covered within the assessment.

Manitoba Curriculum Relevancy

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, is the minister not aware of the fact that many math concepts being tested of Grade 11s, in the 16-year-olds' test, are not even covered in the Manitoba curriculum for Grade 11, and they are not covered until Grade 12? How is that a relevant test to give Grade 11 students?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): As I said, we are confident in Manitoba that our curriculum is being assessed by the SAIP test, and we do recognize that in some provinces across Canada, some of the areas that are being assessed are not necessarily taught within the math program specifically.

I did mention there are two other courses which also teach some of the areas which are being examined which are not specifically covered in the math test, but which are covered within the math curriculum, but which are covered within the geography and the science curriculum.

* (1410)

Mr. Plohman: Many of them are not covered at all, Mr. Speaker.

Cost to Manitoba

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Can the minister please tell this House: How much of taxpayers' money is the minister spending on a national test,

when there is no national curriculum in this country, and which will have only the effect of demoralizing and frustrating students and teachers who have not even covered the material? What is she trying to prove with this test?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, it seems that member is not in support of this assessment process, is not in support of what Manitobans have been asking for, and that is the issue of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are in support of accountability, and therefore we worked very hard over the last three years to see that Manitoba's curriculum would be covered in the assessment. Yes, there has been an amount of money spent by the Council of Ministers of Education across Canada, but if the member knows, each province does pay a different amount of money to belong to the Council of Ministers of Education.

Antiracism Strategy Employer Awareness Pamphlet

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Every week, Mr. Speaker, we hear of another incident of alleged racism. We do not want to have to keep coming to this House and raising this troublesome matter on an incident-by-incident basis.

What we would much rather have is a concerted plan of action to combat racism from this government—something that was recommended two and a half years ago by the Manitoba Intercultural Council, which tabled a very substantive report, but instead of acting on this report, this government has allowed it to gather dust and cobwebs.

I want to ask the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism about several of those recommendations. Let me begin with the recommendation on an employment awareness pamphlet. I would like to ask the minister if she has begun to take steps to implement the recommendation made two and a half years ago, for an employer awareness pamphlet outlining the benefits and advantages to our community of utilizing all the valuable human resources in our province.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have accomplished much in the area of trying to promote racial harmony as a government. Our

Multiculturalism Act that was unanimously supported in this House last year did talk about racial harmony.

We have hired within government an antiracism co-ordinator, an antiracism outreach officer. We had a joint project with the Manitoba Federation of Labour a couple of years ago, where our staff was seconded to work with them so that we could look at—I mean, the Federation of Labour was very interested in the workplace, in accomplishing a more positive and tolerant workforce.

We were concerned within government, too, that we establish some new programming. As a result of that, there were several modules that were developed. They have been piloted within my department in government. We have talked about a more respectful workplace. Those modules that were successfully piloted within my department have been shared throughout the civil service now so that we can deal with the issue of racial harmony.

MLA Cross-Cultural Training

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question about an employer awareness program, a cultural awareness program, among all employers in the province of Manitoba.

Let me ask her about another recommendation then, since I have not seen any evidence of this. When will the government of Manitoba, as recommended by MIC two and a half years ago, provide a one-day cross-cultural sensitization workshop to all members of this Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, I would think that we are attempting to deal within government, and I believe that the Manitoba Federation of Labour is dealing very proactively throughout the community also. This is a partnership, and there is not government alone or any one segment of society that can deal with the issue of racism. It must include and involve every member, every Manitoban, including members of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, the Manitoba Intercultural Council last year did put on a one-day seminar that looked at cross-cultural sensitivity, and I think many members of the Legislature did attend.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: If the minister would like us to organize that seminar, we would certainly be happy to.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member, this is not a time for debate. The honourable member for St. Johns, with your question, please.

Education System

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Finally, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism what steps she has taken to implement the recommendation that the Department of Education provide training to every teacher in Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: Every.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Every teacher in Manitoba, yes, in dealing with racist incidents in the school system.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, indeed, my colleague the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. Vodrey) last year did announce our multicultural education policy that does deal with multiculturalism and all the different components within the education system.

I note that through our Bridging Cultures Program that was implemented by this government back in 1991, there are partnerships within the community between the RCMP, between different school divisions and different schools, that do promote the understanding of racial harmony.

There have been two very successful events held in the week of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination whereby different schools in conjunction with the community have participated in very positive programs that deal with racism and trying to promote racial harmony.

Grain Transportation Method of Payment

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, farmers in Manitoba and across the country have been dealt another blow by the federal government in last week's budget. One of the concerns is that they have been told that the transportation assistance will be further reduced. Farmers feel in fact that they are being blackmailed into the proposal to pay the producer. Even though there is a vote against it, nobody is listening to them.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture: When is he going to start making strong representation for Manitoba farmers to the federal government? When is he going to start speaking up for them—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question. Move right along.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the member obviously has not been paying attention to what has been going on over the last five years. It was an issue that has been on the agenda and been talked about many times at federal-provincial meetings, at western ministers' meetings.

Then the member also has been told in the past that an advisory council has been set up to advise me and the government on how to address this issue. That group has been in place since 1989, met many times, done four studies, most of which have been released to the citizens of the province of Manitoba. They continue to analyze the issue and make recommendations to me.

The representation on the advisory council is from Manitoba Pool, UGG, UMM and Keystone Agricultural Producers.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister then, what is his proposal for Manitoba? Even though farmers do not want to have the money paid to them, what is his proposal? When will he go to the public and tell them what his plans are on how the funds are supposed to be distributed in Manitoba?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the process used by the advisory council, on recommendations from me, is to look at the issue to be sure that the interests of Manitoba farmers are kept first and foremost and that many of the glitches in the proposals have been addressed in that process, and to be sure that whatever is done is for the absolute best for the economy of the province of Manitoba.

Beekeepers U.S. Import Ban

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, another area that has been affected by the federal budget that I would like to address—Manitoba beekeepers are very concerned that the federal government is intending to lift the ban that will allow contaminated bees to come into Canada.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture to tell us whether he is standing with the bee producers on

this one or is he caving in to Charlie Mayer, and are those bees going to come into Canada?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Varroa mite has been a real problem. It has spread throughout the United States. The ban was put in place in 1987, and the ban has been in place in two-year periods since then. The next period is up at the end of 1993.

My representation, on behalf of beekeepers of Manitoba, is that until there is evidence that the Varroa mite will not infest Manitoba in that process, we do not see any positive reasons for opening that border to bees being imported from the United States.

* (1420)

Construction Industry Wage Freeze

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, in July 1992, the Greater Winnipeg Building Construction Wages Board met, as they are required to by law, to prepare construction wage schedules. Subsequent public hearings called for those wage increases to be implemented.

Could the Minister of Labour tell us why he has ignored those recommendations and those public hearings and has chosen, unilaterally, to freeze the wage level in that industry?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the honourable member to look at the statute because she has implied in her question the fact that when the wage boards make a recommendation, that it should automatically become law. They make in fact a recommendation.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, could the minister then make a commitment to review his decision not to accept that recommendation and to unilaterally freeze construction wages in view of the fact that the aims of this act are to create a level playing field in the industry bidding?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made to not accept those recommendations.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, then will the minister kindly tell us when he will make that decision?

Mr. Praznik: In due course.

Solvent Abuse Legislation Proclamation

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, three years ago our caucus introduced legislation which was passed unanimously by this Legislature aimed at curbing solvent abuse.

Since that time, this government has refused to proclaim that legislation or to take any real action on this devastating problem. In the meantime, there have been dozens of tragic deaths as a result of solvent abuse. This weekend, two men from Shamattawa died.

My question is to the Minister of Justice. Why has he refused to take action to amend the private members' bill or bring in government legislation before now? How can he justify having waited for three years while the number of deaths has increased?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am sure the honourable member was here earlier today, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps he was busy with other things. The bill was introduced for first reading just a little while ago.

Solvent Abuse Northern Treatment Centre

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): The deaths this weekend have sparked calls for a northern treatment facility to deal with the growing problem of sniffing in northern and remote communities.

Will the Minister of Health support MKO in their lobbying efforts to establish a treatment centre in the North to assist the more than 2,200 solvent abusers in the region?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I know that those jurisdictions have been in discussions for a number of years with the federal government on a treatment centre. I think that, given the tenor of shift in approach to resolving problems, all of us have an obligation to work on prevention and education and avoid the problems ahead of the difficulty rather than seeking investment in treatment after the fact, Sir.

Farmers Alfalfa Products Status Report

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism today whether he can give us an update on the current situation with the Dauphin alfalfa plant,

as I asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon) last week and the minister previously about the many concerns in the Parkland region, the Dauphin area, about the major employer, some 27 jobs over the last 20 years.

This is a crisis for that plant at this particular time in the short term. I am asking the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism whether he can report any additional developments on that issue to the House today.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): When officials from our government met with the alfalfa producers some 10 days ago, two weeks ago, one of the undertakings was that they are developing a business plan in conjunction with the Federal Business Development Bank. That business plan is expected this week.

Government Assistance

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the minister may be aware that Saskatchewan has just opened a new plant which has Western Diversification money in it as well as money from the Saskatchewan Development Fund Corporation.

Does this in any way serve as a precedent for the minister to realize that he has to provide some assistance and support to initiating such a major priority area as diversification in agriculture?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): As I indicated, when asked the question several weeks ago by the honourable member for Dauphin, the concern is the long-term viability. That was part of the reason that we have been supportive of the producers working with the Federal Business Development Bank to develop a business plan and a long-term plan.

They are doing just that. We expect to receive that plan this particular week, Mr. Speaker, and we will review it at that point in time. As the Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicated when answering a question a week or 10 days ago, clearly that is the most fundamental issue here: the long-term viability. We are waiting to see what they come forward with from this business plan.

We are not interested in something that is short term. We do not normally provide working capital; that is the case with most of the programs of government, whether it has been this government or previous governments. We do not have working-capital support programs.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Gimli have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Excuse me one moment. Did Hansard pick that up, by the way? We are having a little bit of difficulty with Hansard at this point in time. Okay, that is it. The honourable member for Gimli, now we are okay.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to pay tribute to an excellent facility in the Gimli constituency that was opened this past weekend. The Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre was officially opened as part of the 1st Annual Waterfowl Festival. The festival offered family events and displays at the marsh, as well as in Stonewall and in Selkirk.

As part of the ceremonies at the marsh, 300 Boy Scouts and Girl Guides planted 10,000 trees and shrubs. Thousands of people turned out for the festival. I was there, as was the Honourable Harry Enns the Minister of Natural Resources, and a number of other MLAs. By all accounts, the festival was a huge success and, hopefully, will be held every year for many years to come.

Of course, the highlight was the official opening of the Conservation Centre which is a joint venture between the Province of Manitoba, Department of Natural Resources and Ducks Unlimited. During the opening ceremonies, Mr. Speaker, a flock of Canada geese flew over as if to officially sanction the opening of the event.

Mr. Speaker, Oak Hammock Marsh with its 28 kilometres of hiking trails has always been a beautiful location for people to enjoy Manitoba's outdoors, but now with the addition of the Conservation Centre, Oak Hammock Marsh is a world-class site that protects our beautiful natural resources, while serving the thousands of visitors that are expected this year. Oak Hammock Marsh is home to hundreds of bird species, 26 species of mammals and dozens of other living things and through careful planning, these birds, animals and their natural surroundings are all protected.

The Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre is a 2,100 square metre wetland wonderland which provides a learning experience surrounded by nature. Inside the Interpretive Centre, there are

aquariums full of plants, fish and other interesting exhibits. As well, there is a remote controlled camera that lets visitors zoom in on the birds way out in the marsh. The facility also features exhibit halls, a theatre, a seminar room, a laboratory, display courtyard, craft area, art shows, artifacts and, of course, the marsh just outside. The Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre also houses the national offices of Ducks Unlimited Canada, along with the Manitoba headquarters.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, the Conservation Centre is an impressive facility that will make a person's visit to the marsh fun and educational. I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing Oak Hammock Marsh, a fine Manitoba tourist attraction which makes it possible for visitors to enjoy the beauty of protected marshlands.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Johns have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

* (1430)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, today is Arbor Day, as has been acknowledged by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) and symbolized by the trees on our desk.

The official City of Winnipeg ceremonies for Arbor Day took place at a school in my constituency today, that being Luxton School. A tree was planted and all of us, including the students and officials, were reminded of the significance of planting even just one tree with statistics like the fact that one tree acts like 10 air conditioners running 20 hours a day, or that one tree counteracts the carbon monoxide of six cars. The 1993 Arbor Day contest winners are Grade 5 students from Luxton School. They are Troy Slater, Garth Madden, and April Ludwick.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close my remarks by citing briefly from a poem written by Jen Winterburn from Luxton School, who is in Grade 7. Part of her poem goes as follows: The leaves and branches of trees give shade, and they create clean air, but sadly, trees are cut down millions by the minute, and we don't have that many to spare! What a change people could make, if everybody planted just one little tree, our world would become so much more beautiful, it can happen, just you wait and see.

I would like to congratulate all students who have participated in Arbor Day, and particularly those at Luxton School. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Family Services; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Highways and Transportation.

* (1440)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates of Family Services.

When the committee last sat it had been considering item 4.(a) on page 57 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to refer to a news release that the minister put out on November 5, 1992, entitled: Pilot Project to Assist Manitobans with Disabilities. The main announcement that was made was the announcement of a \$2.4-million two-year pilot project to assist Manitobans with disabilities to live more independently in the community.

I would like to ask the minister, what has happened to this pilot project since November 5?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Well, it is moving a little slower than we anticipated, but our objectives remain the same. We want to move some of the individuals who are in the various institutions and perhaps located elsewhere into the community. A lot of work went into this. We are moving slowly but carefully ahead with it.

Mr. Martindale: Has there been a reduction in the budget and, if so, by how much?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The budget is going to be cut across a couple of budget years. Our intention is to be sure that we establish a process that is acceptable, and we have selected some individuals that are going to be participating in the program. At this time, I am told there are 10 that have been selected so far. Our objective was to have a total of 25 who were participating. Again, we are moving cautiously, but we are proceeding with it.

Mr. Martindale: I understand the budget has been reduced from \$2.4 million to \$1.1 million. Is that the case for this year, or is it some other figure?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would point out that the \$2.4 million was over two years.

Mr. Martindale: Would it be correct to say that the 10 individuals will be assisted to live independently in the first year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: These are the first 10 that have been selected. As we move to implementing the program, it is I think a fair assumption that they will be the ones that will be included.

Mr. Martindale: The additional 15 individuals, when will they be assisted to live independently?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think it is fair to say, some work is being done at this time in a number of areas of the initiative. Part of the initiative is to identify others who would be sound choices in implementing this.

Mr. Martindale: The additional 15 individuals have not been chosen yet, is that correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am saying it is in process.

Mr. Martindale: What has happened to the Working Group on Community Living? Are they still meeting or are they disbanded?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is the group that recommended the pilot. They have now completed their work. Some of those individuals are part of the Provincial Management Committee that is overseeing this project.

Mr. Martindale: What is the status of the volunteer community support teams? Are they still in place, and are they working with individuals to help with the transition and, I assume, to provide support in the community?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, that is part of a larger initiative, and that, too, is in process.

Mr. Martindale: The news release refers to a public awareness campaign. Can the minister tell us what is happening by way of public awareness?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is a portion of the initiative that will be, I think, part of the latter stages of this initiative.

Mr. Martindale: What will the public awareness campaign consist of? Will it be a brochure, or does the minister have something else planned?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The public awareness campaign, obviously, is, as it states, to inform the public of the circumstances of individuals who are part of this target group but also part of this larger community. I think that the obvious things that you do in public awareness is things like brochures, but I think also that members of our department have a role to play in disseminating information to the broader community. I would say to the member that part of the communications we have had in doing this project and part of the communications that we have had in doing the lead-up to the legislation is part and parcel of this communication. I think it has been very effective, from the letters that I have received from members of this community. There is a greater awareness.

Obviously, there are ways of doing that through newspaper articles, through the school system, through some of the service clubs, through some of the advocacy groups that exist, and I think that the advocacy groups who are, for the most part, apart from government have done a great job in keeping this issue alive in the communities, whether it is targeted through specific initiatives or in some cases it is through their fund raising. So this is an ongoing issue that is before the department, and it was raised as part of this initiative. I can say that it is on our minds as we work towards implementing.

Mr. Martindale: The news release refers to consultation with the disabled community. Can the minister tell us what kinds of consultation happened in the past in developing this pilot project, and are consultations still ongoing?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The answer is yes, as we meet with the various groups. Maybe if I told the member a little bit about the Provincial Management Committee, it is comprised of representatives of the community. Maybe I could even give you the names of the people on this particular Provincial Management Committee. Vicki Burns, who was part of The Mental Health Act review, who is part of

the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers, and who has worked with the Community Living community, is one of the members. Mr. Allan Simpson, who was on the working group and is part of the Independent Living Resource Centre, is another one.

Michael Hill from the business community was on the working group on Community Living. Arlene Gibson is from the rural Community Living resources and was part of the working group. Dale Kendel is with the Association for Community Living, and Jake Dyck is part of the Abilities Network. Tannis Mindell is with our department; as well, Kim Sharman, Ian Lambert and Allan Hansen, also departmental people, are part of this Provincial Management Committee, and are the team that has been meeting on this initiative.

Mr. Martindale: The news release refers to new initiatives, including follow-up services such as job coaching, counselling and worksite supports, to help individuals with disabilities maintain competitive jobs. Has this been implemented or are you still working on it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We do this through some of the external agencies that we fund. Of course, that is very dependent on the clientele that they are working with, but I can tell you that there are a number of groups who are currently placing individuals in the workplace. Some of them require almost full-time, one-to-one supervision; others have become more independent. This is part of the ongoing work and the ongoing relationship between this branch of the department and a number of the community groups.

Mr. Martindale: The news release also refers to a project using CareerStart and on-site training and support to help 40 high school students. Has there been any change in that due to this year's budget?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We are proceeding with that.

Mr. Martindale: So 40 high school students will be assisted?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

* (1450)

Mr. Martindale: What is in place after students graduate? For example, what has happened to last year's graduates, and what will happen to this year's graduates? Do they receive assistance into the job market?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I presume you are talking about graduates from the public school system.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I assume it means students who are already integrated in the public school system.

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have follow-up services that we provide through some of our external agencies such as Sturgeon Creek and Premier Personnel. We have a limited ability to continue to work with a number of these graduates. There is a turnover which provides some openings for additional students to access programming, and there are times when some of these graduates have to go on a waiting list prior to accessing programs.

Mr. Martindale: How many students will be graduating at the end of this school term in June '93?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it will be in the area of 50.

Mr. Martindale: What is in place to assist them to get into the job market at the end of June?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have staff within the department that are involved in some transition planning. Some of them will be going into day programs, and our staff work with those individuals as resources allow to have them become part of the community. You can appreciate that all these 50 are individuals and some will have the capacity to access programming better than others. I think it is fair to say that we do not have the resources or the staff to accommodate everybody.

Mr. Martindale: When will legislation respecting vulnerable persons—I guess it will become The Vulnerable Persons and Consequential Amendments Act—be introduced?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am confident that we will be doing that this week.

Mr. Martindale: There are further items in this news release that have dollar amounts attached to them, so I would like to know if those have changed due to this budget. It says additional funding of \$341,600 for Children's Special Services this year to meet demand. Has that figure changed as a result of the budget?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That was part of last year's budget that was in place.

Mr. Martindale: What is happening to that budget item in this year's budget?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am informed that an additional \$158,000 is budgeted in this current budget that we are debating today.

Mr. Martindale: Will the additional funds be used to hire more staff to provide more service, or what is the purpose of the additional funding? I am pleased to see that it is up, and I am just curious to know what it will be spent on.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Most of that funding will be to accommodate our provincial caseload, which is estimated to be around 1,545 children, and we anticipate with that budget we will no longer have a waiting list in Children's Special Services.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in terms of the clients that are covered here in Community Living and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, I understand that for the most part they remain within the school system until they are 18, or is it now 21?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Twenty-one.

Mrs. Carstairs: So they remain there until 21, and then they go to a variety of workshop experiences or nonworkshop if they can find regular employment. How many of these individuals find no program in any given year? Do you have numbers on that?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I can indicate the number of individuals that are being accommodated in day services as of March 11 of this year. The total that we are accommodating is 1,757. These are broken down on a regional basis, with almost 700 of them in Winnipeg, and then the rest throughout Westman, Parkland, Eastman, central Norman, Interlake and Thompson.

Mrs. Carstairs: I thank the minister for that information, but that was not really my question.

I am frequently contacted, and I know the department is, by individuals who say their young people have left school and there is not a program. This never happens when they are in a group home situation because they have to have a day program, but it does happen for those individuals who live at home.

Does the minister have any number on how many of them are living at home without any form of day program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: No, we do not have a number on those that return home and do not access a day program.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

In some cases the alternative, of course, as you have indicated, is not to access a group home living accommodation, but they live with their parents. We accommodate many of the ones who are able to go into a job placement. We also do have a waiting list of people we have not been able to accommodate at this time, but there are some who, after they finish their, let us say, formal education, do remain at home with family.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me how many people are on that waiting list at the present time?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have waiting lists for day programming or day services, and there are just over 200 people who are on that waiting list at this time.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is it not, to the minister, somewhat unfair that if a family has, for whatever reason, found it impossible for them to keep their family member within the family environment and have moved them into a group home or alternate facility, and they are guaranteed a day program, but a family that keeps that person within the family unit cannot be guaranteed a day program?

I mean, is that not inequitable and does not it lead to more and more of them wanting to put their people into other living accommodations because they fear the burden will be just too excessive once these young people are no longer in school at least six or seven hours a day?

* (1500)

Mr. Gilleshammer: This is an area of our department where we do not have as many resources as we require to accommodate all of the individuals who are looking for facilities, whether it is for community residences or for day programs. We are often faced with the prospect that the community itself comes forward with the funding for those residences. Often it is parental involvement that creates those residences and the funding which comes from service clubs, which comes from the Manitoba Marathon and other fund raising, that allows those individuals to access both the day program and the community residence.

We in the department have incrementally tried to provide more resources every year. Yet we are still faced there with a waiting list. So I think what the member is saying is that where the family and the community have gone ahead and created these

residences, they are providing housing and programming for their family ahead of others who are in the community, and that is correct.

Mrs. Carstairs: It is not quite as simple as that, because—and I am sure the minister has heard the same scenario, but I have had a number of people in a number of different communities that have come forward and said, the reality is that my son or daughter is shortchanged because I keep him or her at home. I pay all of the living accommodations and I have them live with me, but if I turned them out in the street tomorrow, the government would have to find them a group home and the government would have to provide for a day program.

