



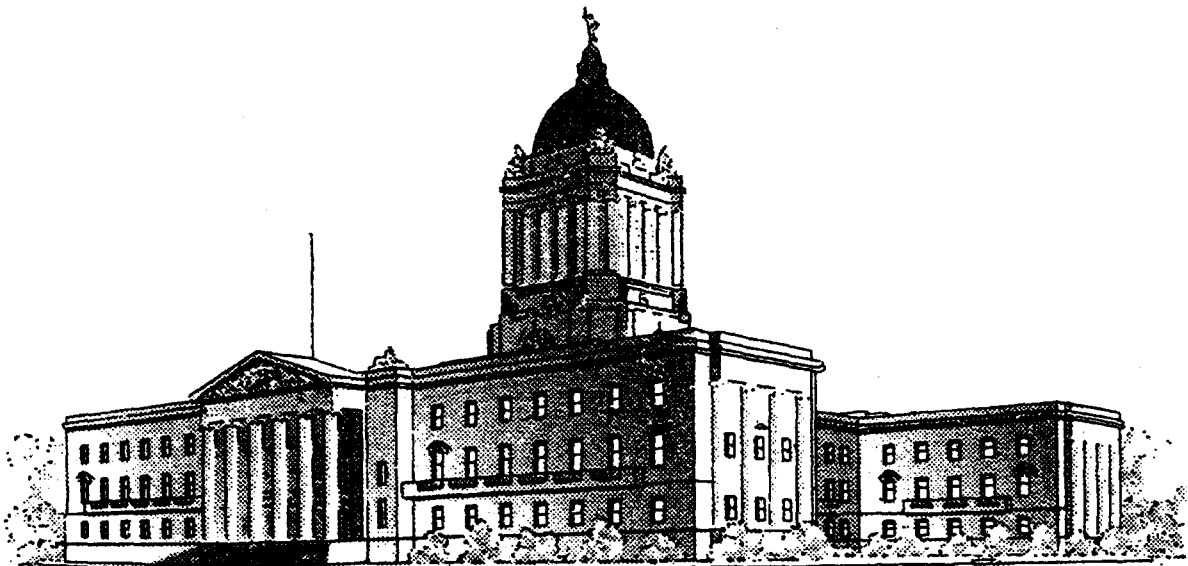
First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
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DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
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RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 27, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

* (1335)

*PRAYERS***Introduction of Guests****ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the honourable members' attention to the public gallery, where we have with us this afternoon sixty Grades 7 to 9 students from Salisbury Morse Place School under the direction of Mrs. Pat Weis, Ms. Lisa Savinkoff and Mrs. Rosemary Greenway. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer).

Additionally, I would like to draw all honourable members' attention to the loge to my right, where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Donald Orchard who was the member for Pembina from 1977 to 1995.

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

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES****Committee of Supply**

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Winnipeg Jets
Operating Losses****Bill 35—The Elections Amendment,
Local Authorities Election Amendment
and Consequential Amendments Act**

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave to introduce Bill 35, The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Ernst: On behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon), I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 35, The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur l'élection des autorités locales et apportant des modifications corrélatives.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the acting Premier.

Madam Speaker, of course we have received information from the City of Winnipeg, not from this Legislature, that deals with, again, some scenarios dealing with the Winnipeg Jets.

Now, of course, there are two scenarios, both negotiated by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). The one scenario is the operating loss agreement negotiated by the Premier and Mayor Norrie, the former mayor of the City of Winnipeg, and the other deal is the proposal now being forged between Mr. Filmon and Mr. Asper for the so-called Spirit of Manitoba. Under the memo yesterday, Mr. Frost presents two scenarios in terms of the operating losses of the Winnipeg Jets team. A, quote, normal range of losses would be \$17 million, and a lame-duck scenario would be losses up to \$25 million.

I have asked this question to the Premier before. Will he confirm the numbers of Commissioner Frost as the possible loss range in terms of the operating loss agreement that he signed in 1991?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): The information that has been consistently utilized over the last few months by governments, by the Manitoba Entertainment Complex, more recently by the Spirit of Manitoba, has been that the losses over the next two years are projected at between \$28 million to \$30 million. Mr. Frost, I understand, was asked to prepare a memo on behalf of the mayor and City Council under so-called worst-case scenarios, and at this particular point in time, those are purely speculative.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows—we had a discussion in Estimates on Friday—there are some very significant contracts coming up in the next handful of days for the Winnipeg Jets. Those are going to be integral to what the future operating losses might well be. The fiscal year-end for the Jets is June 30. We will be receiving the audited financial statements, Madam Speaker, but, as it is everybody's objective to find a Manitoba solution here to keep the team in Manitoba, if that occurs by August 15 of this year, losses will become the responsibility of the Spirit of Manitoba, of the private sector.

Winnipeg Jets/Arena Provincial Funding

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): The second deal and scenario forged in the words of Commissioner Frost, forged between Mr. Filmon and Mr. Asper, indicate that we are still short the \$17 million for the \$111-million arena. Of course, the \$111-million arena comes on the promise of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in the election that he would limit his contribution from the provincial government to \$10 million, and he would not cover operating losses of the team past May 1, 1995, words that ring rather hollow now when we look at the two scenarios and the two doors we may go through based on the two deals the Premier has negotiated with this hockey team.

I would like to ask the Premier today to table the business plan dealing fully with the shortfall of the \$17

million and dealing with the other scenario that we may have to look at as taxpayers in terms of the facility, the \$111 million which is going to be supported by the taxpayers of Manitoba.

* (1340)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has asked a similar question many times. We have discussed this same issue in Estimates, and he fails to understand the difference between the Spirit of Manitoba taking over the operations of the hockey club and the three levels of government building a facility here in Manitoba.

We have acknowledged that there still is \$17 million to be put in place, and we have outlined a series of options to come up with that \$17 million, Madam Speaker. One of them is pursuing that with the federal government in terms of pointing out to them the significant economic benefits that they will derive from the building of a facility. They will derive some \$20 million in direct taxes if a facility is built. They will also take in approximately \$12 million annually in taxation revenue. There are very significant economic arguments as to why the federal government should make a more significant contribution.

We also have indicated to him that for the building of the facility, the rights to the naming and the rights to the clock, those revenue sources will also be a part of building the facility and will ultimately take up a significant part of that \$17 million.

So there are a series of options that will be pursued to come up with the additional \$17 million that is required, Madam Speaker.

Standing Committee Spirit of Manitoba

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the government has been giving us a series of options, a series of scenarios, a series of possibilities for the last five and a half weeks in this House. They have not given us yet a business plan to deal with the \$111 million. They have not dealt at all specifically with these concerns.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), in light of the fact that the government itself was briefed last night in a closed-door meeting here at the Legislative Building, would the Premier of this province have the so-called Spirit of Manitoba come before a legislative committee so that all members of this Legislature who are all responsible to the taxpayers of this province can all be briefed and ask questions on this proposal, not a select group of people that the Premier chooses, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, again, we have indicated on many occasions to the Leader of the Opposition that as this issue moves forward, if deals are concluded, if contracts, if arrangements are ultimately entered into between levels of government with the Spirit of Manitoba or with any other entities, it is certainly our undertaking to make as much as we possibly can available, not only to the members of this Legislature but to all Manitobans because I think that will be a healthy part of the ultimate decisions around this entire issue, to share as much information as we possibly can.

But if we all had the attitude similar to the Leader of the Opposition, today in Manitoba we would have no Concert Hall, we would have no Convention Centre, we would have no Art Gallery, we would have no aqueduct, we would have no North Portage, we would have no Forks.

We would probably have a province with no people living in it, Madam Speaker, if we had that kind of leadership from the Leader of the Opposition in this province.

Winnipeg Arena Design

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I want to table a letter.

Mr. Jerry Shore, who is the second-largest tenant of the current arena, and Mr. Frost, who is the city commissioner, and Mayor Thompson have all confirmed over the last few days that the new building for the Winnipeg Jets is just that. It is a stripped-down, bare-bones hockey rink.

Mr. Frost's rather delicate wording on this is that much private-sector work has gone into the costing of the building, but it is quite evident that this proposed building is at the low end in comparison with other new facilities, a rather delicate phrase.

Will the Premier now confirm that this deal with Mr. Asper is based on a bargain-basement rink and is not in any sense a multipurpose entertainment complex?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Absolutely not, Madam Speaker, and the members of the design team of Manitoba Entertainment Complex totally and categorically reject that assertion.

Private-Sector Funding

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the Premier finally require the private sector to put some money on the table here and to advance the design funds that are now required to forward the project from the club and luxury-seat and box deposits, which are due on July 1, instead of putting further public-sector funds on the table, where no private-sector funds are at risk?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as has been stated many times, the arrangement is that the public sector will create the facility that will be there for the long-term enjoyment and benefit of generations of Manitobans to come, and the private sector will buy, own and operate and be responsible for all costs and losses of the operations of the team in the future.

* (1345)

Cost Overruns

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Will the Premier confirm that last night at the briefing, Spirit of Manitoba showed that, in fact, design costs were to go to Spirit in the third section of the documents which they tabled, and will the Premier, finally then, require that Spirit put forward some of these funds and that it will require personal covenants from Spirit's directors, so that the cost overruns which are almost certain will not fall on the public sector but will fall on the private sector, as promised?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as a member of Thin Ice and as a member of Choices and as a member of all of these loony, left-wing organizations that have been—

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Beausnesne's is very clear that all members are honourable members and not only that, are referred to as representing their constituencies.

Perhaps the minister should wake up to the fact that the member is the member for Crescentwood and should be referred to as that in debate.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I did not specifically hear the Premier refer to the member for Crescentwood as those adjectives he used which regrettably are really not very parliamentary, but, indeed, I will peruse Hansard and, if necessary, I will report back to the House.

I will remind the honourable First Minister that indeed all members are referred to as honourable members.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I categorically did not refer to the member himself in the term that I chose.

I will say this, though, that he has been the guiding genius behind the development of such organizations as Thin Ice and Choices and the Manitoba Medicare Alert Coalition and all of those organizations that offer no vision, no hope and no opportunity for the future of Manitoba, Madam Speaker. He merely mouths the words of all of those who operate out of ignorance and who operate with such a sense of negativity towards this province and this city's future.

Having said that, the answer to his question is that the designers, the architects, the engineers and those in charge of the construction of this facility did confirm last evening that they are confident in the price, they are confident in the quality of the construction of the

facility, and they are confident that it will meet all of the needs and all of the tests and all of the future opportunities that will be created as a result of the development of the Manitoba entertainment complex, Madam Speaker.

* (1350)

Immigration Agreement Application Fee

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, this Tory government has been self-righteously critical of what has been generally described as racist policies of the federal Liberal government in imposing a head tax and bond requirements which the honourable minister of immigration, heritage and culture himself had called exorbitant.

The Canadian Embassy in the Philippines has been using, in addition, a high exchange rate in calculating the number of Philippine pesos needed to cover the new fees of nearly \$1,500 Canadian dollar fare for adult immigrant applicants.

My question is to the honourable minister himself.

Will the honourable minister today table in this Assembly any correspondence he has had with his fellow counterparts expressing his concern and calling for the reversal of federal government racist immigration policies?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, we covered this topic in some detail in the Estimates process just last week, and I regret the honourable member was not able to attend that.

We have taken a very strong stand with the federal minister and the federal government opposing the bond system that he is putting into place, the head tax that he is putting into place. All of these things are going to be detrimental to Canada and Manitoba receiving more immigrants. I have written to the federal minister opposing those, and I have requested a meeting with him so that we could sit down on a face-to-face basis to discuss these issues.

Negotiations

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): What is the status of the negotiations started since May between the federal government and the provincial government on the desired objectives of reaching a bilateral agreement on immigration policies in this province?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, again, we covered this in some detail in the Estimates process, and that is available in Hansard.

We have been very disappointed in the federal government's lack of response to our attempts to get an immigration agreement. It seems that, while we do get agreement at the local level with staff from the Immigration department, as it works its way up the federal bureaucracy we are not getting the type of co-operation we need to achieve an agreement, and, as a result, I have written to the federal minister indicating a desire to meet with him at his earliest opportunity.

Family Reunification

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Will the honourable minister commit himself today to make it clear to the federal Liberal government that he disagrees with the racist immigration policy put in place by that federal Liberal government and that he will call for family reunification as a top priority objective in the recruitment and selection of immigrants to Manitoba?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I have already done that, and we have communicated that to the federal minister.

Again, we covered this in the Estimates process.

I note that one Liberal member of Parliament from north Winnipeg Dr. Pagtakhan has been very much onside on this, and we hope that perhaps other members of that Liberal caucus will see the errors of their ways and talk to Minister Marchi to make the adjustments that we think are desirable.