It is not a lot of incentive, it seems to me, to want to keep these people within your home situation. I can understand their frustration. They say, what can you do? You say, well, you know go on the waiting list and apply and hope that the program turns up.

I had one couple that said to me literally, two weeks ago, we are going to put the young person out on the street because it seems to be a better alternative for him.

Mr. Gilleshammer: There certainly is divergent thinking. I have talked to people such as the ones you reference and also talked to others who are so committed to maintaining the family unit and so committed to keeping their child at home and really do not ask a lot from society or a lot from government, so we have, I guess, quite a variety of scenarios. But you are absolutely right, there is that group as part of that spectrum who say, we know we can force this issue simply by turning the child or the young person over to the state, and then that programming and accommodation will be taken care of.

Until we have all of the resources that we need to provide a variety of services for these individuals, we try to have that balance where we can work with families who want to maintain that child. Some of them are very fiercely independent, saying, this is our responsibility, and the spectrum goes right over to the scenario that you described, where they know they can force their hand. As a department, we try to provide that balance where we are providing some level of service to all of these people, and trying to provide the additional apartment living, the additional respite, the additional day programming, transportation and what have you.

I look forward to the day when we have those resources where we can truly accommodate everyone. We have increased our budget lines here over the last number of budgets, but we still are not near the point where we can accommodate everybody.

Mrs. Carstairs: Does the minister have the external agencies listing for us today?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am aware that the member requested this the last day, and I would like to table the grants list at this time.

Mrs. Carstairs: The Province of Quebec, not this last budget but the previous budget—and it has not been changed since then, introduced a tax-credit system for those who had seniors living within their homes.

Has the department looked at that, not specifically with regard to seniors, since this is not their responsibility, but has there been any evaluation done about a similar tax-credit system for someone living within the home that would be considered special needs?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We as a department have not specifically looked at that, although we do carry on discussions with that branch of the Finance department on a regular basis.

Again, I think I said this in reference to another area of the department that—and it was when we were talking about the—I am just searching for the word here—guaranteed income, that there are so many tax transfers that are within government, within the departments of finance, that we would have no difficulty recommending a total sort of rationalization and review of what the federal government and provincial governments do in that area.

I would, again, take that as information and something that we can certainly take a look at within this department. Because I think if there is any incentive at all for family units to remain together, and to have family units have that ability to participate more and more in the day programming, the housing, the respite, that this is a direction we want to move.

Mrs. Carstairs: I thank the minister, and that is all I really wanted him to take it as, as information, because I think it might be a way of freeing up some cash within the family unit, that they may even be able to buy additional programming with that

freed-up cash for this particular individual within their family unit.

* (1510)

Mr. Gilleshammer: I will just add a comment to that. Many of the families that I have been familiar with in my communities in western Manitoba, again, really do not ask a lot of government, and I think it would be well received and would certainly promote the keeping together of that family unit even more. The cases that I see most often is that of the aging parent where they will need more respite, but will do almost anything to retain that family unit together and that may be a way of furthering it.

Mrs. Carstairs: I am prepared to move into the subappropriations of this unless the other critic has some questions.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I would prefer to ask more questions here, because I am not sure what pages my questions are appropriate on, if that is okay with the minister.

Mr. Gilleshammer: You just want to have a general discussion and pass the lines afterwards?

Mr. Martindale: Well, most of my questions here, I think, have to do with Rehab and Community Living, so I guess we could go on to 4.(b).

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Relmer): 4. Rehabilitation, Community Living and Day Care (a) Administration (1) Salaries \$614,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$232,000—pass.

Item 4.(b)(1) Adult Services (a) Salaries \$1,110,600.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to go back and ask a couple more questions on areas that I have already talked about, but I think it will be fairly brief.

Could you tell us the anticipated proclamation date for The Vulnerable Persons Act?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I do not think I can give you an answer to that. I have indicated that our intention is to introduce it this week. Again, I am anticipating that with the support of the critics and after debate, we will pass it in June. I would think that in the fall, we have to meet some more with the community and internally. There are decisions to be made afterwards. I am sure that will take us into the year 1994. I guess my experience with the Children's Advocate is that it takes some process time and some discussion time, so it may not be dissimilar to that time line.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister have any plans to extend legislation to include other groups who are vulnerable?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, that is sort of a debate, I guess, that has not been held yet. I am aware that outside of the Association for Community Living, it is possible to have a much broader definition of vulnerable people. That can be broken into a number of subgroups, I suppose, and various definitions put to it. We were, in framing this legislation, very targeted to the group that came under the umbrella of The Mental Health Act, Part II, and all of our efforts have been channelled in that direction to deal with that particular target group.

I would say that the member is asking a question that we will have to deal with in our next mandate. This legislation has to be passed and proclaimed. We need to gain some experience in putting this legislation to work. I think there will be time after that where that debate on the expansion of the definition of vulnerable people may be looked at as we get into the 1990s a little further.

Mr. Martindale: I certainly acknowledge that it takes time to do these things, and if you are going to do them you should do them right. I think the Children's Advocate bill is a good example of that, of how the minister did not do it right the first time and now is running into problems.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the member is part of a caucus that was in government most of the 1980s when this was first brought up, in 1982, and did absolutely nothing. I would not sit there and take much glee in saying this was legislation that was inadequate. This was legislation that the previous government completely ignored and had been approached on a number of occasions to do that. I hesitate to get into that debate, but the member brought it up.

We will proceed with the legislation on The Vulnerable Persons Act in a planned and orderly way and, I think, very importantly gain some experience. This is legislation that, in my mind, is good legislation, landmark legislation that other jurisdictions are going to look at. Maybe in practice there will be need to make amendments and changes, but we are committed to bringing it in and committed to bringing it into force in due course.

Mr. Martindale: I am pleased to hear that The Vulnerable Persons Act will proceed in a planned

and orderly way. As far as I know, there has been good consultation with people in the community.

I would like to go back briefly to the Pilot Project to Assist Manitobans with Disabilities. The original announcement said 25 individuals would be chosen. Could the minister tell us if there were more than 25 people who applied or expressed an interest or a need and wanted to be part of the demonstration project?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Probably a different way of phrasing that is, we looked at a broader group than that, some of which are housed within our institutions, others are in the community. The project was going to be limited to 25 individuals.

We did have a group at MDC in Portage who were part of a transition unit there. Some of them will be in this target. We received 140 completed referral forms from applicants. These were part of the selection process.

Mr. Martindale: If 140 applications were received and hopefully eventually 25 will be accommodated, what has happened to the other people and how does the department intend to respond to their needs?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, their needs will continue to be looked after within the family or within the housing arrangements that they are currently a part of. The largest component of those who are living in institutions are at MDC, where we have in excess of 500—it is around 574 or 575 clients. We still have 230—some at St. Amant and around 70 at Pelican Lake Training Centre. Others are living in group homes. We continue to monitor the individual cases and do case planning with and for them. The 25 that we are targeting for this particular initiative come from that particular backdrop.

Mr. Martindale: Are there individual plans and does individual planning take place for individuals who live with the mentally handicapped?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, for the majority of these clients there are individual plans in place, and there is planning taking place in a larger sense with the individuals who come under the umbrella of this part of the department.

Mr. Martindale: Who is usually involved in the formulation of a plan for an individual?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, it depends on the geographic area that we are talking about and depends on the circumstances of the individual. If

it is someone who is living at home, we try to involve the family and do involve the family, also the family service worker, and to as great a degree as we can, we would involve the individual.

Mr. Martindale: How is the individual part of the plan? Are they consulted, or do they have some control or direct say in the plan?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This very much is dependent on the individual, as you can appreciate. If you have ever had the opportunity to tour MDC or Pelican Lake Training Centre or St. Amant, you will realize that there is a range of individuals who are in those settings and in some cases are quite capable of being part of the plan.

Unfortunately, there are others where the family, of course, must represent them, and we do have Family Services workers who are involved. I think it is, again, an area, with the legislation that is coming forward, that we want to put more responsibility on the department in some cases to ensure that plans are up to date. In all cases where the individual can be involved, where the family can be involved, most certainly they are a big part of it.

* (1520)

Mr. Martindale: It seems to me that there may be a difference between having a plan and having the resources to implement the plan. Who decides or who allocates the resources to implement a plan? Also, I would hope that people are not encouraged to make a plan and then find afterwards that the resources are not available, so that people's expectations are not being raised and then people are being disappointed because the resources are not available to implement a plan.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think what the member is saying is that a plan should be realistic, and I wholeheartedly agree. I think that the importance of involving the individual and family, professional staff is to come forward with a realistic plan. That is a care plan in some cases, is a medical plan, is an activity plan, is a long-range plan. You can appreciate that, in this area of the department, resources are definitely an issue. As I indicated to the Leader of the Liberal Party, resources have not kept up with demand. We have not been able to access the resources that would allow us to maximize the possibilities for individuals.

In some cases, the family is still the primary caregiver and still is very involved in the planning for the individual. So there are, I think, very delicate

issues that have to be addressed, and, for sure, resources continue to be an issue in providing as much appropriate planning and programming as we want to for these individuals.

There is such a wide spectrum of people who access services from government or government agencies in this area that the planning component of it is becoming more and more critical in being able to have these people achieve a lifestyle that is satisfactory to them.

Mr. Martindale: I can appreciate what the minister is saying. I have been to St. Amant Centre twice. I can also appreciate, as the minister says, that there are delicate issues and that planning needs to be appropriate, which leads to the question: How are staff trained to develop individual plans, not just department staff but also agencies? Is there training that goes along to assist in the appropriate development of plans?

Mr. Gilleshammer: For sure there is, and the member can recognize the very broad spectrum of abilities that are required from those that are in an institution like St. Amant. We have just participated in a review of St. Amant, which, I think, has been well received by the board and the staff there, where they need skills and training that certainly are not required at the Pelican Lake Training Centre.

We do have a budgeted amount of \$254,000 to be spent on staff development and training, but you can appreciate that within those institutions, training and in-servicing is an ongoing thing as there are changing needs and demands and changing staff. We also have to be sure that our own staff, who work in our regional offices and who work in the whole area of community living, are kept as current as possible in being able to provide the type of training and expertise that is required. So training for both government and nongovernment staff is an important component and an important issue in this area of the department.

Mr. Martindale: So the \$254,000 that the minister referred to includes government and non-government. Does it include boards and parents as well?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, part of the training is for board development. I just, in my previous answer, indicated that we did go through a very intensive review with the St. Amant Centre to look at their operation, which is unique. In many ways it appears more like a hospital than it does a developmental

centre. I have a list here of, I would think, 20 or 30 programs that we fund from that particular budget line. Probably you do not want me to read through it, but it does involve government and nongovernment agencies, and there is quite a variety of issues that is dealt with here in terms of their training activities.

Mr. Martindale: Perhaps the minister could share that list with both critics, if possible.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, we can make copies of that for you.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for that.

Could you tell us a few more of the specifics of the training? Who conducts the training? Is the money given to the boards to conduct their own training? Who is involved, and what sort of expectations, what kind of outcomes, are expected or anticipated?

Mr. Gilleshammer: For the most part, we contract with agencies, and they in turn will bring in experts in the field. Maybe I will just read a couple. It might make more sense to you.

We helped to sponsor The Abilities Network conference. We participated financially in some behaviour intervention training. We participated with some money in communications training, and if you have been to St. Amant or to MDC, you will recognize that communications takes place in a variety of ways.

We gave some grant money for some first aid in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation training. We gave a grant to a course called Gentle Teaching, which might be of benefit not only to service providers in this area, but maybe in a number of areas. We spent some money on a number of publications. We provided some residential care provider training. We helped to fund the St. Amant conference. We have provided money for transitional planning. So there is a broad spectrum of training, and a lot of it is contracted out to people who provide that particular service and expertise.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

* (1530)

Mr. Martindale: Does the Department of Family Services plan or support training for parents who have a son or daughter who live with a mental handicap?

Mr. Gilleshammer: To a degree, the training, I would say, comes from the Family Services worker who will work with the client and the family to better understand some of the issues that are coming forward, but as for paying for formalized courses, I do not think we do that.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister think this is something that is important and that perhaps it should take place in a more formalized way?

The answer the minister gave suggests that it is really happening on a one-to-one basis from individual staff members who relate to a family. Does the minister think there might be a merit in getting groups of parents together and allocating some money for training of parents in group settings, since this kind of training is available to organizations and boards in other settings?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I know that parents do get together as they have common issues surrounding the care that they are giving. We provide as much advice and support as we can through our workers, but I guess the larger question the member is asking is, if you had more dollars within this branch, where would you spend it?

There are many places that we would look to spending additional dollars. If you ask the community, if they happen to be looking after their own individual family member, it might be respite that they want. For others, it may be training. Day programming is a big, big issue as children come out of the public school system, where they have started perhaps at age five or six and remain to age 21.

There needs to be a lot of work done with particular parents on the expectations that they have. You have probably talked to some of those parents, as I have, and they talk about the tremendous education that their son or daughter got at that institution, that high school. If you say, well, what is their reading level? They will say, well, they cannot really read. You say, what is their ability to do computations and some of the critical thinking? Well, that is not what their education was all about. So, if you get that understanding, then you can better understand the type of work experience that they could go into.

I know that I had the chance to go to the Sturgeon Creek Enterprises and look at some of the training they were doing and then we went to a job site at The Keg and watched one of the individuals working

there. I mean it was a tremendous feeling to see the job that they have done where there is still some support from the agency, but the individual is working and his work is valued. So there are many areas that we could spend that next dollar within this branch of Family Services.

Mr. Martindale: What are the department's plans to increase housing options for people with a mental handicap?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I can say to the member that we have had some gradual increases in independent living, and of course many of these individuals are accessing housing that is part of the Housing Department responsibility. So there is a certain amount of independent living that does take place, and it is dependent on the abilities of the client as much as the availability of space. I can tell you that in the last number of budgets we have increased the community residences, an increase in space of about 50 beds from '88-89; that supervised apartment living has increased by 97 spaces; respite—we have got support there for another 131 more individuals. So there have been sort of incremental changes in the whole area of housing and independent living.

Mr. Martindale: I understand that the Association for Community Living applied for 57 units of housing. Can the minister tell us how many units were actually allocated?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That application was not made to us.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us if there are waiting lists for the different kinds of housing, for example, group homes, apartments or foster homes?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think that I can say the answer is yes.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister indicate how many people are on waiting lists and how long it takes to get from a waiting list into an alternative kind of housing?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I indicated the changes over the last number of budgets where we have had a slow increase there, but we still have over a hundred people that are waiting for some sort of appropriate accommodation that they feel that they would like to access.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us approximately how long it takes on average for

people to find appropriate alternative accommodation? Maybe an average is not a very good question, but are we talking months or are we talking years?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There will be some variance in that, depending on the abilities of the individual and the type of accommodation they need, but I think it is fair to say that in some cases it would take more than a year and perhaps a couple of years to find appropriate accommodation. We are addressing this, again, at a rate that is not quite as quickly as we would like, but we are making some progress.

Mr. Martindale: How many people are currently supported by the department to live in apartments?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am informed we have 313 in apartments.

Mr. Martindale: Are there variations in rates or is there a standard funding formula for these individuals?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I am told there is a standardized funding formula, but some of them would be accessing some additional special needs funding.

Mr. Martindale: What is the formula that is used?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The actual rates are the responsibility of Income Security, and again that will depend on individual circumstances. Then there is a service rate whereby individuals are hired to provide that supervised apartment living training support. There are a couple of different rates there depending on their level of experience, but that is between \$7 and \$8 an hour.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us how many people live at the Manitoba Developmental Centre?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I indicated before there is around 575. If I can maybe get you an updated figure, it is 574.

Mr. Martindale: And how many at Pelican Lake?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is around 70.

Mr. Martindale: And St. Amant Centre?

Mr. Gilleshammer: 235.

Mr. Martindale: My understanding of one of the problems of moving people out of institutional care and into alternative settings is that, even though it usually costs much more to house people in institutions, the problem that government has is the hump funding because the cost at the institution may continue while some people have moved out

into other kinds of accommodation that may well be cheaper.

Is that a problem that you see, or is there an ongoing effort to move people out of institutions in spite of the hump funding problem, or is that not a problem at all? Are you only faced with the problems of limited dollars or moving people out at a steady rate as other alternatives become available?

* (1540)

Mr. Gilleshammer: There are a number of answers to that, I suppose, that I could give you. The largest cost that is related to those institutions is staffing, so if you have an institution with 574 and it goes down to 570, you do not save any money on staffing. I would think that in any institution you do not save much by closing a bed. You save a little more by closing a wing, and then if you close the whole institution, you are going to have some savings. Our costs are there to maintain those institutions.

The other thing is that while some people do leave the institution for one reason or another, there are others who may be coming in. It may be deemed to be the best place for them. It may be, again, a family decision that they feel that some training or remediation of behaviour or for whatever reason they would like to have them move into the institution. There are many factors working both ways for sure.

I remember talking to the minister in Saskatchewan, who had embarked around the late 1980s, 1990 on deinstitutionalizing, and they were so proud of the number of people they moved into the community. They, a province of similar size, had moved quite a number, hundreds of people, into the community, and they were now down to the numbers that we were at. It gets more and more difficult to move those individuals into the community.

The member has indicated he has been at St. Amant, and community living for some of them will be difficult to achieve. You get different philosophies at work too, where you have groups that argue very vehemently that everyone should live in the community, but at the same time you also get groups saying, no, this is the best circumstances for my child or for my dependant. The movement out of these institutions has certainly slowed.

That was the whole thrust of the working group on independent living. This pilot project that we have announced is to take 25 individuals who are in an institution or in some housing circumstances that the community feels they could manage independent living. We are working on that with that particular target group.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us if the department has plans to phase out institutional living completely, or do you anticipate that there will always be a minimum or a certain demand for those kinds of settings?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There are people in this room who have been working in this area of the department for virtually a lifetime, and you and I are relatively new at it, but I would say, I sure do not see that, if the goal was to shut down institutions, happening in the near future or the middle future. It is something that may well happen in the course of our lifetime, but there are not the resources, there are not the placements there at this time.

We will watch with very great interest as the hospital in Brandon is closing. The community is going to have to respond over the next four or five years to the deinstitutionalization of those individuals who are in the Brandon Mental Health Centre. It may be that we will learn a great deal from that particular program, but I think it is often the same broader community that we are dependent upon to come forward with housing and with programming, and I do not know whether it is fair to say there is some competition there. I readily admit it is a different client base, but the community is going to have to respond and adjust to that.

So I have never seen any targets that say these institutions will be shut down. In fact, I have heard compelling arguments to say that a place like St. Amant, which provides such a wonderful service, will be there for a long, long time. I invite you to make arrangements to go out to MDC and to see the job that they do there or if you have more time, go to Ninette and see the centre at Pelican Lake.

So I think when you look at the recommendations of this working group, to target 25 people over the next few years—not all of them coming from the institutions, by the way. We are a long way from even beginning to think that we could ever shut down institutions like that.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us how many went into the Manitoba Developmental Centre and

the Pelican Lake Training Centre and St. Amant during 1992-93?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Maybe I could start with MDC. For the year 1992-1993, we have, as I indicated, a population of 574, and there were five new admissions, eight readmissions for a total of 13; there were 18 discharges and 10 deaths of clients who resided there.

I could go to St. Amant. There were in 1991-92, so this is two years ago, but I think, just looking at the figures, it is sort of typical. There were 17 admissions, six discharges, and 16 deaths of clients there.

* (1550)

Mr. Martindale: Pelican Lake Training Centre?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We do not have that with us right at the moment, but we could get that for you. That is our smallest institution, and there are around 70 people there.

Mr. Martindale: How many incidents of physical and sexual abuse were reported from MDC, PLTC and St. Amant Centre during 1992-93?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Maybe I will just introduce Steve Bergson, who is joining us at the table. He is the individual who is in charge at MDC. I am told that there was one reported incident at MDC within the last year.

Mr. Martindale: Did this incident get reported to the police, or was it just dealt with internally?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I can indicate that it was referred to the police authorities, and it is currently before the courts.

Mr. Martindale: So it is going to prosecution then.

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is before the courts, I am told.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask some questions about respite care. I think a good definition would be that respite support is designed to give short-term relief to the primary caregiver such as parents, and be minimally disruptive to an individual's lifestyle.

Can the minister tell us how many children and families currently receive respite care?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, in the adult area, there are 625 persons that will be served in the current budget year.

Mr. Martindale: Would all their requests for respite care be honoured, or is there not enough money in

the budget to find respite care for all those families requesting it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have, I am told, been able to accommodate all of the requests so far, but I know from past experience over the last couple of years there does come a time in the year where certain families are asking for more. We make an effort to review the respite that they are receiving. If we can make a determination that perhaps somebody can do with a little less, then we can accommodate somebody who needs a little more.

This is always sort of a delicate situation, because once you put a service in place, it is difficult to reduce it. Yet the department I know, annually, attempts to share that respite money in the best way they possibly can.

On the children's side, we have a client load there of 1,545. All of those will be getting some degree of respite. Some of it is from what we call the family support fund, the vast majority of it as a matter of fact. A smaller number, 39 of that number, are deemed to be medically complex, where, as you would conclude, the family requires more support and more respite.

Mr. Martindale: How does the department determine who should get less respite?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, that was a comment I made in regard to the adult services. The department will have meetings with our professional staff from time to time, present a problem and attempt to work this through with the families involved to share the resources that are available and, I think, in many, many cases do it very admirably and very successfully.

Occasionally, there may be some disagreement. We have to rely on the professional abilities and professional judgment of those people that are involved to bring forward the best information and be part of the decision-making team.

Mr. Martindale: Are there waiting lists for respite care for either adults or children?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that on both sides of the program, both the adults and the children, we are able to accommodate the demand, to some degree, that is there. We may not always be able to accommodate that increased demand without literally asking somebody else to take a little less. So we are meeting that demand to a very large degree at this time.

Mr. Martindale: Are respite supports different for parental families, as opposed to foster families?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the difference is that with foster families they are dealing with the agency, and the agency also may have other resources that they can apply to the situation. So there is a different relationship where we deal directly with some of the families involved and where the families are fostering, but that will go through the Child and Family Services agency.

Mr. Martindale: The minister, when he refers to agency, means Child and Family Services agencies or the Manitoba Foster Family Association.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am referring to the Child and Family Services agencies.

Mr. Martindale: Does it make a difference whether the department is arranging for respite care or a Child and Family Services agency? If so, what difference?

(Mr. Harold Neufeld, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Gilleshammer: It may well make a difference in that all agencies do not make the same decisions. In a number of cases, agencies have to consider other aspects of the situation within the family, and that they may have other resources that they can call on to address the problem.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to move on now to crisis support. Could the minister tell us what the departmental objectives are for our crisis intervention services?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would say that for crisis intervention that the program description here is that it provides short-term individualized services for adults with a mental disability whose continuation in community placement is in immediate jeopardy. Crisis intervention is designed to provide immediate support pending the development and implementation of longer-term plans.

Mr. Martindale: Are crisis situations involving people with mental handicaps increasing or decreasing? What are the trends?

* (1600)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the information I have here is that it is fairly stable, that the actual people served in 1991-92 was 150. The estimated for the past budget year 1992-93 is 140. So there is a slight downward change. I would not call it a trend.

Mr. Martindale: What kinds of facilities or solutions, I guess, are used to solve crises, problems, and how many people were sent to the Manitoba Developmental Centre?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The solution will be different in different cases, as the member can appreciate. If it can be solved by having the placement continue by putting more staff into it on a short-term basis, that is the most common solution. To actually move the individual, if there is a need to do so, is disruptive, and that would not be the desired way of doing it.

The question that the member asked about the number who have been moved to MDC, I am told in the last budget year, there were eight who were relocated, some on a temporary basis. Eight of them were entered into MDC.

Mr. Martindale: Why are people sent to MDC? Is it because that is the only place where staff can provide appropriate intervention in a crisis, or is that considered punishment for individuals, or is there no other alternative?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would think that if they are sent to MDC, it is because it is the professional judgment of those people who are involved that this was the best way to resolve that situation or that crisis at that time.

Now, the member has asked whether that was for punishment. That sort of injects a new dimension to the whole question of crisis intervention. We are dealing here with vulnerable people, and I do not think I have ever heard that word used as the need for intervention. The whole idea in solving the crisis is to find a solution that is best for everybody concerned.

I know in the school system, one of the interventions sometimes used is called a time out. I never saw that as a good solution, for the teacher to kick somebody out of the classroom, never recommended it and never did it, because you have to solve the problem there. If you have not solved it today, it will be back tomorrow.

One of the solutions, as I have indicated, in crisis intervention is to remove the client perhaps for a short term. The best solution is to add some more resources and solve the problem there. Last year, as I indicated, there were eight who because of the crisis—and the crisis does not always revolve around the client. The crisis may be within the home setting. It may be behavioral or it may be medical.

Sometimes, if that is the professional decision that is made to perhaps stabilize either the home or the individual or to give medical treatment or whatever, on eight occasions that was the decision that was chosen.

Mr. Martindale: I am glad to hear that the minister believes that being sent to MDC for punishment is not appropriate and not used, and I hope that it is not threatened either. I am also happy to hear that as a teacher and principal, he did not believe in time out for students, having been one of those people who spent a lot of time out of the classroom myself.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am dismayed that the member was such a naughty student. I did not see him as a rebel at all. I would have thought he was in the front row and soaking up the knowledge imparted every day and was a model to all that were participating in the classroom, but perhaps there is a side of the member we do not know about.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Neufeld): The Chairperson has to go with the member for Burrows.

Mr. Martindale: I think the problem was ironically that I talked too much and now I get paid to talk, so perhaps there is some poetic justice there—in both my occupations.

Could the minister tell us what training is made available to staff of the department and staff of boards and agencies to enable people to better handle and plan for people who are in crisis, I guess the idea being that prevention is better than having to disrupt people's lives by putting them in another setting or change staff or whatever needs to be done.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I can see that the microphone was on in the caucus room, because the member is going to get that assistance from the former critic of Family Services, but probably the best example I can give you is a document that was prepared for board development.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

It was called The Board Development Guide, and it is one that we have circulated to quite a variety of agencies and, in fact, have had requests from agencies and groups outside the purview of Family Services who have seen the development of this book on board development as just a really good piece of work. I know that I have talked to members of school boards and credit union boards and other boards who have asked for copies of this, and I think

we have also sent copies of that Board Development Guide out of the province because it is seen as a good piece of work. So, in partial answer to your question, that is one of the things we have done.

I did refer earlier to a number of activities that we have funded, and I did give you a few examples. There was one initiative that we funded for \$18,000, called Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, and this was seen to be an appropriate staff training initiative that we were pleased to take part in. As well we employ a behavioural specialist who provides support and training for our staff as well as agency staff.

Wherever you have the situation where staff are in charge of and supervising, I think, a group that is called vulnerable, it is very important, from quite a number of perspectives, that you do professional training with them. I refer back to a question the member asked earlier about incidents. I would hope the day will come in institutions where you get away from any incident, but human behaviour being what it is, maybe we are dreaming.

* (1610)

We have to continue to keep people on staff who work on behaviour not only with the clients but with the staff, and to provide that professional in-service training to make good staff better and to make really good staff excellent staff in dealing with vulnerable people. So there is an ongoing in-service training component that takes place within those institutions and with the staff who work in this particular area. I would guess there is an ongoing responsibility and job training that has to take place.

We will continue to support that as part of our budget initiatives.

Mr. Martindale: How does the department determine who receives crisis support? Is crisis support readily available to families?

Mr. Gilleshammer: One of the responsibilities of the department is to monitor the individuals and families that are part of this branch of the department. The most common demand for crisis support is a call from either a caregiver or comments made by a client. At the same time, there are others who are involved with a family who perhaps will indicate that additional care and support are required. The professional staff or the caseworkers make that decision based on the client's need and the understanding of those needs that come to them

through a variety of sources, the most common one being the caregivers or the clients themselves.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Minister, I got your letter and your documentation in November of 1992 with respect to the Pilot Project to Assist Manitobans with Disabilities. In looking back on past files, I found the vocabulary strikingly similar to the Welcome Home initiative that was launched back in 1985.

Can the minister tell the committee just how this initiative differs from the Welcome Home initiative? What components are here that were not in Welcome Home?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I was not part and parcel of government when the Welcome Home initiative was announced and put into effect. My understanding of the program at that time is that a lot of the community supports and the community placements were not there. As a result, there was difficulty in that transition stage from the institution to living in the community.

One of the things we did prior to this pilot project was to work with the community on a working group to identify the needs, to identify the problems and to work with the community. One of the things that came through loud and clear is that there had to be that support network out there and that education done out there. That support network could consist of family members, of friends, of advocates, of volunteers who would assist these individuals in becoming involved in community life and in developing or purchasing the supports and services appropriate to, what could be termed, their unique needs.

This has been a partnership to identify those, and I guess if the language is similar, perhaps it is because the objective is similar in taking people out of the institution and putting them into the community. The working group encompassed a broad spectrum of people who work in that community, and they have been very supportive of this initiative and very pleased that we are going ahead with this pilot project instead of maybe a grander scheme of things where you make the announcement and move these people without the appropriate work done before hand.

Mrs. Carstairs: With the greatest respect, what specific programs are going to be available as a result of this announcement that are not available now?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think the pilot at one point is entitled In the Company of Friends, and it is the specific support network on a case-by-case basis, on an individual basis, that we want to be sure is there for those 25 individuals whether it is here in the city of Winnipeg or in the rural community. These people who are being selected are a combination of people who are in institutions and in the community at the present time. We want to be sure that specific support for that specific individual is there, and that is not there now.

Mrs. Carstairs: I really do not want to get into an argument about this but I want to know what that support is going to be. We know of people who are now in apartments with so-called friends. We know of institutions where they are welcomed in with limited academic ability. I mean we have had projects at Red River Community College where we had some of these people accepted on a program basis. What new program is going to be there that has not been there in the past?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The supports, I suppose, one could say are not new supports in concept but that specific support networks will be put in place for individual clients. The company of friends that are required for that individual will be a more formalized situation, and the key to this initiative is that the client and friends will make decisions, not the agency and not the department. We want to make these individuals more self-managed, with friends and with family and not become part of a decision making by the department or by the agency. People have questioned the amount of dollars that we are spending on this for 25 individuals and feel that this pilot project is too expensive given the number of individuals who are involved.

Part of the individual plan is to purchase the supports, to use the family members, the friends, the advocates, to provide very individualized programs for these people who will be going into the community. The pilot project will give the participants the opportunity to live and participate in the community and make decisions about the supports that they require.

This, I suppose, ties somewhat into our legislation as well, that these vulnerable people are going to be regarded more and more as part of the planning stages and the decision-making stages than they were before. So I guess if you are looking for something that is different or unique, I think it is the

role of the individual client which is going to be highlighted more than before.

Mrs. Carstairs: I suspect some of these individual clients may not be able to make those decisions, but some of their friends may be able to make some of those decisions.

When we talk about community rehabilitation, we talk about a program initiative that I support. If people and individuals can live within the community, I think that is the goal that all of us would like to see achieved. But over the years, we have heard a lot of dollars bandied around. We are told frequently that it is cost effective to have people in the community. I think that is a myth. I do not think you save a lot of money by having people in the community. That does not make it wrong to have them in the community. I think they should be in the community, but we have now been welcoming people home into the community for eight to 10 years in much greater numbers than we ever did prior to that date.

Has there ever been any analysis done in this department as to what the per-person cost of living in the community is vis-à-vis the per-person cost of that individual living in an institution, taking into consideration the degree of disability that individual has?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I agree with the member that I do not think this should ever be sold on a cost-saving basis, and I agree, and I think the information that is coming out of the department is similar to what you are suggesting, that it is cheaper for individuals to live in the community.

* (1620)

So I think we need to get away from making those decisions on a cost basis. The comment that the member made about clients being incapable of making the decisions or something to that effect, that is true in part, but I think if you look at it from the other side, historically the clients have not been involved in many cases at all in making those decisions. Their wishes have been ignored. For sure they are not living on their own, and they are living in the institution because of the fact that they cannot be completely independent.

The whole thrust of the vulnerable persons legislation is to include the client to as great a degree as possible in making that decision and not to ignore the thoughts and the wishes and the feelings of that individual. So whether that sounds idealistic or not,

I think we have to include the individual as part of the planning.

The information that the department presents is that it costs in the area of \$45,000 annually for that person living in the community. If you will look at the costs in the Manitoba Developmental Centre, it is not far off that, again depending on the specific needs of the person.

Then, of course, you would have to factor into that the cost of a very big sort of campus-like operation at MDC, where you have 575 clients and over 600 staff. It is like a university setting or a school setting where you have to take into consideration the running of the plant and the staffing of that.

Mrs. Carstairs: The trap, it seems to me, that many people fall into is comparing living costs. My concern is that, when we have brought many of these people into the community, many of the supports that they had in the institution disappear: the physiotherapy, the speech therapy, the day programming, which is readily available in the institutional setting, have not been as readily available to some of the clients when they have been brought out of that institutional setting.

Is that part of the program initiative that hopefully will be addressed by this pilot program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, that is built into that \$45,000 cost, but the member is absolutely right. Where those services are available right there, right now at MDC, whether it is in the activity department, whether it is in the hospital, whether it is on the floor, I guess part of Community Living is the reality that you access those services like anybody else does and make those appointments or have them made and be taken to those appointments. That is the trade-off from having that instant support around you in a setting like MDC to having to go to those appointments and find those services out in the community. So there are differences.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, I am pleased, if that is in reality what this pilot project is going to do. I hope that it will come to grips with the fact that I do not think there is a political party in the province that does not think people should be in the community if that is where they can live in an enhanced opportunity for them to maximize their potential.

I also think we all recognize that there are some who can obviously play a much larger role in the planning process for themselves than others. I mean, I have been at MDC and I have been at St.

Amant. I have met many of the clients, some of whom quite frankly do not have the capacity to be involved in that planning process, but I agree with the minister that if they can, then obviously they must be, and that is a parcel that did not exist in the past.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, and as you get into rural Manitoba, where I think there are many wonderful placements that can be made, your ability to access things like physiotherapy and speech therapy and some of the specific therapies that may be required are not readily accessed in a few minutes. But that is again one of the trade-offs for having the privilege of living in rural Manitoba, that you accept that some of these services are a little further away and that you have to travel to them.

Mrs. Carstairs: However, it is not one of the privileges of living in rural Manitoba, if indeed you need that physiotherapy and you need that speech therapy in order to maintain a quality of life. That has always been my concern. Are we making those trade-offs in some circumstances and they are not in the best interest of the client because they are then denied services that they formerly had? What evaluation is done of some of the deterioration in their behavioural patterns which take place because they are denied the physiotherapy or the speech therapy?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, this is certainly the challenge for our professional staff to be able to monitor the changes that are taking place in that individual. Many of the rural hospitals now have mobile clinicians that can provide that physiotherapy, either in that location or are able to make the house calls.

Again, if you are moving people from an institutional setting where the professionals there can monitor that individual on a daily basis and see the changes that take place, there has to be that transitional planning so that the new group of professionals who will be monitoring that community placement are able to understand the changes that are taking place.

That is one of the reasons why this initiative is taking a little longer in identifying the individuals who are going to participate in it and being sure that the plans we put in place meet all of the needs of that individual and that we look at all of the contingencies that may in fact happen.

Mrs. Carstairs: Moving into another area, I want to deal specifically with respite support. Are the clients, the children in particular, somehow or other rated as to the kind of respite, or the amount of respite service should be available to them?

I mean for example, when we panel seniors, we have a one, two, three, four categorization. Is there any such categorization or determination made for whether a child's family should get respite or whether they should not, and what is it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told with the Children's Special Services, it is the professional judgment of our caseworkers who, in consultation with supervisors, make those judgments.

* (1630)

Mrs. Carstairs: What would be the maximum amount of respite available to a family?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that it is up to 30 to 40 hours a week for medically complex children.

Mrs. Carstairs: When that respite is applied, does that mean that there is no requirement at all for one of the parents to be around through the delivery of that service?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There is no compulsion for the primary caregiver to be there. In fact, one of the main purposes of respite, of course, is to give that respite to the primary caregiver.

Mrs. Carstairs: When the minister says it is a maximum of 30 to 40 hours per week, depending on of course the medical need of the child, what do they do in terms of holiday time? Do they have to book that time until they get enough for a solid week or two weeks?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that they have to do some long-term planning and targeting their holiday time and to plan within the number of hours that has been allotted to them to accommodate themselves for that holiday. Probably the most difficult aspect of this is to find a caregiver who can substitute for them during this period of time while they are away.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is it still the policy of the department that a close relative, a brother or a sister, can still not provide respite care and be paid for that care?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Mrs. Carstairs: I have a very simple question. Why?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is a historical relationship that we have, of course. I can wait for the department to give me the answer, or I can speculate that—which I sometimes do—it is the same scenario that we sometimes get into with care of extended family in other areas where there appears to be some sort of conflict of interest.

But I guess I can understand the member's question that you can certainly get into a gray area here where perhaps the best caregiver in the world would be another family member. I think in terms of an abundance of caution, government has always had some difficulty in flowing funds to other family members for what is regarded to be a family responsibility, but certainly in this area it is an area that I think you could more realistically make a case than for child care. I guess the option is still there for family members to give that support in whatever way they can outside of the respite hours that are paid for by government.

Mrs. Carstairs: I just want to ask the government and particularly this minister to look at it again. I mean, I had a situation several months ago in which a 17-year-old who has been looking after her brother and sister for seven or eight years at this point in time, knows how to care for this child, has had to take a job outside of the home, is now not available to the parents on the same basis as the child used to be available for additional respite care. The parents have more trust and more faith in this child looking after their handicapped child than they do anybody else because they know, they have seen every situation and every difficulty. The child involved becomes more tense and therefore potentially more dangerous because they do not have this individual who is used to them looking after them.

It just seems that we do this, and not just this government, governments of all political stripes do it over an overabundance of caution. Maybe it is time we started making decisions based on the real needs of the individual and throwing caution to the wind every now and then. I can say that having decided I am retiring, of course.

Mr. Gilleshammer: You know, I think you are right in that it is out of an abundance of caution in the expenditure of public funds, because not a week goes by when you do not see somebody somewhere raising how public funds are being expended. Yet I tend to agree with the member that here, that perhaps there is a case to balance what

is the best for the client with the protection of the public funds. It is an issue that we will raise within the department and within government, because I think it is a broader government issue as well.

Mrs. Carstairs: I think there are two ways of doing it. I think one way is obviously changing the policy, which is going to be difficult and sensitive to all of the attacks on inappropriate use of dollars, but maybe it could find its way into the pilot program just to say, all right, let us try it in a couple of incidents and let us see how it works out and then maybe we can get some data as to its real validity. The other way, of course, is to look at a tax credit system which might then be used by the family as a way to pay the individual family member so they do not have to take part-time work doing something else. Just a couple of suggestions.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, it sounds similar to a suggestion brought forward to me by one of the agencies that are making similar suggestions in terms of adoption in certain communities where it does not seem to exist at the present time, but maybe having a different perspective on it and having it tied into the replacement of foster care dollars by some other means might solve some problems in that area.

Mrs. Carstairs: Judging by some of the correspondence that I have received recently, there is a perceived lack of adequate program for independent living programs. I have a letter from Dauphin and I also have one in the Stonewall area. Has there been a decrease or has there simply not been an increase of this particular program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the statistics I read earlier would indicate there has been an increase in the number of clients who are accessing independent living. Again, it has been a rather modest increase. Since the '88-89 budget year, we have had an increase in spaces of 97.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I wanted to ask some general questions about the care homes in the community, and I think you may be aware of some issues that came up recently in Wolseley. There was a member of your staff there. Is this the right line to ask it on?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, we are on 4.(b) Community Living and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, Adult Services. Let us see what we can do.

Ms. Friesen: It is an issue which is certainly not new in Wolseley. It is one that I think has been there really since the 1960s and '70s and, of course, is intensified as the number of people returning to the community has increased. It is an issue, of course, of the density, the number of group homes of various kinds, some care homes, some children's homes, some homes for people with particular medical conditions, whether it is mental conditions or others, and also for senior citizens.

* (1640)

We find that in Wolseley generally, and that includes the west Broadway area, we are looking at about 80 to 90 "group homes" of various kinds. It is a situation, obviously, which has been there for a while. It is partly because it is a family neighbourhood, because there are large homes there at a relatively reasonable price and have been certainly since the 1970s, but the density, the number of groups homes that are in that area I think came to a head recently on Garfield Street. A member of your department did come to that meeting. Some of the questions which were raised there were about the possibility of changes to regulations, changes to legislation that might begin to address this situation.

I am sure you are aware of the recent cases in south St. Vital, for example, and also the Canadian Mental Health Association case that went, I believe, to the Court of Appeal in Manitoba, which had some effect upon the location of different types of group homes.

I wondered how your department has been reflecting upon this and where you plan to go with this. Would any of it affect or help some of my constituents who are very concerned about the continuing density in the Wolseley area?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think it is a discussion that has not really developed yet within our department and, I suspect, would cross a number of departments, particularly Health would come to mind, as more and more Community Living services are made available there.

It also is an issue that has to be addressed by some of the outside agencies. I can tell you that it really has not come forward in any substantive way as an issue that department staff have spent a lot of time in discussing that I am aware of. Now that you raise it, I think it is something that I would like to look at, because in one of the recent tours I took of Child and Family Services group homes, it strikes me that

three of the ones we visited were probably in the area that you reference.

For sure, what you are saying is correct. Group homes tend to look at the two- and three-storey large homes where you can accommodate eight to 10 individuals. I do not know whether it is something that has been raised with the city as far as zoning goes or whether there is any sort of governance on that, but I can understand from a neighbourhood perspective where I am sure the neighbourhood wants to do its share, but does not want the proliferation of group homes in any particular part of the city.

I think, as I say, it probably should be raised within government in Health and in Housing and in Urban Affairs as well as this department and maybe Justice and maybe some others. Again, it is one we have not really focused on.

Ms. Frlesen: The minister raises a number of issues, and one of them is the city. Yes, that was a question I was going to ask you to follow up on, if you would, because as a result of the Canadian Mental Health Association case, I understand that the city does have to and is in the process of revising its by-law. I wanted to know if the minister had been in touch with the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst), if there had been any contact over the nature of this by-law, and if there was any way in which the new by-law might help address some part of this problem. In the cases that we are looking at in Wolseley, it is not just the neighbourhood, but in some cases it is individual blocks where there are several group homes of various kinds. I do not want to leave the impression either with the public or with the minister that the neighbourhood is rejecting these.

The conditions that were discussed at the meeting were very much an issue of density, of allocation, not the nature of group homes or the welcoming of people into the community itself.

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is a valid concern that I think I will have officials raise with other departments and see what sort of information is coming forward, either in Urban Affairs or Housing or Health or Justice or whatever, and also see that there is some liaison with the city over that.

I am aware of the issue coming forward in other communities. In one of the communities that we just opened a crisis shelter in not too long ago, it became a very public event between the council and

the community and, of course, very undesirable, because we try to maintain a shelter as a sort of an unknown location, but here it was debated in the newspapers and debated in the City Council.

I know that earlier on the issue came up in the city of Brandon on a number of occasions, where neighbourhoods, for whatever reason, felt that they wanted to preserve the character and the quality of what they perceived to be their life in their neighbourhood and were opposed to group homes.

It certainly comes up on the child welfare side from time to time, where frequently there is more activity going on with the people who live there that may be deemed to be undesirable. So it is an issue that we have to. I think, take very seriously because, as we provide more of these Community Living circumstances, we will not succeed without the support of the community.

Ms. Frlesen: I wanted to emphasize that what the community is looking for is, I think, what is called normalization. We are looking for normal conditions, family neighbourhood conditions for the children or people in residence in the care homes, as well as for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

The recent court cases do have an impact, and we probably should be looking again at the regulations which are primarily in the Department of Family Services. I understand the need to connect with other departments, but I do not want to get lost sight of in some mammoth interdepartmental committee. The regulations rest in this department, and so I would like to focus there.

I wondered if the minister could tell us if there had been any recent discussion of new approaches to legislation, I think, that have been there in the department in the past. I think one possibility had been to look at the principle of reasonable distribution in the assigning of licences to care homes. I think that had been discussed in the department some years ago. I wondered if that was still there.

Mr. Gilleshammer: We had some earlier discussion under the licensing area, but it was very brief. There has not been that issue advanced to my office in recent times, but as I have indicated, we will take a look at it.

*(1650)

Ms. Frlesen: I think some of the residents of the Wolseley constituency might be interested in

meeting with you on that, and I wondered if that would be a possibility at some point.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, we have met with many, many groups in recent weeks and recent months until the Estimates started, and of course, have not been able to do that, but if there is a request coming forward, we will entertain the possibility of either having staff meet with them or myself if time permits.

Mr. Martindale: My understanding is that the grant to the Association for Community Living was cut by 25 percent or \$100,000. I wonder if the minister could tell me if these figures are correct or if not, give me the correct figures.

Mr. Gilleshammer: We tabled earlier the grants listing, and I do believe that we did make a reduction of their grant.

Mr. Martindale: What was the amount of the grant last year, so that we can compare.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I believe it was just over \$100,000.

Mr. Martindale: So how much was the grant reduced from last year to this year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It was 100 percent.