Forest Fires Leaf Rapids Evacuees

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Without question, the citizens of Leaf Rapids have endured a difficult couple of weeks. On the first evacuation, we heard reports of a convoy caught with fires on both sides of the road en route from Leaf Rapids to Thompson. Citizens returned to Leaf Rapids on Friday only to be re-evacuated on Sunday. Today, a convoy of 50 vehicles will leave Lynn Lake and will be escorted through Leaf Rapids to Lake Suwannee, where they will be left on their own to travel south to Thompson, a total distance of approximately 180 kilometres.

Can the minister tell the House what measures will be taken to ensure the safety of these travellers, given that they have only just been evacuated out of this area and given that the last update from Leaf Rapids stated that wind conditions will be unpredictable.

* (1355)

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Well, Madam Speaker, predictions are no perfect science by any means. I have mentioned this before, that we have a committee that meets at ten o'clock every morning, does an assessment in terms of what the conditions are, what the conditions of the fires are, what the wind conditions are, and then they make predictions in terms of whether we should be on an evacuation watch or not.

Many people play a role in this, and certainly when the decisions get made to make any move, whatever it is, it is then always done in conjunction with the RCMP. So if there is any evacuation or movement that takes place of the people from Lynn Lake, or anywhere really where evacuation takes place, it is always done in conjunction with many of our civil servants and the RCMP.

So without really going into the details of it, great concern is always taken in terms of trying to make sure that safety is the No. 1 concern.

In spite of that, what happened last time when the fire broke and raced across, people have to understand—many of us probably have never been exposed to a forest fire and have never seen what happens when the wind is 50, 60 kilometres an hour, and the fire jumps literally two, three miles at a crack and tops through the top of the trees.

It is very hard to always project when we have circumstances up north that are very volatile, as they are now. Hopefully, the people who are out there are making the right judgment.

Leaf Rapids—Disaster Assistance

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Minister of Government Services.

Can the Minister of Government Services tell us when evacuees in Lynn Lake will begin receiving their daily allowances for expenses other than gas and food? It has been a week now.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): I thank the member for the question.

The daily allowance the member refers to is an amount of funds that is made available on a short-term basis, on a bridge basis, to those who have been evacuated who do not have access to any alternate source of funds. That is to say, it is not an entitlement, but it is an amount of funds that would provide for those who have needs such as laundry expense or to procure toiletries, these types of items.

There may be a basic misunderstanding on the part of the member as to the intention of these funds. It is not an allowance per se that is paid to every evacuee regardless of situation; rather, individual circumstances are taken into account in the payment of these funds.

Host Community Assistance

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the same minister: What additional assistance will be provided to the small community of Lynn Lake to cope with the larger-than-

expected stay of hundreds and hundreds of evacuees from Leaf Rapids?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): In terms of the host communities, whether it be Lynn Lake in this case or Portage la Prairie in the past week, other communities are on standby, based on the emergency preparedness plans that have been developed by northern communities which have fortunately anticipated the possibility of this type of action.

All host communities are supported certainly by my department and other government departments in their efforts.

We feel that perhaps the greatest degree of support that they can have is the ongoing support and co-operation of all government departments which will work together with community representatives.

The fact of the matter is we have heard from numerous communities and through various comments we have received that the plans that have been put into place are working more effectively.

We have learned from previous experiences, such as in 1989, and I believe that these people are working together very effectively as a team to do the best possible job they can under difficult circumstances to host these folks and to make sure that they are accommodated as best as is possible.

St. Boniface Courthouse Relocation of Bail Hearings

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): My question is for the Minister of Justice. Madam Speaker, residents of the community of St. Boniface have repeatedly expressed concerns relating to the use of the St. Boniface courthouse as a location for bail hearings. The government has promised to move the process to 408 York. However, we have learned again yesterday that hearing officers have been replaced by magistrates, and they remain at the St. Boniface location.

When can we expect the bail hearings process to move from St. Boniface to 408 York?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I did inform the member it was the intention to move from the St. Boniface courthouse to 408 York.

Madam Speaker, I will look into any issues of delay. To my knowledge, that is progressing, and the full intention is to have that move made as quickly as possible. To my knowledge, it was certainly by the end of June.

* (1400)

Mr. Gaudry: Can the minister tell us if the move to 408 York is dependent on the completion of a video system linking the Public Safety Building and 408 York, and, if so, how long will it take to implement the system?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are looking at a video link from 408 York with the Public Safety Building. That is important in terms of looking at reducing the amount of time that police officers are required to travel from one building to the next.

However, to my knowledge, it was not contingent on the completion of that video link, but as I said to the member, I will certainly look into any delay. It is not our intention to delay that move.

Mr. Gaudry: Is the move dependent on renovations to be completed at 408 York?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said to the member, I will certainly look into the reasons for any delay. As I had told him earlier, it was our intention to have that move accomplished by the end of June. If there has been any holdup, I will make sure that this is looked into.

Forest Fires Damage/Compensation Assessment

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): My question is for the Minister of Government Services.

At some point, the fires throughout northern Manitoba will be out, and at some point, officials of this government will be assessing the damage done.

Can the minister explain to the House the procedure that will be utilized to assess the amount of damage and the compensation necessary?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Basically, Madam Speaker, we could have covered that, I guess, in Estimates yesterday in a little bit more detail for the member, but suffice to say that a process is in place which involves the various municipalities, whereby claims that the member is referring to, Disaster Assistance, and I believe he is, where claims are filed through the municipal levels of government and are forwarded to the Disaster Assistance folks.

They will evaluate those and have been progressing nicely in doing that. In fact, the vast majority of municipal claims that have been filed have been assessed, and, now, it is individual claims that we are progressing on. Some of those, of course, remain to be evaluated and others are forthcoming.

In the case of flood as well as fire, certainly it takes a certain amount of time for us to make sure, for the safety of assessors, that the conditions are such that they can fully evaluate the damage that has been done and do a fair appraisal and determine the compensation that would be paid, if any.

Mr. Struthers: Will the minister guarantee to the House that the aboriginal community will be represented on any committee struck to assess the damages of the fires of 1995?

Mr. Pallister: The Disaster Assistance process is one where the board evaluates and assesses claims as they are received from whichever jurisdiction sends those claims in, so, certainly, government officials and people working with the Disaster Assistance agency will be involved in assessing claims as they are forwarded.

As far as the assessment of those claims, the process is one that is the same, whether for aboriginal areas or for nonaboriginal areas. It is one that calls for the forms to be brought forward, for claims to be filed and for them to be assessed, similar to any insurance claim that any member of this House might file.

The other issue of ultimate payment or compensation is another issue. That would depend on the jurisdictional obligations that are involved in the specific area that files the claim.

Mr. Struthers: Can the minister verify whether or not there is a person serving today as an aboriginal coordinator, as there was during the time of the 1989 fires?

Mr. Pallister: I cannot give clarification to the member on that specifically. I will take that as advisement, that question.

Already at this stage I have been in contact with local officials in various regions, some of whom are aboriginal, some of whom are not. I think, frankly, that the overriding concern we all share in this House is that the people who file claims are treated fairly, that they are compensated fairly, and that should be the overriding issue, not the racial origin of the assessment people or of any official in the given area.

I will continue to work with all the people involved in Disaster Assistance to be sure that people who file claims are treated fairly and to make sure that our department does its very best to be fully compensating those people who have suffered damage as a result of fire or flood or other natural disaster.

Yellowquill College Funding

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): This issue was raised at the recent Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

The Community Health and Human Services Workers diploma program delivered by Yellowquill College in Portage la Prairie and aimed at providing accredited training to both CHRs and NADAP workers and First Nations communities will no longer receive funding for tuition and book expenses for the '95-96 school year, and there is no guarantee of further funding for this program, as well.

Now, we have 30 CHRs and NADAP workers currently enrolled, and they face the risk of having to withdraw from this program.

My question is for the Acting Minister of Education. I would like to ask the acting minister if the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has written in support of this program and whether or not she can table a response from the federal minister.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Acting Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Robinson: I would like to also ask the minister whether or not she believes that ending support for programs like this and Access are steps backward which will result in fewer graduates in northern communities.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I will certainly take that question as notice for the Minister of Education, but I would think it was very important to note to the member our continued commitment to Access programming.

Community Colleges Aboriginal Support Services

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, my final question is this. What strategy does the minister and the department have to increase the number of aboriginal students in community colleges when courses, funding and staff are being cut?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Acting Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I know that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has discussed certain initiatives which are present in each of the community colleges to look at encouraging participation of aboriginal students and also aboriginal staff.

I will take the specifics of that question as notice for the Minister of Education.

Home Care Program Restructuring

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, we understand the government is already planning to make

some major changes to home care, and the last time the government made major changes to home care, it resulted in massive cuts and a great deal of diminution of service to many Manitobans, and I hope the government consults widely before making any changes.

My question to the minister is, we have already heard that the minister is going to privatize some aspects of home care, and I would like the minister to provide to this House and the people of Manitoba an outlined statement today that will confirm to this House that the government is not planning to change the one-entry system, the consistent, comprehensive nature of our home care system that we enjoy in Manitoba and that we are not going back to a fragmented private system as we had before.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, with all due respect, the honourable member should not try to have it both ways. Either the Home Care program works perfectly and does not need any change, or it does not work perfectly and does need change.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member has done nothing but raise issues and examples. He has written me, to his credit, many times to set out problems in the home care system. I recognize that there is room for change. I recognize that the clients of the home care system could get a better deal.

I hope the honourable member will be supportive when we try to improve services for the clients of home care in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister, prior to making changes that will see many services in home care privatized, table in this Chamber and for the people of Manitoba those studies, cost benefits and analyses that justify providing services through private companies that make profit versus the nonprofit, government-run home care that presently offers those services?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I believe with regard to the Home Care program, my vision is clear, and it is directed at the client.

The needs of the client will come before the needs of union bosses who happen to be friends of the honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party and the Health critic of the New Democratic Party. Madam Speaker, the clients are the people who need to see the improvements, and through whatever mechanisms we use, we will never lose sight of the objective.

* (1410)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary: Will the minister, since he has made that statement, assure this House that they will not make massive changes to home care prior to consulting with the public of Manitoba and, in particular, those people getting home care services, so that they do not fall into the trap of making the cuts and changes they made two years ago that severely hurt the home care system?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, unlike the honourable member, I have no intention of defending a situation where people go without service because home care providers happen to be on holidays. I do not think that is defensible. If the honourable member wants to defend that, let him go ahead. I do not see that as appropriate.

I do not see it appropriate that our hospital beds are blocked with people who should be at home receiving I.V. therapy at home. I do not see why we should have our hospital beds blocked by people who should be at home and who are only in hospitals because the system has not been able to see them discharged in an expedient time period, Madam Speaker.

People heal better at home and we can do a better job. If the honourable member wants to stand in the way of improvements, it will be at his peril, Madam Speaker, because there are Manitobans who deserve better.

Health of Manitoba Children Report Compulsory Health Education

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Yesterday it was confirmed that the Youth Secretariat would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the

many excellent recommendations in this report, the report on the Health of Manitoba's Children.

At least six sections of this report, the section on injury, adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, nutrition, smoking, alcohol and drugs, all recommend compulsory health education in Manitoba schools for all children.

I want to ask the minister responsible if the intention of this government is to comply with that recommendation and ensure all Manitoba's school children will have compulsory health education.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the Health of Manitoba's Children report the honourable member refers to is something we in Manitoba should be proud of.

It is the first report of its kind in the country. Dr. Postl and his committee have done excellent work, and the report does indeed form the framework of much of the efforts of the new child and adolescent secretariat.

For the first time, we have departments working in a much more co-ordinated way, not that we have not always been co-ordinated, Madam Speaker, but here again I think that we have operated to some extent in a system of silos in our delivery system as a government, as a health system, as a family services system, and it is time we began working more closely together, and with the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) and others, including myself and our departments, there is a much better working relationship at work today than previous to that report.

As far as education issues, the Education department is also part of that group, and that recommendation will be the subject of discussion amongst the ministers involved.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, is the government going to comply with the recommendation in this excellent report to ensure that all school children in Manitoba will have compulsory health education?

Are you going to give us an answer, Mr. Minister?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I just did. In addition, I think the report makes it clear also that Manitoba's aboriginal population could very well benefit from some of the recommendations in that report, and we intend to work very closely in those areas and to work indeed with aboriginal communities.

The honourable member asked for an answer. I gave her one a minute ago. I said that that recommendation and others will be the subject of further review, discussion and refinement. There is no question about how important health promotion, health education is.

I mean, there are a lot of people in this province who simply need to understand a little bit about the nutrition rules that could make a very, very big difference in the whole life of a youngster starting out today. So I think the honourable member's question is an important one and will be addressed in due course.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister responsible for the secretariat, also the Minister of Family Services, given that she said yesterday this secretariat was considering the recommendations in this report, can she tell the House if that recommendation on compulsory health education has been reviewed and analyzed by the staff in the secretariat?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question.