Mr. Martindale: So this was one of the 56 organizations where the grant was eliminated completely.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what the rationale or justification was for this particular agency losing their grant entirely?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, we have discussed the grants listing earlier, and I do not mind going into it again, that the government of Manitoba, as governments across this country, are looking at very, very difficult budgetary times, and government had to look at the organizations that were being funded, some for advocacy, some for service and some that perhaps did a combination of those.

Decisions were made on that basis to eliminate the funding of certain organizations, and the Association for Community Living was one of them.

Mr. Martindale: I have a very interesting letter that was copied to me, originally addressed to the minister on March 30 from someone who had benefited from the services provided by the Association for Community Living and was quite disappointed with this minister for eliminating their grant.

The particular situation is, it is a parent of an autistic child who expressed gratitude in their letter for a conference that ACL convened for families in which people from other regions or other provinces shared their experiences with what kinds of assistance and programs, et cetera, were helpful to parents with autistic children.

It then goes on to talk about what would have happened to their particular family and child if the services of ACL were not available and points out that—I will just read one short paragraph because it is quite well put. She says: We cannot help but wonder if it were not for organizations such as ACL Manitoba, where would our son be today? Away from home and family because we could no longer physically control his aggressive behaviour, or on drug treatment so he would have no desire to stand up for himself and his rights. He would be expected to learn in a zombie state of mind.

My question is, who will provide the services that ACL previously provided? Will assistance be available to parents of autistic children, for example, as this parent points out were quite helpful when they were provided by ACL, and who and where in the minister's department will take over services formerly provided by ACL?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I did not write down all those questions but I will try and answer them as my memory permits me to do.

I would say that the vast majority of clients who access services from a department that spends around \$700 million are vulnerable people. You can go through, as we have been going through the department, line by line, and in fact one of your more seasoned colleagues once referred to this as the department of human grief. For sure, the services that we provide do make the circumstances of many of our clients or the clients of agencies that we fund somewhat better.

Government was in that position where we had to find some savings from the amount of money that we spent in the past year, and I know we have had the opportunity to talk about what is happening in other provinces and what is happening across this country as governments struggle with the reality of the debt and the deficit. Very, very difficult decisions are being made. I mean, just as it makes families dysfunctional, it is even making political parties fight very openly about where government should be making those decisions.

I am sure it makes the member appreciate the luxury of opposition that he is enjoying and the reality of government as they have to make these decisions. We are hearing members of Parliament say things that they would never have said before, and again, it is the reality of the 1990s as we face these budgetary crises.

It is not just the government of Manitoba. I go back to a challenge that I threw out to the member earlier, to find those savings within the Department of Family Services, and of course we await those suggestions. I am sure they will probably come as we get down to the final lines and the member has had a chance to digest some of the discussions that have taken place and better understand the department, that those suggestions will be forthcoming at that time. We will certainly patiently await them.

A lot of these organizations that were receiving government grants, of course, this was a part of their total funding. I had the opportunity 10 days or two weeks ago to meet with the particular group that the member is referencing, and they do in fact access funding from other sources. They, I believe, recognize within the total picture that there will have to be adjustments made as they determine where they will make those funding decisions. So these have not been easy to communicate to organizations.

I have had the opportunity I think over the last few weeks to meet with virtually all of the organizations that have been impacted by these decisions made by government within this budget. The one thing that comes through loud and clear is that there is a general acceptance that there was some degree of thought that went into this and some degree of fairness. When they have had the chance to get over the initial impact of funding decisions, there is a feeling that government by and large has been fair across departments and within departments in making funding decisions.

All of them, of course, in Family Services are extremely difficult because, as I indicated when I first started, these are vulnerable people that we provide services for. I can tell you again that there are many places that we would spend our next dollar or our next million dollars within this department. This area of Rehab and Community Living is one area where I find that we have waiting lists where we could do with more resources to help those individuals who are accessing service and who are

on waiting lists at the present time. So when we look at some of these grants, if there is a way of perhaps reducing a grant so that we can give more direct service to individuals then that is part of the decision-making process that we made.

Again, I understand the disappointment and I understand the hurt of organizations that have been accessing these funds for some time and the fact that they have to make adjustments. I mean, the whole world is making adjustments at this time, whether it is in the business community, whether it is in the sports community, whether it is in government, whether it is in private business, that there is a recognition that government does not have the ability to access more funds at this time—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The time being 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour, I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee. The Committee of Supply will resume consideration at 8 p.m. Thank you.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Highways and Transportation.

We are on item 8. Expenditures Related to Capital, page 93 of the Estimates manual.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): I would appreciate continuing on some of the roads in my constituency that I would like to question the minister about. I would like to get to Highway 329. We closed up on 329. I had the opportunity the very next day travelling that road. I took that road specifically to see the condition it was in. There were crews out on the road doing some preventative maintenance—[interjection] Friday. The minister, I do not think, would appreciate if they were out there on Saturday without even knowing.

As far as 329 goes, Madam Chairperson, I would like to know from the minister just exactly what the plans are for that vital east and west link that we have between Riverton and Fisher Branch and all the communities between, and where is he going with 329?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Chairperson, the first

stretch of 329 from Riverton to Highway 326 has been upgraded with a base and AST. The stretch from 326 to 233 has been upgraded, and from 233 to No. 17, we are in the acquisition of right-of-way in that portion there. It is up for consideration.

Mr. Clif Evans: The minister says that the portion from 326 to 233 has been upgraded. Has he been down there? Has his staff been on that road lately? What does he call upgrading?

Mr. Drledger: I do not know whether staff have been there on or not, but 1990-91 is when we did the upgrading of the stretch from 326 to 233. However, it has not—we have not proceeded with a base and AST on that. I assume the second lift of gravel is on there. It is a matter of when we prioritize it to do the base and AST, but it is a short stretch there. I would assume that possibly that will not take place until we have done the balance of upgrading on 329.

If the member has some concern about the condition of the road right now, let him not get too upset because at this time of year, as a process coming out throughout the province, I can take him on various roads where we have problems. That comes back to the point that I have made many times, that since the province took over the road system, the PR and PTH system, in 1965, we still had close to 5,000 kilometres of PRs that had never been upgraded, that were in their initial base condition, where we have tried just by maintenance to try and keep them in reasonable shape.

* (1440)

By and large, that was one of the reasons why the consideration was brought forward to take and transfer 2,000 kilometres back to municipalities, because there is just no way that we—our system is such that we just have not got them all upgraded at this point. We are doing it in stages wherever we can based on the condition of the road, based on the traffic counts on the road and based on the amount of money that is available. That has been the challenge that this department has faced for many, many years, to see how soon can we get our system upgraded.

If the road is in disrepair to any degree, I have no qualms asking my regional staff to see what has to be done to get it to be in reasonable shape, but I repeat again, that the fact that we have frost boils coming out in many cases—invariably, as long as it is a gravel road, we do not restrict it in spring. As a

result, the loads that are being hauled on there at the most vulnerable time of a road very often put it into such shape that it takes us virtually weeks before we can finally get them back into reasonable shape again.

I could only assume, if the member has been on that road, that this is what happened in that case, but let him not feel that he has got an isolated case there. This is not an unusual thing, maybe an unwanted thing, but not an unusual thing to happen at this time of year.

Mr. Clif Evans: Madam Chairperson, I am well aware of frost. I am well aware of the situation. On Friday, travelling that road from 326 to the area past 233 that specifically we had talked about the condition, there was in fact a grader on that road attempting to do something with the situation. The part that is troubling me right now is from 326 to 233, because he says it has been upgraded.

There was not an iota of gravel on that road, Madam Chair, and all the gravel, if there was any, was sitting on the sides and shoulders and in the ditches, but all the grader was scraping was mud and boulders. So if the minister claims that portion was upgraded to a certain level, I think perhaps they should go back to that part and upkeep it.

I think, Madam Chairperson, where a big problem is, again, and it relates to other departments, is the upkeep, keeping a road, whether it be a PR or highway or whatever, maintained to a level that at least we are not coming across these conditions that we are on 329, 234 and other roads throughout the province. Preventative maintenance—it is like the commercial, pay me now or pay me later.

The minister is, I am sure, aware of the problems that are facing the farmers. As he is also well aware, there are restrictions at this time of the year on certain roads, and 329 is quite an important link and transportation mode for a lot of the farmers who have to bypass the main roads because of restrictions.

I would say that, being out there again on Friday and seeing what they were attempting to do, it is complimentary to the staff out there and to the minister's department for acting on it, but I am saying, how long is it going to take for this right-of-way or acquisition? The process could be speeded up, I am sure. Why cannot we get moving on 329 and finish it up to a level that will make everyone happy?

Mr. Driedger: Well, Madam Chairperson, I want to correct the member that, certainly if it was of the most extreme priority that things could be escalated, but he says, why do we not do it and make everybody happy. If I did that there, I would still have 100 other places where they would be unhappy, so I would not be making everybody happy.

It is one of the problems we have been facing with reduced expenditures in the Department of Highways and Transportation, and I am sure the member has been very actively supporting the money that has been spent on human services, health, education, family services. As a result of the prioritization of those departments, money that has been coming forward to the Department of Highways and Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources is not keeping pace with what should have happened.

That is the challenge and problems that I face in terms of the quality of the road between the 233 and 326 that the member makes reference to. Whether the road, as he says, there is no gravel on it, that it is all on the sides, it could well be. I will have staff look at exactly the quality of how we maintain it.

We establish, based on traffic criteria, quality of road, our beats as to how many times it will be maintained in the normal course of the year in terms of whether they get graded two times a week, once a week, three times a week. It depends on many things. My maintenance staff out there basically do that on that basis, and that is how we establish our maintenance beats.

The other problem, and I alluded to that early on in my comments, in saying that because of a lack of funding, the quality of our maintenance, especially in roadside mowing, et cetera, would be down. So we look very carefully at these things to see that we can still keep the road in reasonable shape with the minimum amount of money. So the member, lest he tries to give an impression that his area is the only one that is experiencing this, I do not have the time but I could make reference to all the various PR roads that have not been upgraded, that at certain times are in critical condition in spring.

This is not a criticism toward the farmers themselves, but invariably where we have gravel roads we do not restrict. So they invariably take advantage of those roads, and they also take advantage of the municipal roads that are not

restricted in terms of hauling maximum loads if they can in the springtime. If the member says the artery of 329 is a very important artery, I am not saying it is not; however, that portion from 326 to Riverton is based in AST.

I can assure him, unless there is something that I do not know, that it is restricted quite excessively and would be limited at this time of year to relatively light loads. The other portion, maybe the community or the farmers are using the municipal roads until they hit ours and go on there but invariably—and I do not fault them. I mean, I realize they want to haul their loads, and if it is not restricted why should they not? As a consequence to that, you have the kind of conditions of the road that the member is making reference to.

Mr. Cliff Evans: I just want to point out to the minister, too, and what he says about our other roads in Manitoba—I mean, yes, I am from southeastern Manitoba myself. I have travelled all those roads, and in the past two and a half years I have been throughout the province with my critic position, so I can appreciate what he is saying. But he also has to appreciate that my priority of course is my constituency, as his priority should be the whole province. We are both dealing with the same thing with priorities. Yes, I would like to see more done on the roads throughout the whole province and in my constituency. I would think that the minister should prioritize certain areas where conditions have really gone to the point of no return. If that happens, then it is just going to be even more costly to be able to restore.

I would like to continue with—and, again, I want to thank the minister for meeting last year with myself and representatives from Dauphin River—regard to the upkeep and, I guess, the future development of Highway 513 from Gypsumville to Dauphin River. Can the minister tell me if there are plans to do some work on 513 coming from the reserve, continuation of that work?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, let me first of all confirm the fact that I met with the delegation headed by the member for the Interlake and the community people that came in and expressed their concern about the continuation of upgrading the road itself. At the same time, we were talking about the maintenance end of it, which I think staff were going to undertake to meet with them and see whether certain portions of that road could be done by local maintenance. I just want to say that I

personally support that kind of activity where possible, where we can tie it in.

We have to, at the same time, take into consideration—I think I mentioned at the time that we have our own equipment, and we cannot just take blocks out and have somebody else do that. We have to do it so that we get maximum usage out of the machines and operators that we have out there. This is a long stretch that basically comes once you leave Gypsumville. I have had occasion, lest the member feels that road has gotten worse, I have gone fishing into that area for many, many years and there were times when we used to drive through there with two and three feet of water going through some of the low areas.

So there has been ongoing improvement on that road to the point where it is now a much more reasonable road. There is also a fair amount of fishing traffic going down there every spring, which creates a fair amount of pressure on that road as well. I am waiting to see whether staff has got anything specific on it, but we have at the present time—I have to tell the member that there is nothing specifically identified for the continuation.

* (1450)

The member must, I think, accept also the fact that the stretch that was built, that new stretch through the swamp there, if I can call it that, through the muskeg, was a very, very expensive road. That, I think, has improved the driving out there. The balance of the stretch, and as I said, I have been on there, I realize the problems with that, but it is a curvy road, dusty at times, and is subject to safety concerns on there. We will continue to see how we can move this forward somewhere along the line to give it consideration among all the other projects.

Lest the member feels that we are not doing enough, I think just with what he has itemized of his concerns would virtually take up half my budget already if I could comply with all of that in one year. So I note the member's concerns, and we will try to accommodate as best we can, as well as with his other colleagues, those roads that need to be upgraded and that we can prioritize in terms of money and where we are with it. Without wanting to repeat our process again in terms of prioritization, the survey design, the grading, ultimately paving or whatever the case may be, once we get them into the process, and I have so many on there, it is a matter of choosing which ones we can proceed with.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chair, in closing with 513, and I am aware and have spoken with chief and council just a week ago today, they are planning on revitalizing their fishing and tourism aspect in Dauphin River. It is a community-based project that they are beginning to deal with now and have indicated that there will probably, if their plans go the way they want, be a lot of traffic on 513 to revitalize that fishing and tourism industry that they have lost out there because of other problems that they have had.

So I would appreciate the fact that the minister would consider keeping up with the maintenance end of it. Also, on those curves, I noticed last Monday that on some of the curves some of the brush was cut down. I think that probably an important part of the project itself is to maintain that, to be able to see where you are going when you are coming around those curves, and by taking care of some of the shrubbery that has grown up around the corners. So I am just making the minister aware of that.

Riverton downtown revitalization. The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) and the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) met with the Riverton council early last fall, before the new council was in place. What part, what role is the Minister of Highways playing with the Riverton council request for downtown revitalization and work on their Main Street?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, let me first of all take this opportunity to congratulate the people from Riverton, at the time when they were in and the plan that they were developing in terms of revitalizing their community, their Main Street, the banks of the river. It is this kind of attitude that ultimately helps communities establish growth centres and makes people come and want to spend time there, spend money there and shop there.

We are working together with the Department of Natural Resources and my people, together with the community, in terms of getting the program developed to the point where we can start making some final decisions as to what should happen. Having been in the community, I am very supportive of moving forward on getting something done within the community from the Highways perspective end of it.

I have always had a soft spot or a preference, I suppose, to working with communities to try and get

the communities' streets improved, those portions that are ours, because invariably that is where you get most people affected by it. So we are in the process of working with them, and once we get to the decision-making point, as I have indicated to the community, I would be supportive in terms of moving the project forward.

Mr. Cliff Evans: In closing, can the minister guarantee or indicate that a certain time frame has been put in place to work with the council and get the whole program moving, as far as the Department of Highways goes? I know there is the Department of Rural Development and the Department of Natural Resources involved—can we have a time frame?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, I cannot give the member a definitive answer right now. We are just trying to check to see when the last time was that we had contact with them. I am prepared to take that question as notice and respond to the member directly on that specific project, because I do not know what changes have taken place since the last elections at the local level, whether there have been any changes, or whether their position has changed. I will have to do some checking. I have instructed staff to take and find out the details of it, and then we will respond by way of letter or otherwise.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Madam Chairperson, I would just like to put on record, if the minister would agree to discuss Riverton Boat Works with me personally on Friday, or Monday of next week.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, in an earlier discussion about the Riverton Boat Works, I think I gave an undertaking to the member that, once we have the legal opinion that we are seeking, I would then take and inform him, and then we can jointly discuss further as to what approach can be taken and that commitment still stands.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Madam Chairperson, I would like to use this opportunity to ask the minister a few questions about some Highways projects that have not moved too far in the last few years under this minister's stewardship. It is something of concern for a number of people in the area. Contrary to what the minister has said or actually believes, everything was not completed in the Dauphin area forever during the time that I was Minister of Highways and Transportation. There was a lot of work left to be done and in progress at

the time. Of course, it has largely been left undone by this minister. I cannot understand why his priorities would have shifted when he saw these valuable and important programs that had to be done. He did finish a few highways in the area—269, one chunk there that finished paving it to complete the road up to the Waterhen area. He also did a section of 364 to Winnipegosis. That was completed, but that was about the sum total of it.

* (1500)

There is another portion on 276 up to Skownan, I believe, that is currently in the planning for paving, perhaps being paved this summer, and maybe the contract is out already. I want to ask the minister first about that. Could he give me the timetable for completion of paving 276 north of the Waterhen bridge to Skownan?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, we are starting from Skownan going south, right? The member veiled his concerns a little bit saying that we had not completed many of the valuable projects, but I think we have done relatively well in his constituency generally.

I want to say that in our discussions with the people from Skownan, that there should be base and AST done, but we are starting from Skownan going south. So that is the first portion, and then in a meeting with them, we have given an undertaking that the next step is to continue it all the way down to the Waterhen.

So this year should see the base and AST. Mulder Construction got the contract on November 5. So I would assume, based on the allowable days, workable days that are there—so on that particular project the contract is let to do the first portion of it, and then we will continue to do the second portion. We are doing it in two stages. We met with the community and had a good discussion with them. I think they were justified in requesting that.

Does the member have other roads that you want to make specific reference to?

Mr. Plohman: Madam Chairperson, I also wanted to follow up on the minister's answers. The minister said the contract was let for the northern-most portion. Could the minister be more specific? How many kilometres? Will it stop at Rockridge or go past, go further south? Will it include any of the internal roads in the Rockridge community, as Robert Lavalee has been asking for? Precisely how

many kilometres will be done as of this contract that was let November 5, '92, to Mulder Construction?

Mr. Driedger: The contract is for 8.8 kilometres. It stops at Rockridge at the present time. I believe the balance is virtually completed in terms of survey design and some acquisition, that the balance of it for the grading and gravel contract is one of the ones we have under consideration in this year's program, which has not been finalized yet.

Mr. Plohman: Madam Chairperson, the minister should know that the grading was completed when we were in government and it was done with the view that it would be paved right through. After five years it is easy for the minister to start reinventing history when he thinks he has to regrade it again. I think it is just a matter of paving at this point in time.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, I misunderstood what was said here. It has been graded and gravelled. It is basically ready for base and AST at an estimated cost of approximately \$1.1 million. We will be doing the northern portion. This is one of the things that is under consideration for this year's program, for approval.

Mr. Plohman: The road will be paved up to Rockridge and into some of the community roads. That part the minister did not clarify. Is it just to the entrance to Rockridge? Could the minister just clarify that?

Mr. Driedger: No internal roads will be done, because that is not my jurisdiction. That, basically, in the community would come under Native and Northern Affairs, who do the secondary roads in there. It would be our portion of the road. The member is probably more aware than I am exactly how far that goes. It is that portion that is our responsibility that we are doing the 8.8 kilometres on.

Mr. Plohman: Has the minister had any contact with the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) on a request to have paving done on the internal road system while the operations are there and the materials are there, the equipment is there and so on? Has there been any discussion whatsoever about any additional paving that might be pursued and paid for by the Department of Northern Affairs?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, invariably, when we do work in these communities the Department of Native and Northern Affairs is aware of it. We have, in many cases, tried to synchronize that contract, if we let one, to tie in the additional

roads in that community. With the limitations of funding that they have, I do not know whether this one has specifically come under discussion.

I know some of the other communities where we undertake certain work, they try and tie in some further activities through my colleague's department so that we can get the best bang for the buck, so to speak. If we have a contractor in there it is often very beneficial to do this right away because, if it is done on a separate basis, just the movement costs are pretty substantial. So we try and give that consideration.

I rely to some degree that some initiative come forward from the Department of Native and Northern Affairs as to the pressure that they get to have some of this work undertaken. We have ongoing discussions about these roads.

For the member's benefit, we will make note of it and check whether there is anything that my colleague's department has requests for or are considering that could be tied in to the contract with Mulder Construction.

Just because the contract has been let, from my department's perspective, it does not mean that—very often the contractors are very amenable to adding something to that at the given price. I have no aversion to doing that. I think it is only good common sense to try and do that.

I will take the question under consideration with my colleague in terms of specifically whether there is anything slated for the community up there.

Mr. Plohman: I want to thank the minister for that undertaking. I know the mayor there, Robert Lavalee, has been making some requests to the department regarding that. It was my understanding that there would be some work done, so the minister's undertaking was important for us to determine exactly where that is at.

I also want to ask the minister about another road in that area, actually two of them. One is the south Mallard road which the minister has probably received some requests on. It is on the map in the form of a blue road. It is in blue, not fully a provincial road, but it is one that we have provided some work up north to Mallard. The people who live south along the Waterhen River, the south Mallard road, are very concerned about the condition of the road. It is just in terrible condition in the spring, huge frost boils, almost impassable, and they have been writing to the minister, the council at Waterhen. I

have written letters to the minister over the last couple of years.

Has he commenced any work there with regard to that road? Does he have any timetable for completing at least some minimal grading so that it can be passable in the spring, because it is extremely old, the construction. It is, obviously, not done to the standards of today and susceptible to the spring thaw and frost boils and even flooding.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, first of all, that road that is marked there, the Mallard Lake road, if we want to call it that, is a main market road. If the member says it is in such bad shape, aside from the locals who would be very concerned, and I can appreciate that, I expect that aside from him, with the fishing coming up that my colleague the ex-MLA for Minnedosa, Dave Blake, who always fishes up there, is bound to give me a phone call if it is giving him some difficulty in getting in there with his outfit.

The portion south of 328, we have that up for survey design. [interjection] The survey has been done. South of 328, we have it up for acquisition right-of-way and utility revisions. To the north, we do not have it on the docket at the present time. This is something that we worked together with the LGD—[interjection] It was built.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, we did that.

Mr. Driedger: You did that. How come it is so bad then?

Mr. Plohman: It needs surfacing.

Mr. Driedger: A main market road?

*(1510)

Mr. Plohman: Madam Chairperson, the minister wants to know about the north Mallard road. That one was upgraded from 1950 standards to 1980 standards a few years ago, but because of the nature of the subsoil and everything else there and perhaps maybe not even sufficient maintenance on the road and gravel and so on, the condition is very rough. Now whether that is something the minister can accomplish through other means, I do not know that it has to be upgraded again, but it was never surfaced. The intention was not to surface it at that time. It was not built as a main market road. It was not built to surfacing standards at that time at all.