We did have, I think, a really good dialogue around the Children and Youth Secretariat in the time we had allocated last evening in the Estimates process, and I indicated quite clearly at that time that I appreciate some of the issues that were raised by my honourable friend and some of the ideas for constructive and positive solutions to some of the issues that we face in co-ordination of services and in ensuring that children get off to a healthy start and have a healthy quality lifestyle. That is something that we desire as a government for all Manitobans and all Manitoba children.

We will be working co-operatively among departments to ensure that we deal with and address all

of the issues and the recommendations that were brought forward to us through the Postl report.

Winnipeg Development Agreement Winnipeg Adult Education Centre

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, Isbister School, home of the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre since 1966, is both a provincially and municipally designated heritage building. The International Downtown Association has cited education facilities as one of the best engines of downtown revitalization. One of the objectives of the Winnipeg Development Agreement is to assist projects designed to create long-term employment through helping citizens prepare for employment opportunities.

I would like to ask the Minister of Urban Affairs if he can tell the House the status of the February 1995 request of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 for WDA funding for a much-needed addition to and refurbishment of the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, the member for Wellington is right in her assessment of the opportunities that avail themselves to the WDA, the Winnipeg Development Agreement, in the enhancement of local areas and the fact that the component she is referring to regarding the educational facilities is part of that.

The individual aspect of that particular school and the application within WDA parameters, I will have to take as notice and get back to her on the exact status of that application.

Ms. Barrett: Will the Minister of Urban Affairs commit today that he, as well as the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), will take a leadership role with the other Winnipeg Development Agreement partners to ensure that this project, which meets at least three of the major programming criteria of the WDA, receives the highest possible priority for funding?

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that any type of request that comes forth which requires consultation and input between the various

departments will take precedent in trying to come to some sort of understanding and an agreement and a direction that would come forth, but as to the specifics regarding that particular project, I will have to take as notice and try to get better information back to the member.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make committee changes?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Gimli have leave to make committee changes? [agreed]

Mr. Helwer: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) for the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey); the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) for the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer); the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render); the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) for the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews); the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) for the member for Riel (Mr. Newman).

Mr. George Hickey (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) for Wellington (Ms. Barrett); Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) for Tuesday, June 27, at 7 p.m.

Motions agreed to.

* (1420)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, before I call government

business, I would just briefly like leave to revert to Tabling of Reports.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines have leave to revert to Routine Proceedings to table reports? [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would like to table the 1994-95 Annual Report of the Department of Manitoba Energy and Mines.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would ask, first of all, if you could canvass the House to seek leave to call Bill 35 for second reading?

SECOND READINGS

Bill 35—The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to proceed with second reading of Bill 35, The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act? Leave? [agreed]

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that Bill 35, The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur l'élection des autorités locales et apportant des modifications corrélatives, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I begin by thanking all members of the House for their courtesy in allowing the second reading of this bill. I know they all recognize the importance of dealing with this legislation prior to our adjourning the session at the end

of this month. I am pleased to introduce The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act for consideration by all members of the House.

As all members of the Legislature are aware, these amendments arise out of circumstances identified during the recent provincial election campaign and previously. Our government has taken measures to provide enhanced security to individuals in abusive relationships, in strained marriages and in other circumstances. These have included tougher policies on domestic violence and stalking.

During the recent provincial election campaign, concerned individuals pointed out that the time-honoured process of conducting enumeration and making public complete voters' lists as part of our open democratic process put some individual Manitobans at risk. Specifically, individuals who have restraining orders or have fled abusive relationships or who had been stalked were potentially identified through the public posting of these lists.

The purpose of this bill is to protect people who are seeking increased personal security and wish not to have their name included on a voters' list. The bill accomplishes this objective with respect to provincial and local government elections in Manitoba.

The requirement in The Elections Act and The Local Authorities Elections Act to post voters' lists outside polling places is now removed. Instead of posting lists, The Elections Act will now allow the returning officer of rural electoral divisions to place the lists in the local municipal or other public office. Returning officers in all constituencies will have available for public inspections copies of the voters' lists.

The bill will also permit a voter in both a provincial and a local election to ask to have his or her name and/or address omitted or obscured from a voters' list in order to protect the person's personal security. This provision is modelled on a section in a recent British Columbia bill that has not yet become law. The obscured or omitted information will not be publicly available, nor will it be available to candidates or political parties. The returning officer will have the

obligation of ensuring that the individual is entitled to vote and thereby participate in the democratic process.

Election officials will be obliged under both acts to advertise or take other steps to inform the public about the new security protection.

Each act is also being amended to prohibit the use of voters' lists except for political or election purposes, this provision being modelled on a recent amendment to the Canada Elections Act.

The amendments put forward in this bill will enhance personal security while ensuring public scrutiny of amended voters' lists. Candidates or their official agents will continue to receive copies of the amended voters' lists for election purposes. Copies of voters' lists will no longer be distributed as freely as once was the case.

Unfortunately, this is now necessary in order to accomplish the important objective of providing enhanced public security for persons at risk. Not proceeding with this bill would diminish the effectiveness of other measures that have been taken to enhance personal security in Manitoba.

Passage of this bill prior to June 30 will allow it to be effective for the local government elections to be held in Manitoba in October of 1995.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I was hoping to be able to just add comment, because we do believe that the bill, it will be beneficial to see it pass second reading today. If I can have leave to speak to the bill.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to make comment on this bill? We have just agreed to stand it in the name of

the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). [agreed]

Mr. Lamoureux: I do appreciate the Premier's Office, through the government House leader, notifying our caucus that, in fact, this bill was going to be coming before us. We do see the need to pass this bill before the end of June, as the Premier has indicated, in order to protect those individuals who have required restraining orders for good reason.

Madam Speaker, I recall the issue actually coming up in the most recent provincial election. I think that there are a lot of valid arguments to be made for amending The Elections Act to allow for individuals with restraining orders to be erased off of the voters' list that is made available to the public.

So with those very few words, we are quite prepared to see it pass into committee in hopes that it would pass today.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

* (1430)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would ask if you could now please call Bill 25 for second reading, as well as Bills 3 and 7 for Report Stage.

Bill 25—The Real Property Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Bill 25, The Real Property Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to present for second reading The Real Property

Amendment Act (2). While some of these amendments cover the correction of typographical errors or introduce changes in the wording for improved consistency and administrative efficiency, others address more technical aspects of the act.

The proposed amendments will clarify the fact that the Land Titles office is not responsible for checking or verifying the standard charged mortgage terms, number and name in mortgages presented for registration. These proposals will also reflect more accurately current land title practice on the publication of notices in the newspaper.

The proposed amendments to The Real Property Act before this House will remove the requirement for utilities to file survey plans in all cases where registering easement agreements. Under these new proposals survey plans will be filed only in those situations deemed necessary by the district registrar.

This amendment will provide improved protection for the public by facilitating registration of utility easement agreements which disclose the location of utility installations such as telephone, power or gas lines which are often underground. The implementation of these amendments to The Real Property Act do not represent any additional cost to government and will reduce costs associated with utility easements.

For these reasons, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to submit this bill for second reading in the Manitoba Legislature. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 3—The Maintenance Enforcement (Various Acts Amendment) Act

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos),

THAT Bill 3 be amended and the proposed subsection 56(4) as set out in subsection 7(2) of the bill,

(a) at the end of clause (a) by adding "and of that person's right to have the matter heard by a judge or master;" and

(b) in clause (b) by striking out "taking into consideration any concern expressed by the person, may" and substituting "where the person entitled to payment objects in writing to the order made under clause (2)(e) within 28 days after the day the order was made, shall."

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, in light of the rules of this House, we are of course limited in the amendments that we can propose to a bill before this Chamber, limited to proposing amendments that deal specifically with the clauses in the bill.

Of course, one of the main problems that we have been arguing about this bill is that it is so limited in scope. Indeed, I think the best argument about the limitation of the scope of this bill was made by the minister in committee when in amendment after amendment after amendment proposed by us, she said this was beyond the scope of the bill. Indeed, the scope is so narrow that it is, as I have argued on second reading, an affront to our women and children in this province.

This amendment to subsection 56(4) of The Family Maintenance Act as set out in subsection 7(2) of the bill restores the right of a person entitled to maintenance to have the matter heard by a judge or master where the deputy registrar has made an order based on a payment plan proposed by the person in default. To restore this right, two amendments to subsection 56(4) are proposed.

The amendment to clause (a) of subsection 56(4) is to add: "and of that person's right to have the matter heard by a judge or master" at the end of the clause, so that the designated officer has the duty to advise the person entitled to maintenance of the appeal right.

I suggest, Madam Speaker, that this also provides a substantive right. To ensure the substantive right, the second amendment to subsection 56(4) is to clause (b): "to provide that where the person entitled to the payment objects in writing within 28 days of the order being made, the designated officer shall issue a summons within 28 days of the order for the person in default to appear before a judge or master."

Madam Speaker, in the committee, we heard presentation after presentation from people, particularly custodial parents, women in particular, complaining and grieving the removal of the right of appeal from custodial parents in this bill. For example, one custodial parent Rosella Dyck stated: with what little rights the payee has, rights are being taken away.

We had the custodial parents coalition say that the provision will render the recipient powerless. The decision to appeal is left, they said, entirely to the discretion of the designated officer, while at the same time arrears orders made by the deputy registrar are no longer considered to be interim but permanent orders, they argue. They also stated that in effect this order is then a variation procedure but does not allow the input of the payee or her council, as would be the case in a regular variation procedure.

Another presenter before the committee, Louise Dyck, said that this represents a stripping away of the rights of the custodial parent to in fact succeed in getting support payments due.

I know what the minister's arguments have been. She said that this amendment was put in in order to protect the payee, to protect the payee from pressures or intimidation from the defaulting spouse. I ask then, Madam Speaker, why the government is not then removing appeal rights wherever they exist, where there is a debt owing to, for example, a vulnerable party. I suggest that this is not protecting a vulnerable person but in fact just intensifying the vulnerability. It is making the vulnerable party more vulnerable, especially to the courts and to the maintenance enforcement regime, to the designated officer.

It is making that individual more vulnerable by removing her role. If the concern truly is intimidation

why then does the government even leave a role for the payee here? The government still maintains the role of the payee's views. In other words, the designated officer may listen to the payee's views, the custodial parent's views. That defeats the minister's argument.

Custodial parents, Madam Speaker, have already shown and proven their urge to have action and have the arrears collected. They have overcome the many difficulties that follow on separation and divorce. First of all, they have secured an order. Second of all, they have had it filed in the Maintenance office. Third, they have had to endure what we have heard is the inaction, the red tape, of the Maintenance office. By the time the custodial parent gets to this stage of the proceeding, I think that the urge, the self-sufficiency of the custodial parent in terms of being able to withstand any pressure at that point has been shown that it can be withstood if we pay any heed at all to the minister's argument.

* (1440)

But I do not know what evidence the minister has of intimidation of custodial parents in similar circumstances. No one at the committee, none of the custodial parents, none of the organizations on their behalf spoke of such a concern. In fact, to the contrary, at the committee, the presenters said that we must maintain this right of appeal. We are the ones being most affected. We are the ones with something at stake. We are the ones with the insights. We are the ones with the needs. We are the ones who have the children with the needs. Do not shut us out. Do not tell us what is good for us. We must have a role.

So what this section in the bill does, Madam Speaker, is it disempowers the most affected party, and it is not, as the minister argues, comparable to a criminal matter where the prosecution of a case is handled by the Crown, because there the prosecution is handled by the Crown as the agent for the people, as the agent for the state, and it is not to enforce a debt owing to a particular person or persons. So it is not a comparable situation.

It is wrong, Madam Speaker, for this bill to say that a custodial parent must rely on a bureaucrat, a civil servant, to appreciate the effects of a repayment order.

There must be a check on the desires, the conclusions of a designated officer, especially given what we know are the concerns and the problems of maintenance enforcement and the demands on designated officers in this province.

It is too much to ask, Madam Speaker, that designated officers be put in the position of being the sole discretionary authority, deciding whether to appeal when a payment is to be made and how a payment is to be made. Those matters are way too important for custodial parents to give to the discretionary authority of a designated officer, and even more important, Madam Speaker, there is an inherent right in custodial parents to have a say with this important decision.

So we ask that members of this House reject the patronizing and paternalistic position of this government on this section of the bill and ask that the House support the Report Stage amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House certainly speak against that amendment, and believe that it is borne of a misunderstanding by the member on the other side which he has continued to foster, though he has had an explanation several times.

First of all, let me say to the member and to the members of this House that this bill is a very large-in-scope bill, and it is the toughest piece of legislation in the area of maintenance enforcement that is available across this country. It is very wide in scope, Madam Speaker, because it deals with enforcement measures that include increased jail terms, that include increased fines and, in fact, deal with a large number of enforcement measures. In addition, it deals with the attachment of resources never previously available.

One of the difficulties that has always been evident in the payment of maintenance enforcement is that people have, it appears, made an attempt to hide their assets and to say that there were not any resources available. What this bill does is it makes available resources that were never previously there before. It allows the attachment of joint assets, and it also—

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, the minister is speaking on the merits of the bill. The debate before the House now is on the amendment at report stage, which is very specific in dealing with the right of appeal from a designated officer or a decision of the deputy registrar as to the repayment schedule.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, if you would direct the minister to deal with that matter.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns, indeed, does have a point of order.

The debate at this point should be on the amendment proposed by the honourable member for St. Johns to the proposed bill. The honourable minister will have an opportunity to debate the principles on third reading of the bill and to stress the merits of the bill at that time.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, my response was just to the comments of the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) that the bill was narrow in scope. I felt that he needed some correction and perhaps some enlightenment about the purpose of the bill.

However, let me speak directly to the amendment, because I believe that the member has in fact been misunderstood. This is why we cannot support the amendments put forward by the other side.

Individuals are not required to register with the Maintenance Enforcement Program. In fact, if they wish to conduct their enforcement matter totally on their own that is certainly available to them, in which case they would have complete control over how certain measures would be taken between the parties.

However, where individuals do choose to enroll in the Maintenance Enforcement Program they then say that the maintenance enforcement officer will have conduct of their particular case or file. Many people choose to do this because they are in fact intimidated by the payer.

The payer may choose the person at a vulnerable time or in vulnerable moments of their life and exercise pressure on that person to cause that person to make decisions about repayment or payment of arrears which is not in the best interests of the payee, but the payee is vulnerable, Madam Speaker.

What this does is, it puts, as in all other cases, the carriage or conduct of the enforcement file into the hands of the maintenance enforcement officer, and the maintenance enforcement officer becomes the third party so it is not a pressure exerted on the payee. Where that pressure is exerted the best interests of the payment still falls to the maintenance enforcement officer, so it is a useless pressure on the payee.

This amendment, Madam Speaker, that the other side of the House has put forward is one which increases the vulnerability of women, which increases the vulnerability of the payee and subjects them to possible pressures of the payer, which we believe is not in their best interests.

The bill, as it stands, and the reasons that we reject this amendment are, first of all, the bill as we have presented it with this provision make it consistent with other enforcement provisions of the act. It prevents the recipient from being subjected to pressure by the payer to change enforcement actions of key importance in relationships where violence or power imbalances are at issue. That is why we do not support the amendment put forward by the NDP critic, because it changes that power balance.

The government is responsible for enforcing support orders registered with the program, and it is important that they have the power to do that. It also must be remembered that the program officers have knowledge of current levels of support and default payments, as well as, financial circumstances of the payer that are relevant to what is an appropriate payment amount. The program officers and their legal counsel are also able to assess the likelihood of a markedly different repayment order being pronounced by a judge or a master.

The member opposite would have you believe that the views of the payee are simply not taken into

account, that the views of the recipient are simply shut out. In fact, that is quite wrong. If he reads on in the bill he will see that the bill ensures the views of the recipients are taken into account but the final decision to appeal, like all other enforcement decisions, is made by the program.

It also must be remembered that when a deputy registrar's repayment order is reviewed by a judge or a master, the program has conduct of that action. It is the program that makes the submission as to the appropriate repayment amounts to the court at that time, not the payee.

So the bill, had it not been as it stands now and as things are at the moment without this bill, it is still the maintenance enforcement officer who actually takes the case forward before the judge or the master. It is not, even now, the recipient or the payee.

* (1450)

So I believe the member has put some confusion into the mix. I would like to make sure that it is clarified for the people of Manitoba, particularly for the women of Manitoba, that amendments such as this put forward by the other side of the House, by the NDP, are ones which we believe will increase the vulnerability of an individual payee or recipient. This government cannot support that. This government will not support placing women in a position of vulnerability, perhaps violence and increased jeopardy, Madam Speaker.

So I end by saying with the bill as it stands, it is the strongest in Canada, and we would not in any way want to weaken the position by accepting the amendment of the member opposite.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): On behalf of the Liberal members of the Manitoba Legislature, I would like to give support to this amendment. At the committee hearings on this bill, we heard from many presenters, and one of the reasons to have those committee hearings is to hear from the public.

Many of the people who appeared at the committee had concerns about the elimination of their right to appeal. So if we are going to bother to have committee

hearings to hear from the public, then we should be taking some direction from them, and I believe this amendment speaks to a direction that the public has requested in regard to this matter.

The view put forward that the people have the right not to go into the Maintenance Enforcement Program if they want to retain the right to appeal is a weak argument, I feel.

An analogy would be to say to an adult child, if you want my support and you want to live under my roof, then you have to throw out your self-esteem, your principles as an individual. If you want my help, you must ask when you can go to the fridge. You must ask when you can go out.

No, I do not think that is a reasonable answer to the concerns about this, that people do have the right to opt out of the Maintenance Enforcement Program.

The argument about vulnerability, I guess every person who goes to the police with a report of domestic violence, or any type of report, it could be argued that you know we have to protect them from exercising the due process.

I do not think women should need to fear using the due process of law that has been afforded by legislatures and governments, that they should fear anything from it, so we, the Liberal caucus of members of the Manitoba Legislature, support this amendment.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

* (1520)

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

The motion before the House, moved by the honourable member for St. Johns,

THAT Bill 3 be amended in the proposed subsection 56(4), as set out in subsection 7(2) of the Bill,

(a) at the end of clause (a) by adding—[interjection] Dispense.

THAT Bill 3 be amended in the proposed subsection 56(4), as set out in subsection 7(2) of the Bill,

(a) at the end of clause (a) by adding "and of that person's right to have the matter heard by a judge or master"; and

(b) in clause (b) by striking out "taking into consideration any concern expressed by the person, may" and substituting "where the person entitled to payment objects in writing to the order made under clause (2)(e) within 28 days after the day the order was made, shall".

Division

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

Yeas

Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Jennissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 24, Nays 28.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 3, The Maintenance Enforcement (Various Acts Amendment) Act; Loi sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires—modification de diverses lois, reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

* (1530)

**Bill 7—The City of Winnipeg
Amendment Act**

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 7 be amended by striking out subsection 8(2) and substituting the following:

8(2) Subsection 100(3) is amended by striking out "in an election until he or she files an audited statement" and substituting "until after the next election described in section 89 (election of council)".

Motion presented.

Mr. Reimer: I will be very short in my remarks in the sense that the amendment that is brought forth is a grammatical error that was put into the original bill that was passed in committee last week. This is a correction of a grammatical error.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment? Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Reimer: I move, seconded by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik), that Bill 7, The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would ask if you could canvass the House to see if there is leave to call Bill 35 again for second reading.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to recall Bill 35, previously agreed to standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS

**Bill 35—The Elections Amendment,
Local Authorities Election Amendment
and Consequential Amendments Act**

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I think this bill indicates that sometimes, perhaps rarely, if enough pressure is put on this government, indeed, sometimes something can get done, and that something can get done for the women in particular in this province, particularly the vulnerable women, the women who are hiding from people who are abusers and who are stalkers, and for the vulnerable seniors in this province.

It is unfortunate it is with this delay that we have to deal with this bill, because we have just come through an election where I suspect that almost every member in this House heard complaints, particularly from women and from seniors, about the voters' list and how its conspicuous posting is putting at risk the safety of those individuals.

This is not just a privacy issue, Madam Speaker. This is an issue of safety. When we look at the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer going back to June of 1992, and when we look at the Report of the Chief

Electoral Officer which again in the strongest words on March of '94 urges—in fact, the wording was, strongly urge this government to change the law regarding the posting of the voters' list and the access to the voters' list.

We have to ask, where was this government? Where have they been? Where have they been since June of 1992, at least?

I want to refer to the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer respecting the general election for September of 1990, where he warns: The Elections Act does not restrict the purposes for which a voters' list may be used. He said: The act permits anyone to inspect or copy the voters' list in the returning office during an election. Post-election, the act provides for public inspection of the list. These provisions are in need of review in light of privacy concerns.

The Chief Electoral Officer said and warned: There have been routine requests from salespeople, direct mail firms and bill collectors to copy the voters' list for business purposes.

I myself was contacted by an agency just two weeks ago asking for a copy of the list for St. Johns. The purpose of the request was not for electoral purposes, but was to raise money and to use the list, a list created solely for the purpose of enabling people, to vote for soliciting individuals—a purpose that is wrong.

The Chief Electoral Officer went on in his 1990 report by warning that in 1986, 1988 and 1990 many returning officers also received privacy-related complaints concerning posting of the voters' list. Following the 1988 general election, the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women wrote to Elections Manitoba to raise concerns about the posting of voters' lists in public places. As a result of such concerns, some qualified voters have refused to be enumerated. Concerns have also been raised regarding the public posting of voters' lists for voters who are residents of mental hospitals or institutions for mental retardates.

I want to then cite the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer that was received by the Speaker's office in

March 1994 and which was tabled in this House. It says there: A number of complaints were again received from voters regarding the posting of the voters' lists. The majority of these complaints came from individuals living alone. Complaints of this sort have been brought to our attention in every general election and by-election since 1986. The seriousness and urgency that voters' list not be publicly posted on street corners has grown steadily over the years as the fear of personal safety has increased. I strongly urge that Section 36(2) of the act be changed so as to delete the public posting of the voters' list outside polling places and other conspicuous places.

Madam Speaker, finally, and that is the word that is associated always with this government, we have a provision before this House that deals with this. As a result of pressures, not only, I think, from the Chief Electoral Officer, but from individuals and from concerns raised on this side, both during the campaign and during Oral Questions in the last few weeks, this government has now done what was the right thing to do a long time ago and has brought in this legislation.

Madam Speaker, we support this legislation. In looking at it, it does contain not only the removal of the requirement to post the voters' list in a conspicuous place or on the street corners of Manitoba, but also does what I think the government said it was not going to do in Question Period just a couple of weeks ago, that is, restrict the use of voters' lists after the election.

It was our argument that it is not enough simply to say, do not post voters' lists up on the street corners before an election. You also have to control those voters' lists after the election, and it is often a person who is hiding from an assaulter, from a stalker, who will get sworn in on election day so that her name is not on the street corner. But then the day after the election, her name appears on the voters' list and is given out to whomever may obtain access to that list. So we support the legislation, Madam Speaker. We will support it on second reading and look forward to its early enactment, and, of course, it is critical that this legislation be given Royal Assent before the municipal elections unfold. We understand from information received on this side that the construction, if you will, of the voters' list for the municipal campaign, at least in

the City of Winnipeg, is now ongoing or is about to begin.

So it is important that this legislation receive the support of all members of this House as soon as possible. Having said that, we think it is important for the public to have notice that this legislation is before the Assembly and going before a standing committee of the House. It is important that this House do everything it can to ensure that the public enjoy that privilege of attending before the standing committee to express any concerns that it may have. So with that concern about due notice being provided to Manitobans, we look forward to the passage of this legislation on second reading in principle and that it go to the standing committee perhaps as early as tomorrow or the next day but so long as it is given that the public of Manitoba has notice that this bill is being considered. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I, too, want to put some remarks on the record because I believe this is an important amendment, and I, too, received complaints during the election campaign. In fact, my guess would be that probably almost all of us here received complaints during the election campaign. [interjection] Well, it was certainly a big concern in the city of Winnipeg. Perhaps people in rural Manitoba do not share that concern.

* (1540)

I personally took some of those calls in my constituency office or in my campaign headquarters, I should say, and the voters in Burrows constituency who phoned fall into a number of categories. I think, as a previous speaker mentioned, there are individuals who feel vulnerable because of their particular situation respecting former partners, but the individuals who phoned me were seniors, people who were single, people living alone, and they feel vulnerable as well.

In our neighbourhood, the reason is their fear of crime, a well-justified fear, and they did not want people who might be contemplating breaking and entering into homes to find out that they were living alone, and I think that was a very valid concern on their part. And so when they phoned, they expressed

surprise that these lists were still publicly posted, and I pointed out that it was allowed under The Elections Act and that the Chief Electoral Officer, on two previous occasions, in his reports to the government had recommended that this be changed and that there be an end to the public posting and that other arrangements be made.

So we are glad to see that the government is doing this, but as the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) pointed out, they have been very tardy in doing this. They could have followed up after the 1993 report. They could have followed up after the 1990 report, and they had many sessions. I believe we had six sessions of the Thirty-fifth Legislature in which they could have passed this amendment.