So I was just asking what maintenance is required there to ensure that it is in good driving condition, but the major concern that I have been getting is from the south of 328 where all of the frost boils are,

and there we are dealing with a road that was built to 1950 standards. It is basically a very narrow low trail yet, and it needs upgrading.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, I repeat again that the portion south where the member says there are frost boils, et cetera, that is the one that we have up for consideration for acquisition of right-of-way and utility revision. That is among the whole package that I have. We have not completed that, I do not want the misconception here that it is necessarily going to be on, but it is one of the ones that staff have come forward with.

As far as the maintenance is concerned on the northern portion of it—because very seldom, I do not recall where we have basically graded these roads to be able to take base and AST or asphalt, but the concern that the member has raised in terms of the level of maintenance there, I will have staff, as these points get raised here, take note of them and draw it to the attention of our regional offices. We try in all cases, together with the communities involved and our staff and appeal, to develop a maintenance level that basically addresses it.

This is a bad time for myself I suppose to have my Estimates before the House because this is the worst time for roads. We have restrictions on and the frost is coming out and roads are breaking up. It makes me and staff a little bit more vulnerable, but that is a fair ball game.

I will take under consideration the maintenance level of that main market road.

Mr. Plohman: My understanding is that survey design on the south Mallard road has been completed. Acquisition is being considered for this year's program, and the minister I guess has advised our critic when the program is supposed to be available and completed. I would think the minister must be almost finished the consideration, so he may be able to shed some additional light on that than just saying it is being considered. Probably a decision has already been made.

In addition, when the minister responds perhaps to that, I would like to just point out, first of all, the north Mallard road does have a lot of recreational traffic as well as to the community there because of the excellent fishing in the Waterhen River on that section. That is one of the reasons again maybe why the road has deteriorated, because of the extensive traffic.

The minister may have a traffic count on that road available—I am not sure if he would—but if he did a traffic count, he would find, starting about now or within the next couple of weeks, that traffic is really going to pick up on that road.

I would just like to ask the minister about 328 which we started about seven years ago, six years ago or so—probably seven or eight—a grading program from the Waterhen west some eight miles or so. The remaining 32 or 33 miles over to No. 6 Highway is still at 1950 standards. That road was probably built in the '50s, very low winding, susceptible again to frost boils and flooding and also bridges that are very narrow and low, certainly not in very good condition as an all-weather road.

I wonder if the minister has looked at any additional plans for continuing the grading work that was started there in the mid-'80s.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, let me first make reference to the comment that the member made about the road program that has not been completed yet. I tried to clarify that early on in my comments, when I opened my Estimates, that our road program for this year's approval has not been completed and that whatever we do approve now would be actually next year's construction because we are virtually two years ahead.

I will take some of the criticism for not having completed it, but between the federal arrangement that we had and the SHIP program, which we call the Strategic Highway Improvement Project, it sort of created a little bit of extra pressure on us in terms of trying to get everything organized, and it is for that reason that we basically do not have it quite completed.

We do not have that completed. I expect to have that hopefully within the next two weeks, at which time I will table it, once we have gone through the final stages, which are slated actually for pretty extensive hours as soon as we finish the Estimates process. So I would hope that within a week to 10 days, after we finish the Estimates, I should be able to go forward to my colleagues for approval and then be able to table the activities. So I just wanted to clarify that.

In terms of the 328 from Waterhen to No. 6, I personally cannot indicate exactly what condition the road is in. In many cases, I can—I have a bit of a fond memory on that road because, if the member looks at Peonan Point, years ago, that used to be

my favourite place when there was still a tremendous amount of deer in that long strip going in there. I always enjoy that country out there. That time, when you are a hunter, you are not that sensitive to good road conditions. In fact, the rougher they are the better, so that there are less people coming in there.

Because that is a pretty substantive stretch there—we are looking at approximately 64 kilometres or something like that in the total end of it—the survey design has been completed from 6 to Pollock's Lake or Pollock's Creek, and so the design has been done. So we are in a position where we can give consideration to the acquisition of right-of-way on that stretch.

The other portion from Pollock's Lake to 276 or to the Waterhen by and large has been surveyed, but there have to be some changes made. Redesign has to take place or resurvey has to take place in a portion of it, and that is a process that will be undertaken this year. Then that next step would be in a position to have the acquisition of right-of-way done as well. However, that is a matter that has to be given approval first of all, and it would be done in stages, so there is no way that you would have two construction jobs taking place there.

Even these stretches might be broken into two stages because Pollock's Lake is approximately halfway, so you would be having two projects in the area, over 30 kilometres of construction to take place at a time. So we are at that point where, depending how much pressure comes on and how we can prioritize it in terms of starting the construction activity—once we have done the first stage, then of course, it just keeps moving on over a period of time.

* (1520)

Mr. Plohman: The minister should know that the first 10 kilometres or so from 276 easterly has already been graded, not upgraded to pavement standards, no AST and no base, but to surfacing standards. So the minister does not have a great deal of additional survey design from that straight section that was upgraded to Proulx Lake that he was just referring to.

As I said to the minister earlier, this is a link that is in very bad condition in the spring and throughout parts of the year, depending on how wet it is, because it is a very low-lying situation. There are many swamps and bogs. It is something that needs

upgrading, although the cost is quite substantial, I have to admit. Even on the construction project that was done there, I know that it was very expensive.

The minister I hope will initiate at least a program there of moving forward with the construction on a yearly basis, even small amounts, to make some progress on it. There has not been any work done on there now since that initial project was undertaken, other than perhaps some survey design, which the minister referred to.

I just want to mention to the minister that the south Waterhen road would be the highest priority for acquisition, as I can see at the present time, the survey design having been completed, and a grading project. It is not that expensive. It is not that long. It is a smaller project and something the minister should try to fit in there as quickly as possible.

I do not think you would have a lot of trouble with land acquisition, because everyone is anxious to have that done and it would be private land versus some of the areas of the 328 which are mostly Crown land surrounding the road. So the minister does not have to acquire very much in some of those areas to actually undertake a construction project there.

I also wanted to ask the minister about 364 west of Rorketon. A recent petition was recirculated there and a letter sent to the minister. The condition again, we are probably dealing with construction many years ago and it is susceptible to very heavy maintenance, heavy drifting in the winter time. It takes a lot of work to maintain those roads because they are so low and not built to standards that make maintenance rather easy. It is very difficult and probably very expensive to maintain that kind of road.

So I wonder whether the minister has undertaken any initiative there, especially in light of the petition that was circulated and the fact that there has been no work done in that area for sometime on 364 west of Rorketon.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, the member is probably aware that the department was looking at doing a realignment there, a new alignment.

Mr. Plohman: Madam Chairperson, the minister has just put on the record that they are looking at a realignment. I should say, for his clarification, that is an important question to deal with, but that is not the area I was asking about initially.

I was asking about the section immediately west of Rorketon as the top priority. There is a need to look at realignment of 364 perhaps from 481 across to 269, but that is not what I was asking about. I realize that has been in the works for some time, and I would like to get a report from the minister as to how that has progressed, that section.

I was dealing with the section immediately west of Rorketon, the five miles or so that go directly west from Rorketon.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, while the staff is looking specifically on the area straight west of Rorketon, I wanted to bring him up to date on the realignment which would be opposite 481 going straight west to 364. Application was made. That is where the actual intention was to go through there. That goes right beside, if I can recall having driven that road, a wildlife management area. We have not been able to get the environmental licence that is required. So that thing has been sort of sitting there spinning on empty, nothing happening.

Now I will try to address the concern that he had on 364 going west of Rorketon. Madam Chairperson, the member is not going to be very happy with my reply, but it was slated for survey design in the '87-88 year, and we have not totally completed that yet. Once that is completed, then it would be one of the projects, acquisition of right-of-way, that is coming up for consideration in this year's program. So that is where it is at.

Mr. Plohman: Well, guilty as charged here, Mr. Minister. You have had, what, seven years or six years to do that small section for survey and design, and he still does not have it done. So it has not been exactly a high priority.

I would ask the minister to see if he can include both of those projects. When I talk about priorities and talk about the south Mallard road as a small project, this one is not a large project, but it certainly is one that is desperately needed in the area and one that the community has let the minister know is a priority for the area. They have just recently sent a petition that was done a number of years ago when we began that road for survey and design; they have recirculated that to the minister. I sent him a letter as well on that.

I hope that he can get that in for acquisition of right-of-way this year because the little bit that is left on survey design, I am sure, would not take his engineers very long to do. So if he can get that done

and get the acquisition started this year, I am sure that it would be something that we could report to the community as a very positive move.

Mr. Drledger: Madam Chairperson, unless the member is under the impression that I am relying totally on staff for some of this information, I can assure the member that very often, when these requests come in, I have had the occasion to actually drive that whole area out there myself to know exactly what it is about. I can empathize and sympathize with the fact that a lot of these roads basically serve the rural area and the requirement is there to upgrade.

Again, without wanting to repeat extensively the fact that we still have close to 5,000 kilometres—no, it is not that many anymore—maybe about 4,000, 3,500, 4,000 kilometres of PRs that we just have not upgraded, and we are trying to bring them forward as we can, giving consideration to the fact that our major PTH system is suffering as well, and we try to keep our major arteries upgraded to a stage. So it is an ongoing challenge that I face, as he faced when he was minister responsible, in terms of determining where we should do it.

I do not even play politics with this because, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) knows, as the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) knows, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), as we travel through the province, people make their concerns known to us, and we try to address them within the realm of financial possibility that we can.

* (1530)

So I just want to indicate to the member that these roads—one always gets a better understanding of them when one travels them themselves, and I prefer to do that and have done that in this case. I take the member's request for having something done on this as notice.

Mr. Plohman: Madam Chairperson, I just want to respond to the minister from the point of view that, if it has taken seven years to do the survey and design on this little section of road, you cannot say maybe that politics is being played, but it certainly is not getting any political priority from the minister.

So whatever way he wants to phrase that, I am sure one down in the area of 302 or some of those sections, 205, 216, in that area of the province in southeastern Manitoba would maybe not have been

sitting for seven years getting survey and design done.

So I think it is their turn in this one, Madam Chairperson, to the minister. I think that, insofar as Rorketon is concerned west there, it is about coming up to their turn. If the minister can give that a little push now, I think his colleague for Ste. Rose should also be appreciative of that because it used to be part of his constituency and is certainly close by there. No. 276 is the tie-in to Rorketon from Ste. Rose, and maybe he can talk with his colleague and see that that little job in there is done. I say that little job, when I am talking relatively to the other construction that is being done in other areas of the province and give that a high priority for that area.

I want to ask the minister about a couple of other roads—68 through the Narrows has been kind of creeping along. The minister is maybe aware that in the late 1980s we made that into a provincial trunk highway from a PR. As a result, the standards had to be increased, not just because of the reclassification, but because it was in relatively poor shape for even a PR. It had been paved many years ago, stood up remarkably well through weight restrictions every year and over a long number of years. It has stood up remarkably well. However, it does need the shoulders continued and then of course resurfacing at some point.

Can the minister give an update on the priority that that is receiving at the present time—68 from No. 6 Highway, but from the Narrows primarily to Ste. Rose?

Mr. Drledger: Madam Chairperson, I know that you are at a disadvantage and cannot get involved in the debate. I want to note that little sign that you put up there, you know, promoting 210, I will take that as notice as well.

An Honourable Member: Did I raise that one for you?

Mr. Drledger: No, but certainly Madam Chairperson thought that this might be an appropriate time to just broaden the perspective in terms of requirements throughout the province.

On 68 we have just finished a further shoulder widening and gravel on seven-point-some kilometres through that area—big major stretches. So there is always a fair amount of dollar value involved with them that we continue to take and do that on a staged basis. The acquisition of 20 kilometres for acquisition of right-of-way, that is the

next stretch and a further stretch. We have one where we are doing the acquisition of right-of-way, and the next stretch we are doing the survey design. So we are moving with it in stages, and we just completed the shoulder widening and gravel.

The duration on that portion where we have done the shoulder widening and the gravel on the shoulders, we have 21.3 kilometres that is now available for base and AST to the tune of \$2.6 million. So as we do this in stages, the shoulder widening, then we take a bigger shot and do the base and AST. We get a better price that way. It is not base and AST, it is pavement because it is a PTH—my mistake. I just misread this here. A stretch there of 23.6 kilometres, continuing the stages, where we have the right-of-way and we have, not a big deal, but we have utility revisions in place.

The next step would be the grade widening and shoulder gravel and then we have a structure in there yet, and ultimately of course that stretch is a dandy one because the pavement would cost us \$3.8 million. As I am putting this on the record, I want to assure the member that it is in the mix and it is going forward in stages, whether it is survey design, whether it is the acquisition of right-of-way, whether it is utility revisions or whether the grading of the shoulders and the paving itself. So these recommendations are coming forward in stages from staff and we are trying to accommodate them. So there is ongoing action out there.

Mr. Plohman: I thank the minister for that. That is a road I use frequently, and certainly there is a need for the grading work to continue, especially on the 23 kilometres the minister said is ready to go for grading, grade widen, shoulder work and the paving on the section that has already been completed insofar as that work is concerned.

I imagine the minister would have traffic counts on that for the PTH, the latest traffic counts. I wonder if he would have them handy at this time. Maybe he could give me that when he is responding to requests regarding the No. 20 from Dauphin Beach to Ochre River. There was a need to do shoulders there and paving or an overlay. That has not been touched for seven years. I know we were planning to do that about 1987 or '86, so that has been in the works for some time. I do not think there has been any work done on that section. The minister may be able to tell us.

On 480, from 582 to No. 5, that road was paved at one time to Makinak; there is an elevator there. It was turned back from grade to gravel when construction was done because of the poor condition, the poor construction of the initial road. It had to be torn up and broken and turned back into gravel, so the people are still asking when that might be considered once again for paving. So that is the section of 480, from 582 to No. 5.

So I will just ask the minister about those two before I have a couple of other questions on other roads, and then I will turn this over to my colleague. The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), I believe, wants to ask some questions.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, the traffic count on 68 varies anywhere from 450 to 880, depending on which portion of the road—you know, closer to the communities you have a higher a higher traffic count. I do not know whether the member wants it broken down, because if you can recall, between every so and so many such distances, they have the traffic counts. There, if he feels it is of importance, I have given him the range, from 450 to 880. If he wants more detail, I would have to have staff maybe respond by way of correspondence somewhere along the line.

On Highway 20 from Ochre River around to Dauphin—for clarification for the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman)—on the No. 20 from Ochre River to Dauphin, I do not know whether he wanted the traffic count or whether he wanted to know what we were going to do there, because the traffic count is easy to give. What they are doing, there is nothing on the table right now in terms of doing a repavement.

* (1540)

Sorry, Madam Chairperson, correction—the right-of-way has been secured on the property. We are talking of the 12.4 kilometres from PTH 5 to Dauphin Beach. Is that the stretch that the member was making reference to? Okay, the right-of-way has been secured for proper intersection improvements at Crescent Cove turnoff to Dauphin Beach; access at Ochre River; access environmental assessment will be required, hydro line relocated; district is proposing to widen grade using borrow material; existing AST surface mostly 26 years old and badly cracked with some large patches; include property resurfacing of Ochre River access as structure requires replacement as

a result of relocation of roadway; paving costs includes the extension of paved shoulder strips to extend bicycle path to Ochre River as recommended by the district.

Four other structures are 30 feet by 36 feet wide but not proposed for replacement as they are structurally and hydraulically adequate.

What we have there for that is grade widening and shoulder gravel. The estimated cost is \$1.1 million, the structural for \$340,000. That is what is up for consideration under this year's approval program.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, I will just mention to the minister that the initial upgrading was done from Dauphin to Dauphin Beach and the remainder is badly needed, as the minister has mentioned, 26 years old and badly cracked pavement. There is a lot of traffic on that road, heavy traffic, I believe, relatively for a PTH compared to say the one we just talked about. I hope the minister will consider that program urgently.

I also want to mention a couple of others in the interest of time, Madam Chairperson. Other colleagues want to raise concerns. I would bring to the minister's attention 362 from Dauphin to Sifton, which was proposed for shoulder widening and has no shoulders basically on it at all. It is very dangerous with heavy equipment, with farm equipment on it and cars being met because there is absolutely nowhere to pull off; you go off the pavement and you are off into the ditch just like you would be on, I think, it is 207 or something like that number in the Whiteshell.

I do not know if anybody has driven through the Whiteshell where some of the pavement is about a foot thick and if you drop off you are right in the ditch. There is no shoulder whatsoever. This is a similar type of situation on 362 from Dauphin to Sifton, particularly the first few miles there.

Also, 274 north of Gilbert Plains, again, we have a case where there are no shoulders whatsoever, paved nicely in years gone by, but never upgraded with proper shoulders. The rural municipality and the village there are very concerned about getting that widened. There have been a number of fatal accidents there. The minister should keep in consideration 274 for shoulder widening, north of Gilbert Plains and 362 north of Dauphin toward Sifton.

One other I will mention to the minister that is always raised as a major concern for tourism

purposes and one I am sure the minister is well aware of and his colleagues have made him well aware of is that running into the Duck Mountain park. Because of the destination point as a tourism destination, it is an important area where roads mean a lot to the level of activity and a potential there for expansion of tourism is great, and 366 north of Grandview must be upgraded in order to achieve that greater use.

I mention those as additional priorities from our area of the province, from my constituency, and ask the minister to keep in mind, particularly from a safety point of view, those ones without shoulders. I think that is one he has to consider immediately, get the survey and design done and the acquisition so he can get those shoulders done, because it is very dangerous.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, I have noted the roads that the member has put on the record.

I just want to say that ironically the criticism comes forward to the department very often that when we design roads that we design them too extensively with wide shoulders. Very often the temptation has been, I think, in the past and sometimes the temptation is there even now just to do a pavement or a base and AST on existing road and then it serves the purpose for awhile but in the long run we lose the—it is not economically efficient to do that.

In spite of the fact that very often when my engineers say we have to do the shoulder widening so that we can take and establish a proper road and put a proper pavement or base and AST in there that if we do not do it that way then exactly what the member has made reference to on 274 where they did the paving, and then ultimately the road has to now be done again.

I just say that because whoever is responsible for the department invariably runs into that temptation to fight with staff to say, do we have to be that extensive. I am convinced after being here for five years that that is the route that we have to go. If we are going to do the job, let us do it.

An Honourable Member: Well, this was done many, many years ago.

Mr. Driedger: Yes.

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): Madam Chairperson, I find the Highways Estimates very interesting to follow. I guess it is not hard to understand that highways are very important to rural Manitoba. It is interesting to note that each of us

from different areas of rural Manitoba probably think that our roads are the most neglected.

I had one of my constituents tell me not very long ago that he was 80 years old and had never seen a paving machine. I think perhaps he was exaggerating a little bit. I do not want to take too much time today.

An Honourable Member: Is he a Tory?

Mr. Rose: Well, he is now.

I just want to ask the minister a few questions relative to some projects that have already been considered and see if we can find out just what the situation is with these particular projects.

The first one that I know that has been under some consideration for some time is PR 340, north of Wawanesa. That particular road eventually ends up in the Shilo area, and as we all know, the soils to that particular area are not conducive to building the best roads in the world. It is very sandy. In fact, it is the area that they use for army training and artillery training.

The people in the area tell me that some parts of the road are pretty well deteriorated to nothing, that it is very difficult to maintain because of the soil conditions. They cannot use rotary plows in the wintertime, and it is difficult to use graders because of those conditions.

I understand that this stretch of road has been under consideration for quite some time, and I would just like to ask the minister, what stage are you at on the development of PR 340, north of Wawanesa?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, the member is probably aware that in the approval process last year that the approval was given to proceed with 340. What has happened is, in fact, ultimately the staff was agonizing and looking at the consideration of having the 340 actually be an extension of PTH 18. With the crossing that was involved, the structure that was involved, Black Creek, I am told, there was some concern as to the type of structure that should be—whether we should revise it from a PR status to a PTH status because under the PTH system, we allow 100 kilometres an hour speed limit.

In our discussions with some of the people from the area, and I appreciated the member's input into this over a period of time—we are prepared to proceed with the tender process.

* (1550)

Application has now been made for the environmental licence. Once we have achieved that, it would be anticipation, because of the previous approval, to basically proceed with the tender for the reconstruction as well as the structure itself. We anticipate that should happen, hopefully, within the next two months.

As soon as we have the environmental licence, the decision has now been made that, in terms of the structure itself, the access onto the structure, because of the indecision to some degree about the structure itself and with our anticipating eventually having it be an extension of a PTH, we feel confident that once we have the structure in place we will be able to accommodate the standards for it to be an extension of the PTH. So there should be no delay in that regard. Once we have the environmental licence, I am pushing staff to move forward to have it tendered as soon as possible.

Mr. Rose: I would like to thank the honourable minister for that. I know it is difficult for him to make any kind of predictions on environmental study, given the number of crocus fields and ducks' nests there are in that particular area. Could he hazard a guess as to when the environmental study would be completed? In other words, you mentioned in your answer, two or three months. Can we reasonably expect construction to begin sometime this year?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, staff tells me that a two-month expectation to get the environmental licence would be a reasonable expectation. I want to give the assurance that we will try and expedite it as fast as possible, because this is one of the projects that basically has had approval to proceed.

The requirements in terms of the tendering process are all basically met. We will push for the expediency on the environmental licence and then make sure that we get it tendered as fast as possible. I fully expect that there is going to be substantial construction taking place, if not completed, this year depending on weather conditions.

Mr. Rose: Another section, another PR road in Turtle Mountain that has been partially completed, I believe, of PR 347—the portion I am referring to is from Menteith Bridge to No. 2 Highway. It is a distance of, I would say, five or six kilometres. One of the local people told me that it was bad enough last year that he broke the axle on his grain truck.

Again, having driven the road a time or two, I did not quite believe that one. It was like the story about having never seen a pavement machine.

I would like to ask the minister what progress is being made on PR 347, south of No. 2 Highway?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, I beg a little bit of patience here. We are spending—it is hard to put on record exactly how much documentation we have here, but it is very substantive. So it just takes a little time until we get it checked. I have it on my map here. We are just trying to get information, exactly what the status is.

Madam Chairperson, I want to do this in stages. That nine kilometres going south from No. 2 on 347, the survey design has been completed and it is up for consideration for the acquisition of right-of-way for the first nine kilometres going south. That is all we have.

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

On the portion of 347 going east to the 22 we have nothing in the program at the present time, I guess mainly because the traffic count is substantially lower. I think it is 70 or less than 70 vehicles a day. So we feel that there are other roads at the present time, subject to the member's or the people's lobby of course, but at the present time that is all we have. We have the first nine kilometres going south under survey design. That has come in completed and we are looking at acquisition of right-of-way on that.