We also know that people not only phoned people running in the election campaign, like myself, but they phoned radio shows. In fact, I encouraged them to phone the Chief Electoral Officer and put in a complaint. So I hope that part of the reason that the government is acting is that they heard recently, since April 25, from the Chief Electoral Officer that his office received many complaints as well.

Since the election, I too received a solicitation from a hospital in Winnipeg. I will not name the hospital to spare them embarrassment, probably the same institution that phoned the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and asked for the voters' list for the Burrows constituency. I declined, and instead I suggested that they phone the Chief Electoral Officer. I hope they did that so that he became aware that people were using the voters' lists for the purposes of fundraising in order to compile a data base to use for mailings for fundraising.

Now, I am just guessing, but knowing the nature of the institution that was phoning, I think that is probably a very good guess that it was for mailings or fundraising. I think that was inappropriate, is inappropriate, and I am pleased to see that this amendment takes care of that concern.

So we, in this caucus, are supporting this amendment. We plan to send it to committee on Thursday night so that they can hear the concerns of the public. We will

be supporting it, but, once again, we are very critical of this government for taking so long to do what should have been done many sessions ago.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I also want to rise to support the bill, but put a few comments on the record with respect to some issues that I encountered, concerns that I encountered with respect to the posting publicly of the voters' list.

I would like to start off by saying that I would hate to think, Madam Speaker, that there was one person in Manitoba, even one person, who did not vote because they did not want to have their name on the voters' list so it could be made public.

I think that could happen because I think that there are a lot of people who do not understand the procedure and they think that if you are not on the list, then you cannot vote. I think that with this new provision, there will be a need for a greater explanation of the provisions for people to maintain their confidentiality and still be able to vote. I am sure there are a number of people who did not use their right to vote because they did not understand that they could still vote if their name was not on a list and they did not want their name to be on a public list.

I want to talk about a woman in my constituency, whom I have worked with repeatedly over the last couple of years, who is, as the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) has made reference to, one of the women who has been pursued by a previous partner. I was really pleased that she voted on election day, but she only did that because I went to the door and I got her and put her in my car. I had to give her a ride with her two kids and her neighbour's child. She was one of the women that we are talking about who would not have voted and did not have transportation and would have really been concerned about having her name posted publicly.

I also want to talk about some of the, quote, phone scams that are going on. Just recently in Transcona we had a pay-by-phone system where a phone company would solicit using a voice-programmed computer to

contact homes. This program was misprogrammed and was phoning people from one o'clock in the morning to 7:30 in the morning on a Saturday. I had phone calls to the constituency office complaining about this, and I would hate to think that kind of error could be supported and encouraged by using the voters' list for the province of Manitoba. This is one of the many phone scams or problems that could occur.

Other situations that we know occur are people intent on breaking into the homes of people who live alone or are otherwise vulnerable who can simply find that information out by looking at the voters' list and then contact those people by the phone and pretend that they know them by using their names. That is something that we know has happened with elderly people in the province, and again we would not want to see that occur from people getting the name and particulars about that household from the voters' list which is publicly posted.

I meant to make reference when I was talking about this woman in Radisson that she was in the process of moving. I think that we have to realize that there are citizens in our community who move very frequently, and I think that the issues such as this that are being looked at by Elections Manitoba have to be taken seriously when we want to ensure that all Manitobans are eligible to vote even if they do not have a home address, that we have to ensure that we have provisions for all citizens to be given the right to vote. This was not as much a problem in the recent provincial election, but I know it was a very large problem in the federal election.

I think that there are also other issues related to this that need to be looked at by Elections Manitoba, and I would bet that there are recommendations dealing with that in these reports that this government has been tardy in implementing. This government, as we have heard, has had this recommendation to no longer allow voters' lists to be publicly posted, recommendations since '86 and in reports since the early '90s.

I just want to conclude by saying that we are pleased that the government has taken this step to protect vulnerable citizens and to protect the privacy. We hope that they will go one step further and ensure that voters'

lists are not misused after elections as well as when the lists are posted during elections.

With that I will conclude my comments and hope that people will have an opportunity to be aware that they have the chance to make public presentations on this issue. Unfortunately, with the way that the government has handled the legislation, that is not likely since it is going to have to be rushed to committee over the next two days. I find that regrettable in the way that they deal with legislation coming before the House, but I also want to commend Elections Manitoba for their work in ensuring that this government is reminded again of this issue.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 35, The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would ask if you could please canvass the House to see if there would be leave to allow for the third readings of both Bills 3 and 7, and, if there is such leave, I would ask you to please call those bills for third reading.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to proceed to third reading of Bills 3 and 7? [agreed]

* (1550)

THIRD READINGS

Bill 3—The Maintenance Enforcement (Various Acts Amendment) Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, by leave, seconded by the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), that Bill 3, The Maintenance Enforcement (Various

Acts Amendment) Act; Loi sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires - modification de diverses lois, be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Well, it is with regret, Madam Speaker, that we are put in a position of having to support legislation that is so half-hearted, particularly following the presentations to the standing committee the other night and the work that this side has done and indeed the Liberal members in this House have done to raise awareness of the shortcomings and in fact the travesty of justice that is taking place within maintenance enforcement in Manitoba. We note, when the minister moved second reading of this bill, she said, and I quote: with these amendments we are strengthening the Maintenance Enforcement Program and creating the most effective deterrents for those seeking to evade its reach.

Then she went on to say, and I quote: We are doing everything possible to force individuals for defaulting on maintenance and support payments to live up to their obligations.

I ask how the minister can possibly say that, put it on the record, when she comes in with a bill which is such a pitiful half-hearted effort, there is no way in this bill the most effective deterrents. We, in presentation after presentation to the committee, told this minister what indeed could be the most effective deterrents. The minister said no, after no, after no.

We had presentation after presentation that talked about the need for interest payments being applied to arrears. The organization Réseau, the Coalition of Custodial Parents, we had a local lawyer who apparently acts for both custodial and noncustodial parents who said that indeed interest was a main issue. We had a very insightful presentation by a single mom by the name of Rhonda McCorriston who said: My bills were stacking up at 24 percent and 18 percent interest, he was paying 25 bucks a month with no interest; this does not seem fair.

We had another single mom by the name of Louise Dyck, who said to the committee: Interest should be

automatically assessed for all monies in arrears. The government will not accept that I cannot pay my income tax or my property tax because my support payments have not been made. I get charged a penalty in interest, so should the payer.

The Manitoba Association of Women and the Law said: We feel strongly that interest should also be charged on arrears. What incentive is there for the payer's spouse to pay his maintenance regularly while interest accumulates on every other debt but this one? At the same time the former spouse, entitled to receive maintenance payments for herself or for her children, needs this money to live and must pay interest on outstanding taxes, on credit card balances, on loans and on lines of credit while waiting for the maintenance payment to which she is entitled. It is profoundly unfair that interest is not accumulated on all support arrears, and we strongly urge the government to remedy the situation.

I think the presentation by the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law speaks to the argument put forward by this minister in responding to the demand that interest be allowed. She said, well, what is the use of pursuing interest when the payer is in arrears on the payments itself? Well, as the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law says, interest provides an incentive, it is proactive, it will help prevent arrears. The minister fails to acknowledge that. When one has a series of debts, it is nature, it is common sense that you look to see which debts I can afford to put off. The debts that one can afford to put off will be those that have either no interest or low interest, Madam Speaker.

When will this minister understand that interest will make a difference, interest will prioritize the debts owing to children in Manitoba? I fail to understand why, when every other civil debt for the payment of money in Manitoba attracts interest, a civil debt owing, of all people, to our women and children goes without interest. What a profound statement from this minister. What a sad commentary on the lack of respect for our women and children and the priority that must be given to maintenance payments.

On the issue of arrears, again we heard presentation after presentation say that these arrears should not be

written off. It was said, and we know that the larger the arrears, the more likely they are to be written off. Réseau strongly urged that arrears not be allowed to be written off. We had one woman, Ms. Bonnefoy, who told that \$4,000 of arrears was written off and she was not even told about it. People like Louise Dyck, the Coalition of Custodial Parents, Rosella Dyck, pleading with the minister to stop this erasure of arrears.

We need to make sure that the collection of this debt be given the first priority. As the Coalition of Custodial Parents argued, there is no more important a debt owing than that from parents to their children, but it is a priority that this government has not been respecting.

Madam Speaker, we wonder, we have asked the government, why is it that taxes, payment of wages, workers compensation premiums all come before the debts owing to our children? It does not make sense. If indeed women and children and their needs are the first priority in this province, this government had an obligation to ensure that priority.

We know that, from the presentations and from the casework that each member has in this Chamber, for by far too many people priority is not given to the children of a marriage after separation or divorce. I suggest that this government, by its half-hearted bill, and by the rejection of needed improvements that have been suggested and drafted for it, gives moral support to and acknowledges that lack of priority that those noncustodial parents give to the children. I suggest that this government is complicitous in this betrayal of our children.

* (1600)

It is interesting, Madam Speaker, in addition to the particular changes sought to the legislation, presentation after presentation spoke of how this government was failing the women and children in this province. It is interesting that we have people like Marilyn McGonigal who said, I hear from so many clients that they are not getting any satisfaction from the Maintenance office; from Sue Spiece who said, the Maintenance office has done nothing; from Ms. Cornell, who talked about why there was a snitch line

regarding welfare, but of course nothing for maintenance. Because indeed if he does not pay, we all pay. We also heard from Ms. Cornell that when arrears are signed over to social allowances, files are closed. Her file was closed.

It was critical for this government and this minister in particular to hear the circumstances that these single parents are living in.

I want to quote from Ms. Judy Cornell who said, quote, I worry about my children's emotional well-being and future education. I cannot afford swimming lessons, hockey, gifts for birthday parties, field trip costs and student fees. There is not enough money to buy fire or life insurance or car insurance. I am in need of major car repairs on a 1982 car which has a cracked windshield, unsafe tires, holes in the muffler, and I have not taken the car for a tune-up for three years. I do not have money to repair my appliances, vacuum cleaner, dryer, washing machine, et cetera. There is not enough money to own a pet or even the daily newspaper.

Rhonda McCorriston said, we have not had one holiday to anywhere. What does this mean? It means that the chance to see other people and other places, to grow and learn about the world around us is not there. She said, and I think this is particularly instructive for the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), can we blame youth gangs on child poverty? Yes, we can, she said. Single parents work part time in evening jobs. This is when kids are wandering the streets. Children do not have people at home to listen to them. They go to friends, gangs and groups that will make them feel like they belong—car theft and break-and-enters. You are saying, oh, come now, but you have never, ever had anything, you saw your parent working very hard and getting nowhere.

You knew that jobs were few and there was just no money. If you thought the chances of you ever owning a new-smelling, nice shiny car were nonexistent and you knew that you could experience that just for one moment, one minute in heaven, that was your one chance, you would grab it too. The system is unfair. I know that, you know that and our youth know that. We can say it is the best we have. We can say it is not

that bad but the kids know better, kids that watch single parents trying to make ends meet, kids who go to visit the other parent and see stepbrothers and sisters with shiny new bikes, taking trips, CD players and walkmans. Noncustodial parents laugh at custodial parents. It is okay to beat the custodial parent. It is not okay to beat the kids. We need enforcement which sees this issue as being a societal issue.

She concludes: Custodial parents should not have to fight individually, single-handedly against child poverty. At the risk of offending anyone she said, looking at the members, at the committee: is that not your job?

Madam Speaker, as I said in committee in response to presentation, I was raised in a single-parent household. I know first-hand of the demands, the pressures, the loneliness, the pain but sometimes great joy of being a single parent. On top of all those demands and the stresses and the loneliness, it must be so discouraging when one has an ex-partner who, although not present in the house, is perpetuating an abuse, the most sinister of abuses, and that is financial abuse through the nonpayment of spousal payments and child payments.

My father died when I was two years old. While I thought that was the worst that could happen, I know now that there is something worse. That is where the spouse continues to live and continues to abuse. What is even intensifying that situation is when the Maintenance office then comes into play and the custodial parent says, I need help, I need the enforcement, someone to help me with these maintenance payments, and goes there thinking that the office, because it was designed for that purpose, will help enforce the order, the payments—comes up against the wall, the wall that we heard presentation after presentation about, where the Maintenance Enforcement office is not there.

As Sue Spiece says, the Maintenance office has done nothing. As Ms. McGonigal said, they are not getting any satisfaction from the Maintenance office. As I know first-hand in phone call after phone call, visit after visit, the Maintenance office is falling flat on its face despite the good will of people working there.

That office neither has the resources nor the enforcement tools and legislation to do the job. This government is going to ensure that continues. With half-hearted efforts in the bill it is saying to the women and children of this province, you must continue to suffer that sinister abuse; you must continue to face the wall, the inaction, the red tape of the Maintenance Enforcement office.

When you have a government that purports to have a zero tolerance policy on violence against women, you have to ask, how could they dare continue to say that when they are perpetuating the status quo. The government, by this bill, is continuing to ensure the oppression of those custodial parents, the women and children. It is continuing to ensure that this will remain the land of poverty and will continue to ensure that the have-nots in this province will grow and grow and grow in number.

With those comments, Madam Speaker, we are prepared to see this bill pass. At committee we asked the minister to put on the record a commitment to proclaiming the sections of the bill within weeks. We are here talking about this bill today because there is urgency in getting these, albeit, limited provisions into force. So I again ask the minister to put on the record on third reading exactly when this bill will be proclaimed in full. Indeed I want to know from the minister, has she already provided instructions to the various government departments to put in place any forms or regulatory provisions that may be required under the act? Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak to this bill, Bill 3, and indicate our support of the bill.

This in fact has been an issue for a number of years. It is somewhat sad to see, to a certain extent, that it took seven years for this particular administration to address this very important issue. It seems from the view of many that are out there that the primary motivating factor for introducing this legislation or bringing forward the suggestion of introduction of legislation of this nature was prior to the provincial election which was announced just a few months back. Having said that I do not necessarily want to impute too

many motives of the government but rather to acknowledge that this is legislation that many people have been waiting for.

* (1610)

As the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) has pointed out, there are many other aspects to this legislation that could have been added to it. I note the member for St. Johns during committee stage did in fact bring forward a number of amendments and then attempted again to bring forward an amendment for the report stage. We believe, in most part, that these have been very positive amendments, and that is why earlier today we supported what the member for St. Johns was attempting to do.

Whether it is the Coalition of Custodial Parents or the many different individuals that appeared before the committee, I think each and every one were quite successful in articulating a very strong message. I do believe that all members of this Chamber acknowledge the importance of that message.

During the campaign we talked about child poverty and the importance of the province in addressing the whole issue of child poverty. Madam Speaker, the correlation between child poverty and maintenance enforcement is very strong. That is one of the reasons why so many of us, in particular, individuals, friends and former colleagues of mine, have felt so strongly on this issue is because we recognize the importance in terms of getting the financial resources to the children. Even though a vast majority of the custodial parents are, in fact, women, the first priority has to be the children. We have seen some of the hardships that have been experienced as a direct result of government's failure to be able to give the resources that are necessary, take the actions that are again necessary in order to alleviate the problem with respect to maintenance enforcement.

You know it was interesting when the member for St. Johns made reference to the Maintenance office and so many believe that it has done nothing. It is not necessarily a reflection on the civil servants that work within the enforcement office or the Maintenance office. I feel fairly comfortable that they are doing

whatever they can, given the restrictions that they have, to be able to get monies owed to the people that need it.

There are very strong limitations, a good number of limitations. Some of it would be legislative. Other aspects would be financial resources in terms of staffing and so forth. These are the types of issues that are not going to die after this particular bill passes today. There are many other issues facing maintenance enforcement, in particular The Maintenance Enforcement Act. We hope and trust that the minister responsible, who says now today we have the strongest maintenance enforcement—after this receives Royal Assent—across Canada, is not prepared to sit back, because that is in fact what the government did for the first six years of being in office. Yes, this, many would say, is a starting point, but it is not good if this government decides that it does not have to do anything for the next three and a half years leading up to another election when they once again might choose to talk about family maintenance.

I know in discussions that I have had previously with, in particular, Ms. McCormick regarding family maintenance, I can recall her talking about the whole question of arrears and how a judge can virtually wipe out a portion of those arrears. I know what limited research facilities we have within our current caucus and the discussions that they have had, along with my colleague from The Maples, with some of the individuals that have made representation or presentations at the committee. There were a number of other concerns that were brought forward.

One of those concerns was dealt with in terms of the amendment that was being proposed. Again, there is a lot of validity to it, and at times government sets its agenda and says, this is what it is that we are prepared to pass. Maybe that does not necessarily approach things in an open-minded fashion. I have seen that.

I recall the drinking and driving legislation and the then-minister, Attorney General brought in this legislation and was not prepared to accept amendments. There were a great number of amendments that were brought forward, only for us to see them being denied but then the government incorporating them in future legislative changes. We would, of course, applaud the

future changes—or those changes that the minister did bring in eventually. There are some amendments—and I believe that the current minister recognizes different areas of this legislation that could again be further enhanced.

To that end, I would conclude my remarks by strongly encouraging the Minister of Justice to not leaving The Maintenance Enforcement Act as it is after this amendment has been passed but to see it once again before the Chamber sometime, in the not too distant future. One could ultimately argue, it would be nice to see it in the next session, Madam Speaker, where the minister will take the time to reflect over the public hearings, because I like to believe that the public hearings can have a very positive influence on legislation, and also to take into consideration representation and presentations that would be given to her and reflect on the current legislation, the amendments that we are passing, in hopes that the minister will see fit to bring in some of the amendments that have been possibly proposed in committee stage earlier but, quite possibly, maybe not given notice to the minister, or addressing some of the concerns that were specifically addressed and legitimately so, such as the right of appeal being taken away type thing if they want to go through the Maintenance Enforcement Program.

I do believe that there is a lot more to be done, and we hope that this government will not wait another six years before it starts acting on it.

With those few words we are prepared to see it pass.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I just would like to read into the record a letter that was sent to the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) by Rosella Dyck in May of this year. Ms. Dyck has been very active in the various groups that have been appealing to the minister to make major changes to the maintenance enforcement legislation. She also made a very good presentation at the public hearings. It will be a very brief letter.

Dear Mrs. Vodrey: Thirty-seven million dollars promised by Mr. Filmon to save the Jets, a private business venture that has become unprofitable mainly

because its players are paid more money in one year than most Winnipeggers see in a lifetime, an additional \$57 million promised by other levels of government—no need to tighten their belts, no wage rollbacks. Twenty-five percent of Manitoba children, more than 70,000, living in poverty; 62 percent of these children live in lone-parent homes; \$27 million owing to Manitoba children in unpaid court-ordered child support. It is quite obvious that the government can come up with money when it wants to. I challenge all levels of government to give to the poor children of Manitoba an amount equal to the amount they have promised to the Jets. The first \$27 million should be sent to those children who are owed child support. The rest should be used to ensure that all poor children in Manitoba have sufficient nutritious food and the basic necessities of life.

Imagine the long-term consequences of children being adequately provided for, how cost-effective this would be in the long run, and they do not even expect the government to build them a big new expensive playhouse. The arena will not be accessible to children who cannot afford the price of a ticket. For many Manitobans it is difficult enough to find sufficient money for food. A trip to the arena is merely a dream. The reality is hunger pains day after day, year after year. Where are our real priorities? Sincerely, Rosella Dyck.

* (1620)

Madam Speaker, I think that sums up quite nicely the issues facing the province of Manitoba and the government of Manitoba in dealing with maintenance enforcement issues. I thank the House for allowing me the time to read that letter into the record.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, leave to address this matter.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Justice have leave to speak to the third reading? [agreed]

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak at third reading to Bill 3, the maintenance enforcement bill. It is a real pleasure because it is this

government which is breaking new ground. It is this government which is bringing forward the strongest legislation across this country to deal with maintenance enforcement.

Let me start by reminding members of this House that this bill was borne of consultation. This bill was developed based on a consultation process which took place with people from all across Manitoba.

This bill does several things. First of all, it brings forward the toughest enforcement measures, the toughest combination of enforcement measures available across this country, enforcement measures such as the removal or revocation of a drivers' licence, increased jail terms, increased fines to a thousand dollars, report to the credit bureau.

That is very significant, Madam Speaker, because in the past we have been able to try and deal with those people and enforce their maintenance payments where they are employed by someone and we had the ability to garnish wages. However, we have always had difficulty with those people who are self-employed. We have not had a way to provide the incentive, the motivation or the consequence to those individuals who are self-employed. The measures which are put forward in this bill, reporting to the credit bureau, the revocation of a drivers' licence, those are very meaningful. It does not matter where you work. It does not matter if you work for someone else. It does not matter if you are self-employed. It means that there is a consequence that we believe will be meaningful very specifically to that defaulting payer.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the toughest combination of enforcement measures, we also have brought forward the greatest availability of resources. In the past, one of the difficulties has been that there have not been resources available for the Maintenance Enforcement Program to reach in and secure them on behalf of the recipient and the payee. In this case, what this bill does is it allows us now to look at joint assets as a resource now that we can look at to see that money flows into the hands of women and children. We can now look at seizing pension benefit credits, never available before. This is a bold move by this government to make sure that there are resources

available for the payment of maintenance enforcement rightfully to the recipient.

Madam Speaker, I can say that these incentives are the strongest incentives available, I believe, within the civil law. It is one area where there is a debt owing on the civil side that you could just go to jail if you do not pay. That is a consequence that we believe is a very serious one.

The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) brought forward amendments at the time of the committee hearing. Though there was lots of opportunity from the time the bill was tabled till the time of the committee hearing, he did not bother to do that. Those amendments were brought forward on the night of the committee hearings. What the effect of those amendments would be is to have us delay the bill, because the amendments were significant. The amendments were such that if you made them, there would be an effect, not only on other parts of the bill but also on other legislation.

Madam Speaker, it seems to us that the other side of the House was more than happy to continue delaying the passage of this bill, but it was our promise that we would pass this legislation, that we would bring forward the strongest legislation and see that it was passed to get money into the hands of women and children in this province.

We took very seriously—and I commented individually to all presenters, except one whose case was before the court. I made that clear, that I could not respond to any recommendations brought forward by that speaker. However, to all others, I responded. I made it clear that the bill, as it stands, is the strongest bill, and we are not ruling out, in the future, the opportunity to add and even strengthen the bill further. That was a commitment I made that evening and I have also made in this House.

I also made the commitment that we would continue to work co-operatively with other provinces across Canada, the provinces and the territories, because as members speak about outstanding payments to women and children, they know very well that some of those payers do not live in the province of Manitoba. The

measures available in other provinces are not as strong and not as significant as the ones here in Manitoba. In fact, the enforcement actions may not be as strong.

This issue has been raised at the ministers of Justice conference and at the ministers responsible for the Status of Women. There was an agreement to look at the barriers across this country and to try and break them down so that we have a more reciprocal opportunity to enforce maintenance orders, so that when a payer does not live in Manitoba, we will be able to locate that payer and see that that payer pays.

We also have asked the federal government to assist, because one of the other problems, when there is a debt outstanding, is you have to know where the payer lives, you have to know where the payer works. If for some reason we do not know that, we need access to data banks, particularly federal data banks, which would be the most helpful, that will help us locate that payer and bring that money back into the hands of women and children. We look for the support of the other side in our approaches to the federal government to make sure that they will look at possible amendments and action so we can get that money into the hands of women and children.

Madam Speaker, there has been some comment about the Maintenance office. I feel that it is very important to speak about the very hard-working individuals who work there and their successes. The success of the Maintenance Enforcement office: collection is in the range of 74 percent. If you live in Manitoba, every effort will be made to have you pay.

I would just like to take a moment to speak about the very dismal record when the NDP was in power, because I can tell you, in 1987, the amount of money collected was \$16 million. The amount of money collected now in 1994 is \$33.2 million, an almost 80 percent increase since this government has been in power.

So let not anyone suggest that the Maintenance Enforcement office is not doing its work. Let them not suggest that the Maintenance Enforcement office is not effective, because the figures speak for themselves, an almost 80 percent increase in the amount collected.

The files have increased, but they have increased only about 35 percent. The staff increase—the members have spoken about a lack of staff. The staff has increased, since the NDP was in government, by 50 percent. This government has increased staff, has increased the collection from the dismal record of the party opposite when they were in government.

Madam Speaker, what this bill does is it brings forward now an additional strong measure to make sure that money flows into the hands of women and children. In addition, we have tried to assist in terms of the client service by increasing resources, by putting in place an automated voice system which will allow any recipient to phone up 24 hours a day, seven days a week and find out the status of their account.

No longer do they have to try and phone within government working hours and wait on the phone until they reach a maintenance enforcement officer, who then would simply provide information and not be working on the enforcement files. Now, what this government has done is put in place an automated voice response system so that individuals can phone and check the status of their file, and maintenance enforcement officers can actually work on maintenance enforcement.

* (1630)

We have also enhanced the computer system so that the ability to retrieve material is much enhanced from where it was previously, particularly when the other side was in government. We have also found that some people have said, well, you know, we would pay, but it is hard for us to get downtown.

We have now put in place that you can use a debit card system so that payments can be made from places other than just walking into the Maintenance Enforcement office, and that money can flow now into the hands of women and children.

This government has made improvements on the administrative side, on the staffing side, and, in addition, we have brought forward the strongest legislation across this country.