Mr. Rose: Thank you. I think the principal concern of the local people was just a small portion between Menteith Bridge and Highway No. 2, and I appreciate the fact that it is being considered.

PR 346 south from Highway No. 2—as the minister knows, there is a bridge there. It is commonly called McKeller's bridge, but I do not know if that is how the Department of Highways designates it. I know that the minister is aware that this bridge, while it has not been condemned, is certainly not capable of handling any kind of heavy traffic. People on the south side of the Souris River are particularly interested in the progress of a new bridge there for the very good reason that they are presently served by the CNR line through Margaret, Minto, Ninette, Elgin and that area.

The only access they have to a CP line would be across the Souris River and, if they move to the west and then cross the Souris River at No. 10 Highway, there are no elevators located on that CPR line. If

they move to the east and take Highway 18 across the river, again there are no elevators located there, but there is a large elevator at Nesbitt which is almost directly north of that particular bridge. So if that bridge was upgraded or rebuilt to the point that they can handle large grain trucks, it would give them close access to another rail line at Nesbitt.

I would like to ask the minister what the status is of the bridge and PR 346 from, I guess it comes from Highway 23 right through to Highway 2.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the member gives a pretty good assessment of the road itself. What we sometimes start off with is thinking it is just a matter of doing the design and doing the reconstruction. In some cases it turns out to be much more complex and much more difficult than that, and 346 is definitely one of those. We have a structure across the Souris River that is part of the requirement which is a pretty substantial structure. Initially when staff did the design and started planning this road, we thought we would just go into the normal process. As it develops, we have lobby groups that are creating a lot of concern and have already signalled us that if we—we were going to go with the existing alignment. In doing that, we have already gotten pressure that that is not an acceptable alignment, and we are looking at working with the municipalities and those individuals who have raised concern in terms of seeing what options we have in terms of a new alignment.

* (1600)

I do not want to raise any early expectations from the member as we go through that process. Anytime we have the concerns flagged environmentally, the process gets to be a little longer, but I feel confident that we want to move ahead with this project and that we will try and see whether we can alleviate those concerns. We cannot really complete the design on the bridge until we know exactly where we want to ultimately locate the bridge. I will try and get a further update from what I have given now in terms of some time frame and try and work together with the member in terms of seeing whether we can alleviate some of the concerns that are being brought forward already.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairperson, PR 440 south from Highway No. 3, I would like to thank the minister and the department for responding a year or so ago and rebuilding a portion of the road that was badly deteriorated. We were getting heavy

rains in the middle of the summer there, and it got to the point where it was almost impassable. I appreciated the fact that it was tendered and completed in a hurry in response to that even though preliminary work of course had been done.

As the minister will know, the southern portion, about 10 kilometres or so has not been completed. It will eventually hook into PR 253. Currently the southern portion of 440 goes through the Pembina River Valley, which has a very substantial hill on both sides.

A number of the local people—in fact, I have a petition with 200 or 300 names on it, along with some of the local jurisdictions who are suggesting that there should be a new routing on PR 440 on the southern end so it would link up with PR 253 a mile or two to the west and avoid going out of the Pembina Valley at all. Has there been any thought given to this? Is that under consideration?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the member is correct. A portion of that has been upgraded last year. We are looking at the balance of it, which we have another 9.5 kilometres which is under consideration for survey and design to do the completion of that. If we bring that forward for survey design, that next 9.5 kilometres, at that time consideration would be given in terms of whether we would have a new alignment or not. The next step is to bring it forward for survey design and then consideration would be given as to whether we would take and go with a new alignment or not.

Mr. Rose: Right in the town of Boissevain there is a—and I will get away from the roads in the area and note that we have only asked the minister about a very few kilometres, so we are looking forward to next year that, hopefully, there will be an increase in the road building and road improvement program in the constituency of Turtle Mountain. Some of the questions that we have asked the last few minutes, as I say, have only addressed a very small number of the many, many miles of roads that we have in Turtle Mountain.

I want to come into the town of Boissevain, where, as the minister knows, Highway No. 10 goes right through the edge of Boissevain. A few years ago, the portion of the street or of the highway—I am not sure whether it is designated a street or highway in the town—but that portion south of the railway tracks was divided into four lanes. The northern portion from the tracks north, which is roughly the centre of

the town, was not done at the time. For what reason, I do not know.

I have had a number of requests from the Town Council and the R.M. that consideration be given to that because that happens to be the area where the school is located right on the highway and also the rinks and the fairgrounds and swimming pool. In fact, all the recreation facilities in Boissevain are located in that part of the town, so they need to control the traffic a little more. It is probably greater on the north side of the tracks than it is on the south.

I would just like to ask the minister if any consideration is being given to making that portion of No. 10 Highway in the town of Boissevain on the north side of the tracks into four-lane divided.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, at the present time there has been no activity designed to take place in terms of four-laning on the other side of the track. Staff feel that the traffic does not warrant it, but this is something that I am prepared to undertake with the member to further consider together with the community and the member in terms of seeing whether we would want to proceed on that basis which then would, of course, have to be prioritized in terms of getting the design done.

Maybe the member can give me further advice as to his rationale for why it should be four-laned or some of the reasons. This is not what we have on record at the present time, so I would be prepared to further discuss it with the member to see whether we can develop the kind of rationale that is required to bring this forward as an extended four-lane in the town of Boissevain.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I will only comment that at one time there must have been rationalization. I would expect the traffic on No. 10 Highway on the north side of the tracks would be the same as the traffic on the south side of the tracks. Since the south side was done a few years ago, presumably at that time there was traffic enough to rationalize it. I appreciate the minister's answer, and we will certainly pursue it at another time.

Again, on No. 10 Highway, just to the south of Boissevain at the junction of Highway 3 and Highway 10, a year or so ago there was a fortunately not a fatal accident there, but a fairly serious one as far as tin is concerned at least.

There have been a number of concerns locally. I do not think there was anything there at that junction beside the stop sign, and I am not even sure if there

are speed bumps there. The request came in from the town of Boissevain suggesting that some kind of traffic control device be erected at the junction of Highway 10 and Highway 3 south of Boissevain. Can the minister tell me if that has been considered and what the conclusion was?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, we are having a little bit of debate here as to whether we had put up flashing lights or not. It puts me at a little bit of a disadvantage. I will undertake to review the request from the community in terms of exactly what has taken place. I do not have that information here now, but I am prepared to supply it to the member as soon as we have a chance to look at it.

The member is looking, I think, and probably has some correspondence that I have sent on that matter. If not, I will reply again to him in terms of exactly what we have done to address the intersection at Highway 3 and 10 which—

Mr. Rose: I do not have it with me, but I believe I do have a copy of the minister's letter to the town suggesting that the control lights would be erected by this fall. I am confident that will occur, but I just wanted to jog the minister's memory in case it has not already occurred, and we will look forward to a traffic device being installed before freeze-up this year.

I would like to also ask the minister about the satellite repair shops, I think a new program that is being developed for a system of repair shops located throughout the province. I guess my own particular area, as the minister knows, we do have a Department of Highways in Boissevain with considerable service provided there. The current plans indicate that the repair shop for that particular area would be located in another location down the highway a piece. I appreciate the thought behind it.

* (1610)

The suggested location is more or less the geographic centre of the region, but I guess some of the questions that are being asked locally—we do have a maintenance crew in the Highways shop in Boissevain. I guess the question is, where does maintenance stop and repair begin? The people that work in the garage and others are suggesting that people that do maintenance are also probably qualified to at least do minor repairs, and if consideration is being given, rather than create some kind of inefficiency where a simple repair job has to go to another town down the road a piece,

what kind of division or thought is given to defining what is service and what is repairs?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I appreciate the question and concern that the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose) raises here. In fact, I believe the concern was raised by some of the communities feeling that they were going to be deleted from the kind of service that they have in the area now. I believe, if I am correct, that I sent a letter of correspondence to some of the communities involved, clarifying—it was a misconception, because we are talking of building a repair shop which is not a maintenance shop.

The repair shop, by and large, is a facility that is a little bigger than some of the maintenance shops that we have and basically would involve two repairmen in there. This should not be confused, and there was some misunderstanding that this meant that we would close all the maintenance yards and shops in the area and that is not the case.

The maintenance yards will still be retained and this would be a repair shop. The member is correct in saying that. I believe it is slated for—the repair shop itself with two potential employees in there has been slated for Deloraine, which is geographically the centre of it. I want to re-emphasize the fact that, in spite of the concerns which are justifiably out there, our maintenance shops will not be closed. They will still be manned.

There has been a fair amount of confusion that has come forward under the regionalization and the turn back of the 2,000 kilometres. There has been movement of staff, and in some cases, especially under the turn back of the 2,000 clicks, there has been some deletion of staff in certain areas. That was where part of the savings came from.

Knowing that it has created that concern, I just want to assure the member that under the regionalization, which is the next step that we have taken, we are trying to be very conscientious of the fact that we have people employed and we have structures in the communities. I can fully sympathize with the feelings of any smaller community that has government employees working there. First of all, they are usually good jobs, and they are local people. If those positions disappear, these people are either out of a job or have to move.

I am not quite as fortunate. Living in a community of 750 people, we actually do not have anybody from

government there. I guess that maybe reflects on myself being maybe not that good a politician. I am saying a community of 750, and we do not have one single government job there other than in the post office.

An Honourable Member: You just got the road paved last summer.

Mr. Driedger: No, the member is wrong. The road was paved a long time ago. I would never take a chance waiting that long.

I know the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) has raised concerns about what is happening under regionalization as well. We try to do this as fairly as we can in terms of making sure that, where we have employees, there is little impact.

Very often staff, with a certain amount of uncertainty as we moved into regionalization, sort of had their own apprehensions and created that among other people as well. Basically, by the time we have completed regionalization, the impact there should be more people in the rural area than there are at the present time. There could be some adjustments between certain communities, minimal, not anything major. I want to assure all members in the rural area that we do this with great consideration and fairness, as much as we can.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I realize that is a long convoluted way of maybe answering the member for Turtle Mountain's question, but I wanted to clarify that the repair shop and the maintenance shop, there are only two positions involved, so it is not going to have a dramatic impact.

Mr. Rose: I appreciate the minister's answer, and I am sure there has been careful consideration given to it, but the people in the area are questioning that fine line between maintenance and repairs. I guess they are concerned that something that might be relatively a simple thing to repair may have to be picked up and moved 20 miles, just because that is government policy.

That is not criticism of the department or anything else. I appreciate what the minister is trying to do, but because of the distances in rural areas it is sometimes easier to use local people for anything less than major repairs. Perhaps that is all that is in mind here, is major repairs, but the people locally do not know that. Obviously, these questions are coming from those communities that now have Highways facilities, but still the question is whether

it will be a more efficient operation than it is now. No comments required on that.

I just have a couple of more points I would like to touch on, if I may. Very quickly, at this time of year, of course load restrictions are something that are of great concern to everyone. I am sure the minister is always pleased to hear a comment about load limits or road restrictions, but we do wonder, particularly in a spring like this in our particular area of the province, there was very little snow, very little runoff, very little moisture collected anywhere. The ditches have been dry for quite a while. The 4-H people were out and cleaned them up tidily last Saturday and the restrictions are still on, of course.

No reasonable person would suggest that load restrictions should not be placed on our highways. We have all seen the results of not following that, not only the results of inconvenience for people in the area to travel through potholes and whatnot, but the cost of repairing the roads, but it does seem that perhaps there might be a little more consideration given, I guess, to conditions from year to year.

Just while I am on the same point, the second aspect of that, I am sure the minister is aware of the problems that farmers encounter at this time of year moving seed and fertilizer. It is not necessarily that they want to haul full loads to the market, but they do have to move seed and fertilizer and chemical around at a 60 kg load restriction.

I am afraid I am still on Imperial and will never fully understand the metric, but I understand that translates roughly into what used to be 350 pounds per inch, which is what I was familiar with working with when I was in the trucking business.

Even if we could raise that at this point in time in conditions like we have this year another 50 pounds per inch, and I do not know what that reflects to in kgs, but that would give a farm truck with six 10.00 tires on it an extra 3,000 pounds. It would be another tonne and a half of fertilizer, another 50 bushels of wheat, so I guess the question is, is there room over and above the 45 kg and 60 kg load restrictions? Is there room for a step between there and complete removal of the load limits, which does not usually occur until well on into May or early June?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the member is correct that during the time when restrictions come in it is always a difficult time, because everybody feels that their economic requirements in

terms of transportation, whether it is hauling fertilizer, grain, fuel, et cetera, is very vital, and that is probably one of the more difficult times in this office, because individuals keep phoning and asking exactly, you know, why do you restrict it to such a level?

We have a system in place whereby we have a compactor, a machine that basically we take and put out on the road that takes readings as to the strength of the base and the AST or the pavement. I want to clarify that we do not just set a date from the time that we put it on until it is closed off. We go based on the tests that get taken. If the tests warrant earlier removal of the restrictions, we do that, so that it is not just that we take a two-month period of time. We continue to test.

* (1620)

The member raised the point as to whether there could be a compromise between the 60 kgs and the 45 kgs. I do not know whether that has ever been given consideration. I am prepared to have further discussion on that matter.

However, I think I have mentioned this in past times already. Early on in my tenure in this department I overruled staff and allowed a special permit for an individual for a heavier load on a road that definitely should have been restricted. As a result, we grooved the road and virtually ruined a whole road by allowing one truck to drive on there. Since that time I have been much more hardened to the fact that the restrictions are there for a purpose. We do not do that to create problems for the farm or business community in terms of hauling. We do that for the protection of our infrastructure and for the fact that we can ruin a road so easily by having them on there at the wrong time with heavy loads.

The other problem, of course, is that our farm community by and large is expanding their units, this many times. Ten years ago a three-ton truck still used to be a relatively big truck. Now it is a small truck compared to the kind of units that are being hauled, you know, for hauling of milk, for hauling of fuel, for hauling of grain, the hauling of gravel. You have just gigantic units compared to what we had and many of our roads are not built for the kind of units that are on there. From this department's perspective as we keep rebuilding roads we still lose the battle. By the time we would ever catch up, we would probably have to rebuild again for the heavy

units that are out there. We try and do this as fairly as possible.

I made reference, and if the member wants to check the Hansard, somewhere along the line I made reference to a third category of roads, a category between a PTH and PR, where we are looking at establishing a system that would be probably pavement because PRs are mostly base and AST. The next system of PR roads that would basically be pavement allow certain economic connections between communities to a major PTH.

I realize the concerns that the member is raising in terms of the restrictions and want to assure him that certainly from my perspective and staff's perspective, we will not have them on any longer than is required. This will vary from year to year and time to time and if the conditions in this area are such that they could be removed sooner, we will make very sure that they will be removed sooner.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairperson, just one more question, but before I ask that, I would like to congratulate the minister and the Department of Highways for what I consider to be an excellent system of roads throughout rural Manitoba given the distances and the weather conditions that need to be contended with. I know that this system has not developed overnight, so perhaps the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) when he was the Minister of Highways did have a hand in some of those developments as well. It may be because of or in spite of the various ministers along the way, certainly the Department of Highways is to be commended for, as I say, developing a fine road system throughout rural Manitoba.

To drive on that wonderful road system in rural Manitoba we need vehicles and I have noticed that once in a while we put out a new licence plate to put on these vehicles and I understand that is probably something that needs to be done fairly soon. I know mine is getting pretty worn and a few of the stones that bounce around on these good roads that we have, time for new licence plates and I would just like to suggest to the minister that when he is considering the design of that new licence plate that—yes, Souris would be a good suggestion but I think it would be even more appropriate if we put "Peace Garden Province" on our new licence plate.

I think we all know, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that the Peace Garden is located on No. 10 Highway on the border between Canada and the United States.

It is literally known worldwide as a centre of beauty and a centre of peace. We have music students come from all over the North American continent and other countries as well to the music camps and the peace gardens. There are any number of other activities that take place that are known across North America. I think we would be very well suited in Manitoba to have our vehicles identified with the Peace Garden province. If the minister would consider that, I know that I can find any number of capable artists that would be delighted to give him a hand in the designing of a new plate. With that I thank the minister and his staff for their time and answers.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I must compliment the member for Turtle Mountain. Obviously, himself and a few others have lobbied extensively—

An Honourable Member: A mutual admiration society.

Mr. Driedger: The reason I am complimenting him is because, obviously, he has done a pretty good job together with some of his other—not colleagues necessarily, but people in the area for promoting the Peace Gardens.

In terms of the licence plate issue, the normal approach has been over the years to do a reissue every eight years. At the present time, it is already 11 years. It had been my hope that aside from the photo licences that I had the privilege of bringing in, that I could also accomplish the reissuance of a licence during my term in office. It is still my hope to do that, of course.

We had planned to move forward in that direction this year, and then when we came through the budgetary process, this was one of the things that got sort of lost in the shuffle in the decision making. So I would hope that as the economy probably turns around that, ultimately, we can do a reissuance. I have always considered our licence plate a very bland type of licence plate, and would hope that when we do come up with a new design we will take the member's comments under consideration and put to see whether we can maybe have another run at it next year. I thank the member for his comments.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would remiss if I did not, first of all, congratulate the minister and his department for their repairs to the Selkirk Bridge. Speaking of

bridges, I was wondering if the minister's department has been monitoring the progress of the repairs to the Lockport Bridge.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the member is probably aware of the involvement of my department or noninvolvement that has taken place ever since the federal government gave notification that the Lockport Bridge was going to be closed. Extensive meetings have taken place with the community. We have, I think, played a role with the federal government, Public Works Canada, in terms of trying to get them to move forward.

Many meetings took place in my office with the business people from Lockport, also with the federal members, also with Public Works Canada, pushing for what I thought was poor handling of a very sensitive issue. I feel confident that if my staff would have ever operated with that attitude and with that kind of a preparedness or lack of preparedness that we would certainly take strong exception to that. I would.

I think that it was irresponsible by the federal government and Public Works Canada knowing the condition of the bridge over the years already as we started restricting the weights on it, that they would not have done their planning better. I put the responsibility fully on the shoulders of the federal government, Public Works Canada. They saw this thing coming down the pike somewhere along the line and instead of being prepared where the activity could have taken place sooner, at a different time of year so that it would have the least minimal impact on the economy for Lockport, this was not the case.

Yes, we have monitored what is going on. We have been working together, my staff, in terms of the signage or whatever which was required for Public Works Canada. The first contract was let which was the demolition of the west approach. My understanding is that that has been completed and that the contract has been let for the substructure, and it is in progress at the present time.

* (1630)

The community has raised ongoing concerns even prior to this, as to what other options were there. We worked with them in terms of a winter ice crossing, which I would not undertake from the government's perspective, which they undertook on their own, though I offered them at that time staff who were qualified on ice crossings to give advice. They undertook that together, whether they did it on

their own or with the municipalities; anyway, that served for a time.

That ice crossing, of course, is gone now, and further discussions took place in terms of looking at the option of a ferry crossing, and that has not progressed well at all. If the member has probably read the Free Press, comments by some of the business people say that their business is down by 50 percent, and that is going to be one of the difficult things that the community, the people in Lockport, the business people will have to, I suppose, live with until the time of the completion of the contract, which, my understanding is, is still on track for November.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, just a few further comments. The two contracts that are in place right now, that is, for the substructure and the structure, it is our understanding that these will be completed in August, at which time there is going to be another contract for the deck. So at the present time our information tells us that everything is still on track timewise and that by November we should be able to have the use of that bridge again.

That does not take away from the fact that that is only part of the total agreement with what the feds are undertaking, but at least the bridge will be able to be used. There still has to be the refurbishing of the lock and dam and other portions of the bridge that have to be redone, but this is the inconvenient time that is going to have the most impact on the community.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I agree completely with the minister that the federal government bungled this, and, in particular, the M.P. for the area, who will, unfortunately, share some of the blame for the way he mishandled this particular situation.

All of us who commute from Selkirk to Winnipeg are fully aware of the decay of Highway 9. I was wondering if the minister could update myself and the citizens of Selkirk on the progress of his department in terms of repairs and upgrading of Highway 9 between the Perimeter and, I believe, Little Britain Road.

Mr. Drledger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, we have done extensive design work and planning on the No. 9 right from that portion within the city which we have designated as the first stage of improvement. It is a very, very costly project. Basically, I think the plans are in place to go. We have not got anything out in

tender at the present time. This is one of the projects that we are looking at bringing on-stream. Once we start it, it is an ongoing project, a very costly one. Realizing that the pressure is coming down in terms of traffic and safety requirements, we have to do that.

The member is well aware that, aside from that, we have set aside what we call the Selkirk corridor, property that has been set aside and a plan that was in place already when I took office, where we are buying certain right-of-ways which circuitously by-pass the intensely populated areas that No. 9 is on. So that is the long-range planning. From time to time, as people have properties there and wish to either relocate or sell, we pick up these properties to secure them for the future.

At the present time, Mr. Acting Chairperson, we have no contract on No. 9. We have it there for consideration, but none has been let at the time.

Mr. Dewar: When can the citizens of Selkirk expect that tender to be put out?

Mr. Drledger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I apologize, I was looking for a little bit of advice. Could the member just repeat that question?

Mr. Dewar: I was just wondering when the tender will be put out for No. 9 Highway. When can we expect the repairs to begin?

Mr. Drledger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, no, I cannot give a commitment, but first of all, it is not going to be one tender. I would expect that we are probably looking at four or five stages just based on the tremendous costs involved of redoing this. The first stage, I assume—staff have just informed me that we are still in the process of acquiring some right-of-way in some stretches of it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): Item 8.(a)—

Mr. Drledger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am sorry. There was a delay. I was just getting updated. I do not want to necessarily take the time to go into detail of every step of what has happened along the No. 9 Highway. The first stage would be basically from the Perimeter heading north 4.8 kilometres, which is, you know, out in the rural area. Talking about the rural area, that would probably be a small project. In a very densely populated area of this nature, it is a pretty substantive project, and so I think we have two pieces of property?

Just to maybe clarify for the member how complex it gets, in that first 4.8 kilometres, we have 102 properties that we have to deal with. That just gives you an illustration of how complex it gets to be with that kind of a project, and we still have some properties that we have not acquired. If we cannot come to a harmonious agreement with the Land Acquisition Branch with the people involved, then we use the expropriation route and that also is a little bit of time. But we are moving forward on this. We realize the pressure that is on this road and will continue to move it forward as fast as we can.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the minister mentioned the Selkirk corridor. I was wondering if he could provide me with the plans for the Selkirk corridor.

Mr. Driedger: Ask it again.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Relmer): We will have to repeat the question again, is it?

Mr. Dewar: I was just asking if the minister could provide me with the plans for the Selkirk corridor at a later date, formal plans.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I want to be cautious in terms of making the commitment to provide the full plan because it is very extensive, but we have plans that are facing municipalities. We have them in my office. At a certain given time, we can probably maybe have them viewed as far as we have. We just have functional plans at the present time. I will have a review of exactly what we have there. It is not anything that is secretive or that we are protective about. I will see what I can provide the member in terms of information.

Unless there is some confusion why I had to have a couple of the questions repeated, the unfortunate thing is that the Speaker of the House (Mr. Rocan) also is not in a position to necessarily ask too many questions, and while we were debating some of the issues here, he was getting in his plugs.

So it just goes to show the importance of highways and the rural areas as well as the surrounding urban areas. They are very important parts, so I think we should take in somewhere along the line before Estimates finish, have the endorsement of all members of the House that there should be a substantial increase in the capital budget of the Department of Highways for the future.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I would like to thank my colleagues for the opportunity to ask a few questions in this area. As the others have

indicated, the roads in rural Manitoba are very important and there are several in my constituency that I would like to ask about. In the interest of time, I will only take a few of them and one of them being on 268. On that road we are supposed to be having the Lenswood bridge rebuilt, and I want to ask the minister at what stage they are at and when can we expect to see the construction of that bridge?

* (1640)

Mr. Driedger: Have I not opened that bridge already? I am being facetious, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I had the occasion to cross the Lenswood bridge at various times and also meet with the people from the community.

We had it on for design purposes and I know full well all the implications and problems with the bridge. It is a very narrow bridge. It virtually cuts off the farm community from one side to the other in terms of the equipment. It is a very progressive farming area and the kind of equipment that they have nowadays really does not lend itself well to it. I am talking while my staff is going to get me updated as to what the status is on this thing.

We are not looking at having anything happen with the bridge until possibly 1995. The reason is we are undergoing an environmental assessment at the present time and we are trying to still get the location identified. We have a consultant that has been engaged to do the design once we have a location study completed. The location is subject to the environmental approval.

Again, for the members here, I have to say that I invariably come up using the environmental consideration as part of problems from time to time to move projects forward. I will repeat again, that under normal just road widening or reconstruction, it is not that dramatic, but when we start doing anything that deviates from that and deals with rivers, creeks, certain things that could be—even the swamp areas, we get into really delicate negotiations in order to get an environmental licence.

As much as I had anticipated that we would have moved forward on the Lenswood bridge a lot sooner, it is in the mix, as it has been, I guess, but we are trying to get the environmental licence. Once that is done, the consultant is in place to then do the design based on the location that the environmental licence will allow us to do.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am pleased that the minister does recognize the value of that bridge, and with the changing times, it is very important, because, in fact, for some farmers it means an added distance of 15 to 20 miles around to get to another piece of land. So it is quite a distance for them and I would hope that we would see that soon. I am disappointed to see that we are not going to see anything likely before 1995. It has been a long-awaited promise and one we have heard about many times.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

I want to move to another area, and that is PH 487 also in the Swan River area. It is called the Harlington road. There were plans to upgrade that road. Some of it, I believe, is supposed to be paved. Can the minister tell us where those plans are and to what extent the plans are for improving that road this year?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, Madam Chairperson, that is the one that goes towards the ski hill in that area? If the member would have half a second of patience here—as I say, our pile is this thick in terms of the roads. We are scrambling to try and pick out the ones that are being raised—487 going west.

Madam Chairperson, we just completed regrading a small portion of it, I think, two kilometres or something like that. The road was basically reconstructed in 1982 to a 38-foot subgrade. I do not know whether I should necessarily say this should please the member, but we have the environmental approval for resurfacing that whole stretch. We have everything in place to proceed to do that. It is just a matter of whether we can—it is up for consideration for surfacing, subject to financial restraints that I have. But it is one thing that there is nothing that is holding it back except the decision to ultimately do it.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, the minister is well familiar with the gentleman, Mr. TerHorst, who visits his office on a regular basis regarding this road. I will convey the message to him that plans are going ahead. However, I think that he will be disappointed to hear that it is only two kilometres. There seems to be a—

Mr. Driedger: No, I want to clarify that. Last year we just redid two kilometres of that road right close to 83. The whole stretch is ready to go; 15.1 kilometres is basically all ready to go. It is just a matter of whether we can prioritize it and have the

money for it. But there is nothing to hold it back other than the decision to do it.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you very much, and I hope that the minister will put that high on his priority list. It is an important road to the area. Again, that it is one of the roads that farmers in that area do not have any other access to get out to the highway. If they do, it is across country to the ditch road, and that is a long way for them to go. We appreciate and hope that the minister will proceed with that this year.

I want to move to another part of the constituency, and that is in the Ethelbert area. I have copies of resolutions from the town of Ethelbert and from the R.M. of Ethelbert, and they have been requesting, for some time, a by-pass on the north side of the town. There is a concern that—construction of a by-pass between 269 and Highway No. 10—there is no other access out of the town right now except on No. 10, a small bridge there. The town has been working and asking for a long time to have another by-pass.

I want to ask the minister whether his staff has looked at that proposal to put that by-pass in on 269 and where those plans are at this time.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, my staff informs me that we have a new location—she refers to it as a by-pass, I do not know whether it is a by-pass—at 2.7 kilometres, which basically is virtually ready for grade and gravel. What has happened is the right-of-way acquisition is completed; environmental assessment is required because we again do a new alignment. It says here construction should not proceed until the issue of Fork River diversion is resolved between the R.M. and Water Resources.

The Fork River bridge on 269, which is the main street in the village of Ethelbert, is 70 years old and very substandard, only 20 feet wide. The village is concerned this bridge might be blocked for some reason during an emergency with no other route available between one side of the community and the other.

The resolution recommended from the R.M. of Ethelbert requested extension of 269 from the northeast corner, section 31-29-21W, westerly to PTH 10, in order to provide a second access route. I think that is what the member is referring to, the village across from Fork River.

We are working on that whole aspect of it, but I cannot give a definitive time when it is going to be

completed because of the complications of what has taken place there. There is a pretty substantive write-up here, and we are working on the thing.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification, the minister is saying there is a concern with the water in there. So which departments—is Natural Resources involved with this before the plans can go ahead, or what has to happen?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, in looking at the briefing notes, it appears that everybody is involved, including the R.M., the community itself, Water Resources, Highways, and Ducks Unlimited as well. So that is when things always get a little tacky, but it is on stream. It is being worked on, and I hope that we can get that resolved.

* (1650)

Ms. Wowchuk: I have been talking to the R.M. of Ethelbert and the town of Ethelbert, and I am not aware of any meetings that are being co-ordinated at the present time. Which department would be co-ordinating those meetings to see if this project can go ahead?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, I suppose the onus would be on us, depending on how much pressure we put on to try and move ahead with this thing. I certainly have not been putting the pressure on my staff to move with it. I do not know, I cannot recall to what extent we have pressure coming from the general area on this because I get so much correspondence. That does not mean it is not there but usually it depends a little bit on how much pressure comes down as to whether we then prioritize it and move it forward with Water Resources, the R.M. and the community. I am sort of leaving that door open to see exactly how serious it is out there. We will deal with it from there on as it comes forward, unless there is something that triggers it from Water Resources but I would expect that the triggering part, in terms of moving it forward, would come from my department.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I guess then the advice I should be giving to the council of the R.M. and the Village of Ethelbert is that they should increase their pressure on the minister because this has been ongoing for a long time. I think that is what the minister is saying. Letters have gone just a short time ago to him, so I will be advising them then to encourage the minister and continue pressuring on this issue because it is important to them.

As the minister said, it is a very old bridge that is the only access from the town right now. I hope that we can see some progress made on it in this year or in the near future, somebody looking at it at least and giving the town and R.M. some answers because they have been waiting for it for a long time.

Just continuing on in a couple of other areas. I want to ask the minister what is happening with the road to Wellman Lake? That is Highway 366. Are plans going ahead to upgrade that road and can we expect any paving? That is an important road and there is a lot of tourist traffic in that area. People who have cabins in that area have been calling, and I know there have been some promises made to upgrade it. Is that upgrading going to continue and what work can we expect to see happening on it this year?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, we have in last year's program approval to proceed on 366, along with many other projects of course. We have it on for spot improvements and ultimately for repaving, you know, reconstruction and resurfacing. This is one of the projects that, as I say, we have approval to proceed. It is just a matter of when we can get it forward to do it. I cannot cover all the projects in this construction year that we had approval for last year, so I had to take that into consideration as I developed this year's program. If approval has been done, it is just a matter of when we can move all these projects forward related to the SHIP program that I have going with the federal government—SHIP—so, you know, to clarify that.

There is nothing more the member can really do. It is there to be done. It is just a matter of when we can move forward with it.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am starting to wonder whether there is going to be any work done. All of these roads are in the works, but we are not sure whether any of them are going to happen this year. I hope that we will see some paving done this year.

Another area: Has the minister had any communication from the residents of Indian Birch? It is not a numbered road; it is a road that is north of Birch River, off No. 10 Highway, to the reserve. There has been a tremendous amount of concern about whose responsibility that road is and who should be looking after it. I want to ask the minister what is happening on that road and whether there are any plans to upgrade it in the upcoming year.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, because it is not a numbered road, I assume that it is probably what we call a main market road. If it is within provincial authority or whether it is on the reserve, or whether it is in the—I am trying to find it; I have not got it on my map here, so I am wondering if the member could maybe clarify a little further exactly where we are.

Ms. Wowchuk: It is a road that is just north of Birch River. It is outlined on the map in blue and white. It is considered "other road," but there has been discussion about transferring that road or having some assistance on that road. I believe it is a main market road, but the municipality, the LGD of Mountain, has been talking about having that road transferred back to the province or somebody else taking responsibility for the road because they cannot maintain it. There is a lot of traffic on it.

So my question to the minister is, has there been any discussion with the LGD of Mountain on that road, and are there any plans to offer assistance on that particular road?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, if it is a main market road, of course, that would be our responsibility; if it is not a main market road, I would have to clarify in this particular case, what the classification of that road is, because it leads into a reserve, if I can read my map correctly.

Rather than belabour it and stumble around at this time, I want to tell the member that I will try to get a clarification of exactly what the status is of the road, who has the responsibility. Then I will take and respond to her, because I do not have that information here with me at the present time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I thank the minister for that, and if he could check into that and let me know what is happening with that road, I would appreciate it.

That road falls into the same category then, I would imagine, as the road into Pelican Rapids does. They are marked as "other roads" on the map; there is no number on them. So then I would like some information on the Pelican Rapids road, whether the government is going to proceed with the continuous salting of that road this year, as was promised earlier on in the year.

If the minister does not have that information with him here, if he could provide it for me at a later date, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Chairperson, on both those roads, I will have to take that under advisement to give a proper status on it.

I might tell the member that I had the privilege of driving down on the road to Pelican Rapids when I was up there on my hunting excursion last fall. I thought it was actually a very good road. I was pleased with the quality of road, whether it is still that way or not. I would like to take credit for the condition of that road, really, but I will undertake to find out what the status is.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister can take credit for the road if he wants, but he should also talk to people at Pelican Rapids and Shoal River reserve, because they are not very happy with the quality of the road.

There is a lot of dust and there has been some concern with the amount of service on that road. So I would hope again on that road, if the minister would look into it and provide me with the information, any plans he has to upgrade those areas.

If I could move on to another area—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 19—Preservation of the Family Farm

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that

WHEREAS preservation of the family farm, the most efficient and effective unit for production, is essential to the long-term survival of the rural economy; and

WHEREAS municipalities throughout Manitoba have, by way of resolutions, recognized the devastating situation facing farm families that has been compounded by low prices and bad weather conditions in the summer and early fall of 1992; and

WHEREAS 70 percent of farm debt in Manitoba is borne by 30 percent of farm families, primarily younger farmers; and

WHEREAS existing programs, including GRIP and NISA are not based on cost of production, have failed to assist young farmers carrying the highest debt burden, and do not provide disaster relief; and

WHEREAS the federal and provincial governments have promised to put in place a third line of defence program, but have failed to do so.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the provincial government to listen to the views of the municipalities and individual farmers and to consider, along with the federal government, putting in place emergency cash relief; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly call on the government to work with financial institutions to institute, on a voluntary basis, a one-year debt moratorium, or failing that, to consider introducing enabling debt moratorium legislation until sufficient cash is available to farmers.

Motion presented.

Mr. Plohma: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this resolution today in the Legislature on May 3, some six months after the resolution was indeed drafted.

Because of the nature of our system and the fact that we have a fall sitting as well as a spring sitting, the resolutions are brought in and accepted in the fall in session, in this case prior to the December sitting. Then we do not always get to them until many months later, in this case about six months after.

So sometimes these resolutions are dated, to a certain extent, and some of the latest information is not included in the preamble as we would like it to be had we drafted the resolution at this particular time, say a day or two ago before it was finally introduced in the Legislature.

Even though it was introduced last year, initially, it does have I think the same relevance today as it did at that time. Some minor things have changed. Some might say they are major things.

GRIP final payments are in the hands of the producers for the previous year, so that has brought some cash into their hands, and there have been a few other instances where that has resulted in some cash into the hands of individuals.

However, the cash relief called for in the fall of 1991 has not materialized. That was based on the previous crop year, where there was really no cash

relief for the major disastrous year that took place at that time, and farmers are still feeling the results of the impact of that major failure, Mr. Speaker.

So those dollars that were required when we went as a delegation, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) was part of that delegation, along with farmers from Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba, along with political leaders and farm leaders making the representation to the Prime Minister and various groups and M.P.s in Ottawa. The arguments that were made at that time were still relevant and were never answered in a satisfactory way by the federal government.

Of course, the third line of defence that was discussed so widely and certainly publicized so broadly by the minister himself at the time that GRIP was brought in and NISA, and the federal government, whether it be McKnight or Mazankowski or Charlie Mayer or whoever at the time, the federal ministers have not lived up to their obligation in this regard. I am not so sure that the provincial ministers have taken the kind of initiative with this to apply pressure to the federal government in living up to their obligations for a third line of defence as was envisaged a couple of years ago when GRIP was designed and NISA was designed. As a matter of fact, I think many people do not believe that the federal government ever will live up to what was envisaged.

As a matter of fact, I found it of interest when I read the CAP brief to the minister regarding crop insurance, which was dated February 17, 1993. They made an observation which I found quite telling when they said as part of their recommendation or point No. 8 on the Crop Insurance Review: While we have no disagreement with the Recommendation 8 dealing with risk-area disaster, we believe it is necessary to be realistic in terms of the very limited likelihood that the federal third line of defence program will ever materialize as envisaged.

So even the Keystone Agricultural Producers believe, it seems, that the federal government will not live up to its obligations, even though we have from Manitoba a Minister of Agriculture at the present time, Charlie Mayer, and we have a federal election coming. But things have changed in this country. Rather than a flood of announcements of expenditures before an election, they seem to feel that the mood is such now that that would be counterproductive to getting re-elected and that it is

more prudent now to in fact at least give the impression of making cuts that may not look to be painless. So they are all kind of scheduled for two years down the road so that in fact it would look to be prudent in cutting back and so on, but there is no impact because it is all two years down the road.

So it looks like the federal government has taken a completely different tactic, and I do not think that we are going to see any softening up as a result of a federal election on this kind of important issue. As a matter of fact, we are seeing the opposite. We are seeing further cuts in the Western Grain Transportation Act. We are seeing a movement away from the Canadian Wheat Board with the movement of barley potentially from the Wheat Board, which I think is a blow to farmers in western Canada following on what happened to oats.

We certainly see a change in the method of payment perhaps being devastating or at least contributing to the hardships of a lot of farmers who may not be in a position to benefit from that, but certainly would be in a position where they would be hurt, particularly those who are not on the main lines through western Canada, through Manitoba, where they are going to have to truck greater distances, where there are going to be greater costs borne by them, where there is not sufficient compensation for the losses they are going to suffer as a result of the rail line abandonment.

So things are actually being complicated by federal policies, insofar as their impact on farm families. The minister is not without adding to that complication, without blame in that regard, too. As a matter of fact, some recent changes that he announced only April 6, 1993, with regard to young farmer rebates reflect less support in the young farmer rebate category which is another blow, because I think the Crop Insurance Review recommended even in crop insurance there would be special attention for young farmers.

Everyone has recognized that young farmers need special programs to get established, if we want to indeed ensure that young farmers continue to take over farms and have an opportunity to become viable and not be so burdened with debt that they just cannot surface in their working lifetime, that they are sucked under like in a whirlpool and not able to actually enjoy the fruits of their labour during their working lifetime, that they are burdened with debt during that whole time. I think that the Young Farmer Rebate was one major step, significant step

to a limited extent that MACC was involved, a significant step to help young farmers.

What really bothers me is the minister complicating things further. People who want to come for loans to MACC are now going to have to pay \$500 on \$100,000 loan as an administration fee to apply for a loan. I think that the minister is trying to run it like a private corporation and private lending institution charging all these additional fees. We see that in the banking industry now. Wherever you go, no matter what you do, you are being charged for it. They have your money, meanwhile they are making money off it or they are making money off of lending it to you, and they still want all these other charges. Is it not enough? Is it not enough to make money off the money that they are lending to you? Why do they need to charge all these additional charges?

* (1710)

The minister has fallen right into that. I think he is moving the wrong way insofar as helping young farmers in this province. I want that noted because I do not think that is contributing to assisting in relieving the crises that we talked about when we wrote this resolution last fall. It is continuing. The interest rates are lower, but many of the loans are still at a much higher interest rate. So people are still paying the higher interest rates on their long-term loans.

In addition, many areas of our province were hurt by the early frosts and the wet weather last fall. They have not really been able to get out from underneath the burden that that placed on them either. So when you consider drought over the last number of years, when you consider wet weather that has made it difficult to harvest, when you consider low prices, when you consider the unique problems of southwestern Manitoba which the Crop Insurance Review has recommended the minister pay special attention to in Risk Area Nos. 1, 2 and 3, when you consider the fact that there was no cash relief in the years preceding GRIP, and when you consider that GRIP does not impact fairly to all farmers—some benefit a great deal, others benefit very little—then you have to look at the cumulative effects of that and say, yes, there is a crisis out there for many farmers through no fault of their own.

They need to be dealt with, and I do not know whether the minister ever feels he can fine tune to the extent as required to deal with those who are

hurt the most, but there is a real crisis for many farmers. So when we consider all of those aspects, we have to continue the pressure on the federal government regardless of whether the political climate is such that they may respond. We have to put the pressure on this government to continue to identify areas where they have to target programs for those most in need.

I have to say that the minister has not been particularly good at targeting over the last number of years. He was not particularly good at fine tuning GRIP and targeting it for those most in need. He has not been particularly good at doing it with regard to crop insurance either. We have to say to the minister then, he has a responsibility to change his priorities so that he in fact does attempt to target rather than paint with a broad brush. All of the farmers say, well, generally they are doing pretty good, I mean, the overall debt is down and that kind of thing, and net farm income is up. It is easy to use those kinds of terms. In a broad way, they seem to indicate that things are looking up. For a majority of farmers, particularly the larger farmers, there has been some improvement in their outlook.

We also have to consider those that are not in that category. Why are they not in that category? Is it bad management or is there a combination of other things that resulted in their not being in a category where they can be saying, well, things are looking up for us?

I think that is a real challenge for the minister and one that this speaks to. Because we want to target younger farmers, that is why we have included the issue of the cash relief and why we have included the issue of the voluntary debt moratorium.

I think that is something the minister has never talked about or considered. Saskatchewan did do it after the latest election for, I believe it was, a three-to six-month period. I do not know if it was extended or not. At that time, it was done on a voluntary basis. I believe, as a result, it led to greater co-operation, with the exception of the FCC that did not want to co-operate with anything that Saskatchewan was doing, perhaps for political reasons from the federal government again.

I think we should put the political considerations aside, Mr. Speaker, and instead try to do what is best for western Canadian farmers rather than this punitive reaction kind of thing that is taking place between governments of a different political stripe,

as is happening with Saskatchewan and the federal government. That is total nonsense. I do not think we can blame the provincial government for some of the things that have happened there with regard to how McKnight and Mazankowski have approached the situation in Saskatchewan, with the crisis that they have there and the crisis that I say is in place in many areas of our province, in which we have to target our programs to meet that challenge and that crisis.

I hope that the members opposite will support this. I know our new Agriculture critic will want to speak on this as well. It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will be able to see this resolution receive the unanimous support of this Legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, certainly it is a pleasure to talk about the family farm and what it means to Agriculture in Manitoba. It is rather discouraging to listen to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who is always on the gloom-and-doom scenario, which does not really very fairly reflect what has happened in agriculture in Manitoba for over 125 years in this country. He thinks you can live on gloom and doom. I can tell him, from the farmers of Manitoba, they have not lived on gloom and doom ever, and they do not live on gloom and doom today.

An Honourable Member: They live on hope.

Mr. Findlay: They live on hope, is right. They live on opportunities today and in the future.

This province was built by Agriculture. We started exporting Red Fife wheat in 1876, 800 bushels to some destinations in the world, basically Britain. Today, we now export over 60 crops and over 20 livestock species all over the world. We export these to over 100 countries, Mr. Speaker. I think therein lies a demonstration of the success of what Manitoba farmers have done.

If you look back over that 125 years of history in Agriculture, there has been a tremendous amount of change in our industry. People have adapted. Farmers have adapted. Agribusiness has developed. The social environment of rural Manitoba has developed because of agriculture.

Yes, we have lost population rather dramatically over the last 100 years, but that is the way it is in any part of the world. When agriculture builds itself up, it expands opportunities and jobs beyond the farm gate and then the population moves to centres like Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and western

Canada. A lot of the jobs in those locations are created because of agriculture.

If you look at the overall western Canadian agriculture of the three provinces, one in eight jobs in western Canada is generated by agriculture. So we generate a lot of activity before the farm gate and after the farm gate.

Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the debt situation in Manitoba, and he full well acknowledges that the debt situation is not as bad now as it was four or five years ago. Farmers have adapted their operations rather significantly to deal with the realities of incomes and expenses. Certainly farm incomes have not been as strong in the last four or five years as we would have liked them to have been. Expenses have been basically kept in line so the net revenue the farmers have had to live on has basically been shrinking somewhat.

* (1720)

The member does not like me to refer to general statistics which show that the realized net income is improved in '92 and is expected to improve again in '93. Certainly it was very low in '90 and '91 when the realized net income was around \$150 million, but we generally need around \$350 million to have any kind of a reasonable healthy rural economy.

We expect it to be around the 350 to 400 range in both '92 and '93 when the final figures are in. So in the broad brush situation there is a bit of good news out there. For the last 20 years, the asset to debt ratio in rural Manitoba has been around 80 percent, good times or bad times. Farmers have generally have about 20 percent of their assets covered by debt. So, you know, I do not think any other industry can point to those strong financial figures for the basis of their industry.