Madam Speaker, we look forward to the support of the other side, and I am very pleased to have brought forward this legislation on behalf of our government.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 7—The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move, by leave, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 7, The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg, be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, before I move the motion for Supply I would like to announce that the Committee of Law Amendments will sit on Thursday morning at 10 a.m. to consider such bills as will be sent to it by this House, I believe Bill 35 being one of those bills.

Madam Speaker, I would now move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Labour; the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) in the Chair for the Department of Housing; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for Aboriginal Justice Initiatives and Decentralization.

* (1640)

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

LABOUR

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Labour.

Does the honourable Minister of Labour have an opening statement?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present the 1995-96 Estimates of the Department of Labour. I hope my opening statement will give members an informative outline of the funding needs and main activities of my department. I look forward to working with the labour and management partners of the department to strengthen labour-management relations and public safety in our province.

Although the House was not sitting when I was appointed Minister of Labour on May 9, members may recall that just after I took office one of the most esteemed members of my staff, J.R. Matheson, died of cancer after 27 years of service in the Fire Commissioner's office, the last five of them as the Fire Commissioner.

J.R., as everyone called him, was highly regarded both by his colleagues in Manitoba and his counterparts across Canada who elected him vice-president of the Canadian Association of Fire Commissioners and Fire Marshals. After his family, his first love was the fire service to which he brought a great spirit and enthusiasm. J.R. was a doer, a man who could and did make things happen by sheer force of character and will. He was a big man with big plans for his service and a big heart. He will be missed.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to my staff for their dedication and their service to

Manitobans under the capable direction of my deputy minister, Tom Farrell. I have had an opportunity to meet with many of the staff, and I am impressed with their knowledge of and commitment to the department.

With respect to the operations of my department, Mr. Chairman, for 1995-96 we are requesting a total of approximately \$16.7 million. This is a reduction of .5 percent from the previous fiscal year. The department recovers a significant proportion of its annual expenditures through various sources of revenue. This year we expect to recover about 69 percent of our total budget in this way.

Our staffing allocation has been reduced by two staff years in administrative support. As in previous years, Mr. Chairman, the department was able to avoid layoffs through successful management of vacancies.

We are also very fortunate to have the benefit of outside advice and expertise from public-spirited Manitobans who serve on a number of advisory boards attached to the department. I would like to acknowledge their contributions and thank them for their time and service to Manitoba.

I will refer to the work of a few of these boards more specifically, Mr. Chairman. At this point, one comes to mind. Earlier this year it was announced that Manitoba's minimum wage would be increased, effective July 1 of this year and on January 1, 1996. The Minimum Wage Board carried out extensive consultations in order to ensure that public input was provided on this important policy issue. The decision to raise the minimum wage to \$5.40 an hour in two stages took into account the advice we are given. The increase represents a very reasonable balance between the needs of employees and the need to maintain jobs in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to touch briefly on some of the activities of the Manitoba Labour Management Review Committee in the past year, specifically of some of the subcommittees. The health sector working group continues its work of ensuring that essential service agreements are negotiated to cover work disruptions in health care institutions. The arbitration advisory group is concentrating its efforts on

developing and providing a training program for arbitrators.

Some time ago the Minister of Labour asked the Labour Management Review Committee to make recommendations to improve The Construction Industry Wages Act. The committee made a detailed study and identified a number of important issues for the attention of the minister. I will study the report and its recommendations and will bring them forward to cabinet for its consideration.

Mr. Chairman, since 1991 my department has been in the forefront of practical reforms to improve our operations. The department's continuous improvement activities focus on improving our service to clients, ensuring an appropriate working environment for staff and achieving efficiency in program operations. I am pleased to note that Treasury Board has extended our delegated authorities, which makes it possible to manage programs effectively. We have met all major conditions of operating under delegated authority and in addition have had our practices reviewed by the Provincial Auditor.

As a further step in support of accountability reporting, the department has developed a new program performance framework. It will help us to assess performance of programs and services by measuring the achievement of results against performance targets. In this fiscal year we are focusing on implementing continuous improvement more fully throughout the department and using this new framework to measure our performance as I just have outlined.

In the Workplace Safety and Health division, Mr. Chairman, one of our major challenges has been to improve the understanding of The Workplace Safety and Health Act. The Workplace Safety and Health Branch conducted a survey of Manitoba employers who attended two conferences held last winter, the Manitoba Safety Council conference and Construction Safety Conference. The survey objective was to find out how the branch could improve service to workers and management in small business. The branch discovered that just over half the employers want help in interpreting the act and most want more written information about the legislation. We are exploring

several ways of developing new materials, including collaboration with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Early this spring, our mines inspectors began enforcement of a revised mine regulation that was passed last year. The new regulation covers a number of advances in mining technology, improved standards in key areas such as underground storage of fuel and expands the role of workplace safety and health committees.

I am pleased to note that the revisions resulted from the work of a tripartite industry-worker-government committee. In addition, a standing committee has been appointed to review the regulations on an ongoing basis. Our Occupational Health Branch has benefited from a co-operative relationship with the Workers Compensation Board in two initiatives now in progress.

Together with field staff of my colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), the branch is in the second year of a pilot research project to collect and analyze data on farm-related injuries and illnesses. The project, funded by a grant from the board, also involves a medical officer of health from the Central Region and physicians from Morden, Notre Dame de Lourdes and Winkler. We think this project could produce significant findings. We know that agriculture is a high-risk and high-stress occupation, and this field has not been extensively studied in Manitoba.

The board has also assisted the branch in making available its claims data for use in epidemiological purposes. The branch has been analyzing this material to give our safety and health officers company-specific and sector-specific accident trends. This will help in directing preventative action to high-risk areas and making more efficient use of resources. The objective is to bring about permanent change in the workplace, which will require a considerable effort by both management and workers. It is our experience that where there is a commitment to safety and health at senior levels, there is generally a successful program in that workplace.

In turning to the Labour Services Division, I would like to touch briefly on a process started in 1991 to

review our public safety legislation, consisting of eight acts and 15 regulations. An extensive multistage consultation process has been completed, involving two consultation papers and three days of public hearings. I will be studying this area as well and considering future action.

* (1650)

Mr. Chairman, one of the most important public safety components of my department is the Office of the Fire Commissioner. I am very proud to report on their achievements in both the training and education fields. Over the years, the number of fatalities from fires has declined in Manitoba. I think this is a result of both higher fire safety standards and increased awareness by Manitobans of facts about and dangers from fires. The Office of the Fire Commissioner has worked hard to educate Manitobans of all ages about fire safety, and the public education section has received an international award for its contribution to the Learn Not To Burn program.

They have also been nominated for membership on the National Fire Protection Association education committee. A public education fire service officer has been seconded to the Winnipeg Fire Department for two years to help plan and implement the Learn Not To Burn program in Winnipeg school divisions. The office has expanded the scope of the program and of the children's Nero and Ashcan fire safety series by translating the materials into French. In addition, a public education officer based in Brandon has been hired to serve western Manitoba.

The high standards of the training programs in the Manitoba fire college were recognized through accreditation of seven programs last summer by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. The college is working on having four more programs ready for accreditation by the end of this fiscal year.

This accreditation, Mr. Chairman, has resulted in the kind of recognition of which we can all be proud. The college receives phone calls from fire chiefs wanting to hire graduates from college programs because the programs are accredited. The expanded fire college facilities were officially opened last fall and are

expected to allow for an increased number of training programs offered by the college. For instance, the college now offers two pre-employment classes.

Mr. Chairman, the activities of the Conciliation and Mediation Branch have helped maintain Manitoba's good labour relations climate. Last year, the branch was successful in resolving 80 percent of the 305 grievance mediation assignments undertaken. Also, 96 percent of 166 conciliation cases affecting 14,000 employees were resolved without a work stoppage. Four conciliation cases under The Public Schools Act were handled, involving 1,160 teachers. All of them were settled before arbitration.

Last year, the branch entered a new field, prevention mediation. This involved workshops and acting as facilitators in mutual gains interest-based negotiations with several employers, one of which was Manitoba Hydro. These activities will be continued according to interest and demand.

For the past dozen years the Mechanical and Engineering branch has been moving to a four-year cycle for renewal of trade licences, and the transformation will be completed this year. This year, licences for first- to fourth-class power engineers were issued under the new cycle. When licences are renewed for the rest of this group next November, this process will be completed. The change increases the efficiency of the renewal process and reduces the time needed to carry it out.

Mr. Chairman, the Manitoba Pension Commission has moved into line with most other Canadian jurisdictions with respect to investment and loan of pension plan assets. We used to have a highly prescriptive list of investment procedures that plans and financial institutions had to follow. This made it hard for plan sponsors and Manitoba-based financial institutions to compete in the marketplace.

Accordingly, in response to submissions from the industry, we have adopted the prudent person standard for these investments. These will increase opportunities for plans to earn high returns and will make plan sponsors more accountable for their investment decisions.

The commission has been very pleased with both the public and institutional response to the introduction of the Life Income Fund and locked-in retirement account. Initially staff of the commission worked closely with trust and insurance companies to ensure that these traditional sponsors understood the rules of the new pension vehicles.

More recently, however, Mr. Chairman, the staff have been assisting banks and credit unions, since these institutions are now moving into those fields. Last year, 11 workshops were given to credit union and bank staff to acquaint them further with the operations of these new products. The LIF and LIRA were introduced in response to consumer interest and have proven to be quite popular. As of June 1995, 46 financial institutions in Manitoba were offering them to members and the public.

Turning to the Employment Standards division, Mr. Chairman, the Employment Standards Branch is one that has a heavy level of public inquiries since it deals with such fundamental matters as wages, vacation pay and hours of work. The branch has improved client service by introducing a quick resolution process to speed up resolution of less complex claims. Last year more than 400 claims were handled through this process resulting in resolution in nearly one-third less time.

The branch is working with the Electrical Contractors Association of Manitoba and the Construction Labour Relations Association to assess, promote, and ensure compliance with The Construction Industry Wages Act in that industry. This has involved a comprehensive review still in progress of all of Manitoba's electrical contractors with employers. It is evaluating the level of compliance with the wage schedules outlined in the act and a number of meetings with interested parties.

The Labour Adjustment unit has made good progress in its work to provide displaced workers with workforce adjustment services. The unit has been heavily involved in a worker adjustment committee which successfully negotiated the establishment of a storefront worker action centre in Winnipeg. The centre is staffed by a full-time employment coordinator. It provides employment counselling, resume

assistance, re-employment assistance, educational upgrading and workplace-based training.

The unit entered into 11 new labour-management committee agreements last year and continued with 18 others during the fiscal year. In total, the unit provided services to more than 2,200 affected workers. The unit also completed community-based and worker adjustment agreements in the single industry towns of Snow Lake and Flin Flon. Through these agreements more than 1,400 workers were assisted over a three-year period in such areas as re-employment, educational upgrading, retraining and relocation.

In the Worker Advisor office, Mr. Chairman, I am happy to note that several initiatives have resulted in enhanced level of service to clients. Given the sensitive nature of work, assisting clients of the Workers Compensation Board, the office has made a significant advance in reducing the waiting time. On average, personal contact with clients is made within two to four weeks of initial contact. Besides improving service to all clients of the office, this is important for making possible quicker identification of persons at risk and early intervention to assist clients when it is needed. In addition, the office is assisting the board in developing a protocol to deal with especially sensitive claims such as sexual assault claims.

This completes my opening statement, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Labour for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Transcona have any opening statements?

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I do.

That was quite an opening statement the minister made for his first time as a new minister here for the Department of Labour. Unfortunately, I do not have the experience and the staff available to me to make such extensive opening comments as well, but I will confine my comments to—

An Honourable Member: He did this himself.

Mr. Reid: Well, perhaps he did do some of this work himself, but I must compliment the staff the minister has here today that will be advising him on the efforts they have made on the minister's behalf, I am sure.

First, I would like to thank the minister in the very beginning of his opening comments for recognizing the services of J.R. (John) Matheson who was the Fire Commissioner for the province of Manitoba. Mr. Matheson was a resident of the community of Transcona, a lifelong resident of Transcona.

I had the opportunity to represent the community at his funeral services at the beginning of this month and it was a very sad day indeed for his family, for the community, and, I am sure for the Fire Commissioner's office as well as for the Department of Labour.

We would like to recognize his accomplishments and to extend our condolences to his wife Gail, his sons Terry and Lynn, I believe, and to his daughter Roberta. I think those were the children of the family, and to recognize John's accomplishments on behalf of the youth of our community too, because that is a very significant role that he played in our community.

* (1700)

He was the founder of the Transcona Railers Junior B hockey team and had a lifelong love of hockey and invested a great deal of time and effort into ensuring the success of that hockey team on behalf of the youth of that community. It was a very competitive team. I believe it did go to the national finals on one occasion, so it is a great credit to Mr. Matheson for his efforts.