I would like to just point the member to some information that came out here a few months ago. It was a study done in 1989 which looked at 500 farms in Montana, Minnesota, South and North Dakota and 1,500 grain farms in western Canada. There have been some interesting statistics come out of it. Generally the assets on these grain farms in Canada is \$482,000, U.S., \$480,000. We were comparing the same kind of grain farms in the western Canadian region with the northern state region. Total liabilities in Canada, \$85,000 on these farms, and \$99,000 in the U.S. The net worth in Canadian farms, \$397,000, and U.S. farms, \$381,000. The asset-to-liability ratio in Canada is

83 percent and in the U.S., 80 percent, so very comparable figures for Canada and the United States.

Certainly the kind of agriculture we practise, the way we market our crops, the way we manage our farms, and the involvement of the Wheat Board and all that is quite different in Canada than it is in the United States, but yet to break it down to financial figures, there is a tremendous amount of similarity.

We often hear of a lot of American farmers complaining about the advantages Canadian farmers have and vice versa. When you do a study, and I think it is a fairly large study, 2,000 farms in total, shows there is a lot of similarity between the two countries.

The member talks about the third line of defence. There is no question that in the agri-food policy review, where we looked at trying to be sure that farmers in the future become more market responsive, that they demonstrated a greater sense of self-reliance, that we in the process of Ag policy recognize regional diversity, and we paid serious attention to environmental sustainability of farming, that out of that process the first, second and third line of defence came forward. Farmers have the responsibility to the first line of defence to do the best job they can on their farm; the second line of defence program, whether it is crop insurance or GRIP or NISA or tripartite stabilization, be in place to assist in an ongoing way, with farmers being able to minimize their risk, have some predictability to their income, some base-line sort of numbers in terms of what their income might be, and GRIP in Manitoba is very targeted.

It is predictable for farmers, although the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) does not like GRIP. He never liked it from Day One. But I want to remind him that the area north of 16 benefits very tremendously from the fact that the GRIP program was in place in '92, when the early frost came and the late harvest. If it were not for GRIP, a lot of family farms would not be there today that are there right now.

In terms of determining whether GRIP was adequately targeted, I will tell the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) that if she wants to ask the question, we will go into some detail on this in Estimates. We did a study where I asked staff to look at some case farms: a farm that had a good crop with no impact of frost; a farm that had

moderate impact of frost; another farm that had a heavy impact of frost; and a fourth farm that had a frost impact and could not get the crop off. We did an analysis and showed that in general terms, the farmer, of course, with the good crop got no payments in GRIP, and then the greater the degree of the impact of frost or not getting the crop off, the greater the financial impact on the farm and the more GRIP payments occurred.

It showed that even though the worst hit farmer did not get as much income as he would have, had he had a good crop, he got about 80 to 85 percent, which shows that you still have to get out there and farm the best you can and get as much as you can from the marketplace. In the event that you do not, that you get a frost and you do not get your crop off, GRIP comes in in a very big way. I was quite encouraged to see how the numbers worked on those various case farms. It showed, one, farmers still had to operate with the emphasis on the first line of defence; secondly, if something went seriously wrong, he got tremendous support from crop insurance and from GRIP. NISA, also, of course plays a role. So those figures have been worked out by the department, and we will talk about them in Estimates.

In terms of the overall debt situation, the member full well knows that the number of farmers that have declared bankruptcy has gone down each of the last five years. The number of farmers coming before the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board has come down from over 300 cases per year to less than 200 cases per year, and the process of going through debt review has kept an awful lot of farmers on the land in some fashion that otherwise would not be there. I have had numerous farmers tell me that thank goodness they had that opportunity. They knew they had trouble for two or three years. When they finally got there, they got somebody to help them sort things out and to restructure their debt and their farming operation to maintain some levels of survivability.

An Honourable Member: A good policy that the NDP put in.

Mr. Findlay: Well, the member says the NDP brought it in. Yes, I will agree to that, but the ability of the people sitting across the table from farmers, they are the people that have to be given credit for making it work. They are excellent negotiators. They work with the farmer and the financial institution to work out a solution. In the majority of

cases, it is quite workable. The guarantees that we had in place, when we came into government, were being called on in over 80 percent of the cases. Now it is down around 25 percent of the cases that guarantees actually have to be used, because the farmer has got his plan restructured so he can pay his own bills. The guarantee is only there if it needs to be in the last instance.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member does not like me to comment on Saskatchewan. I know, as he well knows, there are serious, serious problems out there. He says he wants to blame the federal government on what happened in Saskatchewan. I want to remind him that it was the Saskatchewan government that made the decision to make the massive changes in GRIP last year. They are also the government that made the decision in their budget of this year to give two years notice to withdraw from GRIP. That means that the Saskatchewan farm community, which does not have predictability in GRIP right now, will have no GRIP program after the '94 crop.

In Manitoba we have signed a five-year contract that expires after the '95 crop, and I have been out talking with farmers and the various places I have met within the last few months about what are we going to do beyond '95. Will GRIP be needed? Will NISA be an adequate whole farm stabilization? Certainly the impact of GATT negotiations is an unknown factor at this time.

I think that another factor that we have to keep in mind is that although we have evolved agriculture with a tremendous dependence on exporting cereal grains, as we look at the potential market revenues in cereal grains over the next few years, they are not as encouraging as the income will be from oilseeds or special crops or the livestock sector.

Certainly the family farm has been paramount in terms of developing agriculture in Manitoba. Ninety-eight percent of the farms out there today, 98 percent-plus are still family farms. I can guarantee the members for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) and Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) that the family farm will be the base of agriculture as long as I can see into the future.

It is a way of life. It requires a lot of commitment and work by the family members. There is not enough profit in it to cause corporate farms to come in, like maybe the member might envision. It just is not going to happen. In terms of the change that is

going on in rural Manitoba, the family farm is much more able to adapt. In many cases, it has two generations, and occasionally three generations. That really helps in the thought process because the older member of that generation, if it is a three-generation farm, he is very cautious. The middle guy, he has been around about 20 or 30 years, and he has an element of caution. Then you get the young buck who is really energetic and wanting to do all kinds of things. That combination of energy and control and conservative thinking makes for a good farm unit.

* (1730)

We have seen a lot of farmers evolve in Manitoba by diversifying their production. That has helped to strengthen the economy of the farms very, very significantly.

In terms of the resolution that the member brings forward, I have no dispute with the first "WHEREAS preservation of the family farm, the most efficient and effective unit for production, is essential for the long term survival of the rural economy".

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose), that Resolution 19 be amended by deleting all the words following the second WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

Effective support is provided to Manitoba farm families on an individual basis by Crop Insurance, GRIP, NISA and Tripartite safety net programs; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board is effectively addressing the debt problems of individual farmers in financial difficulty; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government and the Department of Agriculture continually meet with farm organizations, commodity groups and Municipal organizations to discuss and analyze the ongoing issues in the industry.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba continue to support the government's actions and programs that are preserving strong and viable family farms in Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, when I saw this resolution and seconded it for the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohma), I felt that it was very important that we address some of the concerns that have been outlined in this

resolution, things such as the high debt load that young farmers are having to carry.

I am disappointed that the minister would amend the resolution to the extent that he has because he has taken away the real intent of it. Although he may want to think that there is effective support provided for Manitoba farmers right now and everything is all rosy out in rural Manitoba, in fact, that is not the case. Farmers are under a tremendous amount of pressure in rural communities, and there are many farmers who are concerned about the survival of the family farm.

The minister talks about the programs that are in place, but in fact the crop insurance program, in the opinion of farmers, has been weakened. In fact, some of the changes that the minister has made, this government has made, in this budget is going to make it more difficult for young farmers. In particular, when we look at the changes that have been made with respect to the rebates and the young farmers' loans, young farmers are the ones who are going to have to take over. They are the ones who are carrying the big share of the load. This, I believe, will increase the burden that they have to carry. When we start to see administration fees brought in as well, I have some concern about why the government would be going in that direction. I think that they are just putting added burden onto farmers.

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

The purpose for this resolution was to address a concern that was brought forward by municipalities. Municipalities were concerned about people in their communities, whether or not they were going to be able to survive on the farm, whether we were going to see an increased migration from the rural communities, and they, last fall, recognized the difficult situations the farmers were in and wanted to see support. In particular, they wanted to see this government lobby the federal government to bring in the third line of defence, because the third line of defence was, when the farmers could not get their income from the marketplace, then the third line of defence was supposed to come into place.

The farmers are not getting their income from the marketplace. That income is not coming up, Mr. Acting Speaker. The only way that they are surviving is by off-farm jobs. Last week there were some statistics put out on the low income of farmers and the amount—the minister talks about how farm

income has come up, but in reality, a large portion of that income is coming from off-farm jobs; about two-thirds of that income is coming from off-farm jobs.

Well, farmers should be able to make a living, get a fair return from the market for the products that they produce. Right now, that is not happening. It is off-farm jobs that are providing most of the income.

In fact, both people—two people in most cases—are working off farm, and that is not what I see as a fair return, nor do I believe that if the minister really admitted it, he would prefer that it was otherwise. So I do not think it is fair to say that everything is all rosy out in the rural community and that the farm income is going up. Farmers are facing a tremendous amount of difficulty.

I want to look at the resolution here. When we talk about GRIP and the other programs and the stabilization programs, in fact, those are causing farmers some concern. We do not know where this government is going to go with GRIP. I believe the minister has said, given notice, that there could be changes coming up, and that is only a couple of years away. We have to know, farmers have to know what this government's plans are in that area.

The minister talks about effective support under tripartite stabilization programs. Well, there are some groups that are not having effective support under the stabilization program and one of those is the sugar beet industry right now. The sugar beet producers are not having their concerns—they are facing uncertainty because there is not an agreement with this government and the sugar beet growers. So I do not think that we can say that the Manitoba family farms are having effective support. There are sectors of the industry that are not having effective support.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, there are other areas of concern with what is happening within the Department of Agriculture. The minister talks about diversifying the economy and support of value-added jobs, but in reality, what we see are cutbacks in the amount of money that goes into research. There have been cutbacks in the agriculture support staffs at a time when farmers are facing difficulty, but also at a time when they are supposed to be making changes and looking at new crops and trying to get into the marketplace, as the minister says. There should be more supports for

those farmers there. The information should be more available to them, rather than cutting back on the services, as appears to be happening under this government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the government should be so congratulatory of itself, that everything is going so well. The member across the way talks about low-income farmers, but in fact there are many, many low-income farmers. Just to get a better understanding of what farmers are facing, some of the people in this building should get out and visit some of those people who are trying to make a living off the land and provide the food for this country.

The agricultural industry is a very important industry. There is a tremendous amount of spin-off jobs that come from the agricultural industry. I think that we have to be prepared, but we have to also realize that these young farmers are not going to be able to survive if they cannot get a fair return for what they produce. We also have to be prepared to support the young farmers that are willing to take a chance and take over those family farms, because in reality, we do need the industry in Manitoba. We do need to have the programs where farmers can continue on. We have to have a mediation board that works with the farmers and addresses the debt problems.

As I talk to people in the farm organizations, I am told that the mediation board is not being nearly as effective as the minister would like it to appear to be. They do not have the ability to implement many things. I would hope that we would consider that and improve upon it, improve the mediation board that it is stronger and can work effectively for the farmers, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (1740)

I am disappointed that we have had this resolution changed to the extent that it has and that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) is not prepared at this time to talk to the federal government about the third line of defence. [interjection] The minister says he has always talked to the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa. Well I hope he is.

I hope, when he is talking to him, that he brings the real concerns that Manitoba farmers have been raising. I hope he will take forward the concern of the cash flow problem, the third line of defence. I hope he will take forward the concern of barley sales

that farmers are raising right now. I hope he will let us know what his position is on that.

As we get into Estimates, I look forward to a discussion on what it is that his department is doing.

I hope the minister will also talk to the federal Minister of Agriculture about the method of payment because, in reality, the farmers across Manitoba feel very much like they are being blackmailed or backed into a corner on this particular issue. The farmers at the transportation meetings indicated last year that—the majority of farmers in Manitoba said they did not want the change to the method of payment. The federal Minister of Agriculture and Mr. Mazankowski appear to be determined to proceed with the change and again are not listening to farmers. So that is something that we will discuss a little bit further.

There are other areas. Earlier this afternoon, I raised the issue of the beekeepers, because there are many segments to the agricultural industry. It just appears that there is not enough consideration. It just seems that there is a heavy-handedness from the federal government that they are going to proceed with changes whether or not it is what the farmers want. There does not seem to be any commitment to listen to what the farmers are saying in some of those areas, as I mentioned, the whole issue of barley sales.

I look forward to hearing what the minister is going to say about that particular issue, because there are now other studies that are out. In fact one, the pool study, done by another consultant, is out right now. I wonder where he is on that one and how he is considering dealing with this.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as I look at this resolution that was prepared some six months ago, as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) indicated, this resolution was brought forward because all people in rural Manitoba, particularly municipalities, were very concerned with what was happening with farmers.

They wrote to the government asking for assistance. The member for Dauphin put in the resolution because he felt, as our caucus did, that it was very important that we address the concerns of those young farmers who are carrying a tremendous amount of debt but who are very important to the survival of the community.

We felt, Mr. Acting Speaker, that NISA and GRIP, because they were not based on the cost of production, were failing to meet the needs and that

young farmers were having a really difficult time carrying this heavy debt burden.

So we would have hoped that the minister would have taken this seriously, and also look at ways of implementing a moratorium on a voluntary basis that would help farmers. The minister instead has chosen to amend this resolution to the extent that it does not address the concern that was raised in the original resolution. I hope that that is not an indication of what his opinion is of farmers and what his opinion is of the burdens facing those farmers out there.

Farmers have indicated very clearly that there is a need for some cash relief and they cannot depend on GRIP because, as we look at the program, we see that there is going to be less and less in it for farmers. We are on a sliding average and the program will not meet the needs of farmers basically because it is not based on the cost of production.

So I am disappointed and I hope that the minister will seriously consider the debts that these farmers are facing, and I hope that he will recognize the value of the family farm. It is the small family farm that is the root, the basis of this province and of all of rural Manitoba, and if we cannot support the family farm, we will see real difficulties and a further demise of rural Manitoba.

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Acting Speaker, I was not surprised to see the resolution amended because very few of the resolutions pass in this House without amendments or—well, look, the government usually likes to congratulate themselves, and I guess if we were there, we would do the same thing.

The family farm has long been a very important part of the Manitoba economy and we must do all we can to support that industry. We would have supported this resolution to consider what measure may be available for emergency cash relief but, when you look at the budget that was presented on April 6, the major cut, the overall cuts in the budget for agriculture were something like 14.2 percent, and most of this was cuts in the funding to the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation.

Yet, you look into the departmental expenditure Estimates, and the first page is signed by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay). It says, in support of this mission, Manitoba agriculture is committed to a series of primary goals identified below. The first one, I quote, to preserve and

strengthen family farms in Manitoba. I felt that resolution was doing something to do that, because if you look in the original resolution it is quite clear, as the resolution noted, 70 percent of the farm debt in Manitoba is borne by 30 percent of farm families. It is important to note that of those who are suffering the most are the smaller operations. Many of these are younger farmers trying to carry on the tradition of their fathers and grandfathers on the family farm.

Some of the statistics, and I think the minister this afternoon gave statistics, showed total farm cash receipts for the province are increasing, but much of the profits being made are going to the very large scale farming operations. I think the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) also indicated some statistics where the income is from outside and not directly from the farming. So I think it is important to note that the farmers should rely only on the farm income.

An Honourable Member: What?

Mr. Gaudry: Well, why not? [interjection] Yes, yes, I have turned socialist. [interjection] It is probably on now. There may be not an easy answer to all these problems, Mr. Acting Speaker, but I think it is a good idea to listen to the municipalities and the farmers who are being affected. [interjection] Well, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) says he does. Well, we will see it all when the reports come.

It seems to me that there are a lot of reports being done, but we do not seem to see all these reports coming back to the Legislature. [interjection] Well, I will not use that word, but maybe I could use an easier word. This is the kind of consultation the Liberal Party has been calling for in many of the departments of the government. [interjection] Well, it is like me, I would not want to be lumped with the Tories either probably. As well as looking at possible—[interjection] Oh my God not—at possible emergency cash relief and possible moratoriums. I would hope the government would listen carefully to what these groups have to say about other issues and that they are affecting the family farm, issues like the role of the Canadian Wheat Board in marketing barley and transferring grain subsidies to individual farmers from the present subsidized railway rates.

* (1750)

The Liberal Party has long supported the right-to-farm legislation. We have urged the government to introduce legislation to ensure

farmers need not be concerned about the encroachment of urban areas into prime agricultural land. We have encouraged soil conservation programs. All of these issues all have an impact on the family farm.

I would hope that the government will keep on listening and would have given consideration to pass this resolution. But now with the amendments that have been presented, it is pretty hard because the government says the farm mediation is effectively addressing the debt problems of the individual farmer. I have no qualms, and I am sure that they are doing that. I think the government amended this resolution for its own interest, and it should not be that way. I think it is for the young farmers that we should have concern, and we should listen to the young farmers and the municipalities and the Liberal Party—[interjection] and the rural members, yes.

Mr. Acting Speaker, with these comments, I will let the member for Dauphin put a few comments on the amendment. I am sure he will be supporting it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Acting Speaker—I would not want to misapply the term here. I know that you have a great deal of interest in this resolution as well, and I would hope that the other colleagues across the way would have had the interest enough to stand up beside the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) and put their thoughts on the record with regard to the resolution that was before the House that I put forward and not the self-congratulatory message that the minister has now put before this House as a result of his amendment in destroying the intent—well, I should not say destroying the intent of the original resolution, because then I would be reflecting on the Speaker in allowing this amendment.

I believe that in fact the minister has once again broadbrushed the problems again. He has pointed to some general statistics about how great things are in some areas or how things are improving, and then he comes in and says that the mediation board is effectively addressing the debt problems of individual farmers in financial difficulties, so therefore we do not need to worry about that.

Well, what about all those farmers who fall between the slats, who are not being effectively dealt with by the mediation board? I mean, there are many who are not effectively dealt with. They

do not even go that route. They just quit or whatever because of the circumstances, so they never are able even to receive any counselling or help, end up with a small portion of their farm perhaps to struggle along on in a very small way, even the home quarter, because the minister has not put in the requirement that even the home quarter has to be safe.

So indeed there are many farmers who have simply gone away, and that is why our rural population continues to dwindle and we have our rural communities continuing to sink, because they do not have as many people to support those communities, to earn money in those communities, spend money in those communities, and the economy continues to spiral downward. That is a serious problem, rural depopulation, so we need to keep the farm families there.

It is wrong to, again, brush this aside with a broad brush and say, well, we have a mechanism there; we can just forget about that and go merrily on our way. The minister takes that approach with a lot of problems. It is not fair. It is not a sensitive approach, and I think it is regrettable that he has used that as a way of discarding the concerns that were brought forward with my resolution.

In the same way, he says that crop insurance and GRIP and NISA and tripartite safety net programs are doing all that is needed with regard to stabilization. There again, those programs were not targeted to meet those most in need to meet the heavy debt burden. Sure, GRIP has helped a lot of farmers. The minister likes to say: Well, I never did like it. I never did like the details of it in its form. I wanted it changed so that it would be supportive to cost of production and would not have a dwindling level of support that we are seeing now, that will just roll right out of existence.

The minister is probably going to have another situation this year where he is going to be announcing that he somehow saved the farmers from his own program from kicking in to the level it was going to kick in for support, as last year he said that the the 15-year moving average was applied in the wrong way, and therefore he saved the farmers by getting the support price up. Well, what is he going to say this year?—because he designed that program. He was part of the design of that program. So if it dwindles and if it offers less support every year, he has to take the blame for it. He cannot come riding in and say, I saved the farmers from my program. That is what he said last spring. So now

he is going to come and do it again in this next year because it is going to be much more serious. We are maybe talking 25 cents, 30 cents a bushel instead of five or 10, 15 cents, maybe more.

So the minister is going to have to deal with that, and he knows that was not a fair program insofar as those who were not on crop insurance. It did not apply evenly, and of course he knows that as a result of the Crop Insurance Review there were many inequities there. So indeed the sole reliance for GRIP on crop insurance was wrong and it was not fair, and it was not an equitable program. So to mention that program as the reason why he does not have to worry about farmers, that the third line of defence is no longer needed, is not satisfactory.

I think he tried to address the concerns of the municipalities by saying that the Department of Agriculture continually meet with farm organizations, commodity groups and municipal organizations. Now, is that not nice? His department. He did not even say, I continually meet or my colleagues continually meet as political people who have to respond to these issues, but instead his bureaucrats meet with them and that is supposed to be good enough. I hope you guys are taking care of it because I do not want to hear about their problems. That is the image that is left that conjures up in one's mind. I hope you guys are looking after it. I do not want to be stressed with all of those problems that the municipalities are coming up with. Well, the municipalities came forward—they do not usually undertake massive resolutions and political action campaigns. They did it with the VLT because—[interjection] A political action of this nature, I am talking about, not within their bailiwick.

Yes, the resolutions all deal with municipal action, with the actions of government as it applies to municipalities, but this did not apply to the municipality. Sure it applies to people, but I mean everything applies to people. The people within their jurisdiction were the farmers. They came and they felt compelled to bring forward resolutions in an area that they have virtually no jurisdiction. They also brought in a resolution on VLTs this year. That was a political thing because they felt the need for it. But basically what they try to do is to have the government respond to concerns that deal directly with the areas within their jurisdiction, and this was a major departure.

So that must mean that the minister should have taken them seriously. He should have said, okay,

the municipalities have recognized the real need with regard to their people. They know that the numbers are dwindling, that more and more are going out of business, that more land is repossessed, that most of the land in some of the municipalities is not in the hands of the individual farmer anymore or their descendants, but it was in some areas—[interjection] or their descendants. But it was in the hands of the banks and the financial institutions, it had been repossessed.

Southwestern Manitoba is a prime example. The Minister of Northern and Native Affairs' (Mr. Downey) constituency is a prime example where he has not been representing his constituents very well. [interjection] Well, the member for Arthur has not been representing his constituents very well

because they have been hardest hit and he has not been speaking up for them. I have not even heard him stand up to say how hard and difficult it has been as a result of the insensitive programs that his colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) brought in with regard to GRIP in southwestern Manitoba. He did not deal with the concerns of Risk Area Nos. 1, 2 and 3 even though now Crop Insurance has said the minister should have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. When this item returns again to the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes left in the debate on the resolution.

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 8 p.m. in Committee of Supply.