Mr. Matheson was also, I believe, in the fire service since 1958 and, as the minister has indicated, I believe, served some five years as the Fire Commissioner, in acting or in full-time duties. So that was a great tribute to the individual for the accomplishments that he managed to achieve in his very short 59 years with us.

With respect to the Estimates, this is my first time in dealing specifically with the Department of Labour Estimates. For me, it is going to be a learning process. I know the Minister of Labour has some previous

experiences of which we will get into some detail perhaps through the course of these Estimates.

I have several questions with respect to the functions of various portions of the department relating to The Construction Industry Wages Act, the minimum wage employment standards, unfair labour practices that we sense may be taking place through some of the ongoing labour disputes, labour-management disputes that are taking place within the province, and some questions in a general way to educate myself on some aspects of the department itself and to bring myself up to speed on the full range of activities that the department provides for the business people and for the working people of the province of Manitoba.

So with those few comments, Mr. Chairperson, I will save my questions for the section by section.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Is it the will of the committee that the member for Inkster put some comments on the record?

Mr. Reid: I believe, Mr. Chairperson, that there is an ability for the member for Inkster to add comments at any points he likes. He is a member of this committee, as is any other MLA of the House, and he would have that opportunity to do so at any time.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: So be it.

Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce his staff present.

Mr. Toews: I have with me now the deputy minister, Mr. Tom Farrell; the assistant deputy minister, Mr. Tom Bleasdale; Mr. Jim Nykoluk and Mr. Jim Wood, all from my department.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We are now on item 1.(b)(1) on page 111 of the Estimates book and on page 21 of the yellow supplement book.

Item 1. Labour Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$266,300.

Mr. Reid: The minister referenced his staff. Unfortunately for myself, two, I am familiar with their work in the staff, and the other two are new to me. Perhaps the minister can give me some background on the two individuals, Mr. Nykoluk and Mr. Wood.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Nykoluk is the executive director of Management Services, and Mr. Jim Wood is the director of Financial Services.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for that information. In section 1.(b) of the Supplementary Estimates, Executive Support, there is a line showing—and I am going to deal, Mr. Chairperson, if it is all right, if it is the will of the committee to deal with those two sections together for the sake of expediency here, even though—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: You are talking about (b)(1) and (2)?

Mr. Reid: Right. There has been a change in the—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Is it the will of the committee to deal with both those sections at one time? [agreed]

Mr. Reid: There has been a change in the overall dollar expenditures, about some \$6,000, I believe. Can the minister explain, is that related directly to salary increases for merit purposes?

Mr. Toews: That simply reflects the negotiated increases. That does not reflect any merit increments—I am sorry—merit increments as well as the negotiated agreements.

Mr. Reid: I am unclear on this, then. Is there a negotiated increase? Government service employees, it is my understanding, just took a 10-day loss in days which have been commonly referred to as the Filmon

Fridays, seven of which are going to be taken this summer and three at the Christmas period. How is it that we have a wage increase for employees at this area?

Mr. Toews: That reflects the increments in each salary level that are negotiated. So the member is correct in his assessment of the collective agreement, but there still is movement within steps.

Mr. Reid: So then it is the range adjustments within those steps, like an AY2 that had certain levels and the same would apply to the employees in this department as well.

Mr. Toews: That is correct.

Mr. Reid: In the Other Expenditures, it is showing Other Operating expense. There has been a decrease there. Can you tell me what is covered under that heading, Other Operating?

Mr. Toews: Just a clarification. You indicated an increase or decrease?

Mr. Reid: Decrease.

Mr. Toews: I am advised that relates to the reduced travel costs.

Mr. Reid: I thank the minister for the information. Are there any vacancies within this area?

* (1710)

Mr. Toews: Just a clarification. Is that vacancies generally in the—

Mr. Reid: Well, just to assist the minister, quite often what I do in Estimates is—it has been my experience that there have been vacancies for jobs not filled in various sections of departments for which I have been the critic, and I will be asking as we go through the Estimates process where there are vacancies that are existing within each of the minister's subdepartments. So if the minister has information available, it may ease the process somewhat if he just has that information on one list.

Mr. Toews: In respect of the entire department, I can advise the honourable member that the Office of the Fire Commissioner has two fire service officers vacant, one in Thompson and the other in Swan River, and the competitions are to be held later this summer in respect to those two positions.

In respect of Workplace Safety and Health, there is one mines engineer, one safety and health inspector, one part-time health nurse. It is a .4 or .5 position. It is a little less than half time there.

In respect to the Manitoba Labour Board, there is one board clerk. Again, the competition is in progress. I am under the advice that all of these are in the process of being filled through competition.

Mr. Reid: I have no further questions on this section.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(b)(1) \$266,300.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I do have a couple of questions I was wanting to ask the minister, but first just to comment in general about the Department of Labour and to acknowledge and congratulate the member for his appointment as Minister of Labour. A couple of years back I used to be the critic of this particular area, so it always has been an interest on my part dealing with labour relations and trying to get an understanding of the department. Unfortunately, I did not have the portfolio that long, so I did not get as much in-depth information as I would have liked to have received, and once again, I am in a situation where I am just looking for some specific information.

To try to get a better understanding of the organization that makes up, if you will, or assists, I am looking in particular at the organizational—or the Schedule 2 on page 9. I am wanting to get again—because there is a number of boards that no doubt meet on a regular basis. Some of these might be ad hoc. I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of an opinion of the boards that are there. I am interested in a couple of them in particular, but just some sort of an opening remark on boards where there are appointments made from government. That would be boards and committees.

Mr. Toews: In respect of the boards, I would want to point out, first of all, that in many respects there is one board that is quite different from the other boards. That is the Manitoba Labour Board, and the chairperson of that board is Mr. John Korpesho.

The Manitoba Labour Board is a quasi-judicial board and makes its judicial decisions independent of government. It is based essentially on, or finds its jurisdiction in, the Manitoba Labour Relations Act and derives its powers through the Manitoba Labour Relations Act. If one goes across Canada, one will see boards of a very similar nature, again created through legislation with the primary purpose to foster good collective bargaining relationships between employees represented by unions on the one hand and employers on the other.

The basic principles on which those boards operate are fairly standard across Canada, but of course for each board decisions are affected by the specific legislation that governs them. The present act under which the Manitoba Labour Board operates was extensively amended in 1985 and was given many modern powers at that time to bring it in line with many of the other boards in Canada. The model, as I understand it—and I had the good fortune to be the lawyer for the Department of Labour and the Manitoba Labour Board at that time—was based on the Ontario Labour Relations Act, and again that act was very progressive and the government of the day decided to incorporate many of those concepts and ideas in order to streamline the decision-making process of the board.

The Manitoba Labour Board is a tripartite board which has an equal number of members representative of the views of employers and representative of the views of employees. It is very important to note that these are not nominees of employers or nominees of employees when they sit as a board, but in fact are representative of the general background of employers or employees. Many of these come from either a management background or a union background.

There is a process by which the management representatives, if I can use that shortened version, are recommended to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council and the employee representatives are recommended by

the certain organizations as well for appointment by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. The Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council appoints a chair, whom I mentioned is Mr. Korpesho, and I believe presently there are three or four vice-chairs.

* (1720)

It is also very important to note that while the Manitoba Labour Board exercises powers under The Labour Relations Act, it also exercises powers under other acts, for example, The Employment Standards Act. Essentially, it is not sitting as the Labour Board in that situation; it is in effect sitting as the payment of wages appeal board. So an order, let us say, that is made by the director of employment standards will go from the director of employment standards to the Manitoba Labour Board sitting essentially as the payment of wages appeal board. I believe, again, that designation is by Order-in-Council.

In the context of The Payment of Wages Act, only one member need sit as opposed to the tripartite boards that sit on The Labour Relations Act matters. Also, it would be important to note that it acts as the appeal board under The Workplace Safety and Health Act. Therefore, for example, when a safety and health officer goes out, makes an order, and an employer or an employee disagrees with the order that is made, that order is appealed, first of all I believe the step is, to the director of Workplace Safety and Health and then if there is still dissatisfaction with the order made by the director, it goes to the Labour Board sitting as the appeal board under that particular act.

So there are various other acts that it administers: The Construction Industry Wages Act, The Workplace Safety and Health Act of course I have indicated, The Employment Standards Act, The Vacations with Pay Act. So the jurisdiction, what I should probably say in summary, is a statutory jurisdiction, but is what is known as an inferior court as opposed to a court of superior jurisdiction. It is certainly not inferior in the sense of the service it provides to Manitobans, but in the sense that its jurisdiction is statutorily based.

Some of the other boards—I had the good pleasure of meeting with the Advisory Council on Workplace

Safety and Health just yesterday. It has been quite a task getting to meet all of the boards and board members, and I have been trying to do that as quickly as possible. I am not making any excuses here. I am certainly responsible for the boards and for the department.

So sometimes I may not be quite as familiar with all of these, but I had the good fortune to meet yesterday with the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health. This particular council advises and makes recommendations to the minister concerning Workplace Safety and Health issues generally, the protection of workers in specific workplace situations, the appointment of consultants and advisers to the minister, and essentially any other matter relating to Workplace Safety and Health in respect of which the minister seeks the opinion of the council.

The council plays a key role in the development of workplace legislation and regulations. Again, it has a representation from workers, if I can use that, and employers. So there will be management people and there will be representatives of unions on that very important council.

Some of the functions of the boards are more straightforward and, again, like the advisory council, does not perform judicial functions. It more performs advisory functions or assists in the administration of an act. For example, in that category I would place the Building Standards Board, the Power Engineers Advisory Board, the Elevator Board, the Gas Advisory Committee, again, making recommendations based on the national gas code, trade examination boards. These are boards that are set up to examine and license applicants to practise in the trades of power engineer, electrician, gas fitter and oil burner installation or repair person.

There is a very, very important board that I should not overlook, and I am trying to give you a quick summary of all these boards for your information. The very important board is the Labour Management Review Committee—maybe I should say committee. Again, this committee is comprised of representatives of business and labour, and this provides a forum for discussion of labour and management issues. The

mandate of this particular committee is to promote a harmonious labour relations climate and to foster effective labour-management co-operation in support of economic stability and social well-being of Manitobans.

I know that is a tall order, but this is a board that has been in this province since perhaps 1964. I think it is unique to Manitoba, and I believe its first chair was Professor Woods, who, of course, wrote many reports, was very important in the development of modernization of labour relations acts across Canada.

So we have had the benefit of this committee's expertise in advising the government. You know, I have talked to many groups in the last little while and asking for their input and for their impressions as to how The Labour Relations Act and the committees are running, and I find that many people are very, very satisfied with the Labour Board, without saying that no changes are required.

But, generally speaking, Manitoba's labour stability I think is in part due to the importance of not only our Labour Relations Act, which I find to be a very good act, and also the Labour Management Review Committee. This has consistently given ministers good balanced advice, whereas in other provinces I think sometimes there is a tendency for the pendulum to swing to one end or the other, and that I think, with all due respect to people of a different view, has created a stable economic basis in Manitoba so that at least people looking to invest in Manitoba say, yes, this regime has been here for quite a while. There is input by management, input by workers into how the act should be developed or changed and therefore they can feel comfortable in terms of investing in Manitoba and making Manitoba a more prosperous province.

The construction industry wages boards, there are essentially three of these boards, and there is a Rural Building Construction Wages Board, the Heavy Construction Wages Board and the Greater Winnipeg Building Construction Wages Board. Again, these boards recommend to the minister minimum wage rates and hours of work for the construction industry. This board, as many of the boards are, is chaired by Mr. Wally Fox-Decent. Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, the

government is truly blessed with his talents by having him also act in the Labour Management Review Committee and also, I believe, the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health.

An Honourable Member: Are we training anybody with him?

Mr. Toews: Well, the honourable member asks if we are training anyone else, and hopefully by this process here, we are training the members of the opposition, and perhaps one day they too can step into a position as important as that one.

* (1730)

In any event, the construction industry wages boards deal with various schedules under the act which create different wage scales for construction industry workers in our province.

I would like to point out very briefly, it is a very, very difficult act to administer. I noted that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) had indicated that The Construction Industry Wages Act was on his list to talk about or some of the boards, and I do not want to pre-empt anything being said there, but it is a very, very difficult act to administer.

This act has the particular characteristics of many people on what is traditionally seen as the same side of the fence, disagreeing about. So you will get employers disagreeing about whether we should have it or not. We will have union leaders disagreeing as to whether we should have it or not.

There are many philosophical arguments we can have, and I am sure, as in previous governments or previous ministers—and certainly this minister has a concern that we have to take steps to deal with this particular act. I certainly look forward to working with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) in seeing if we can do something to rationalize, perhaps, the administration of that act.

Mr. Lamoureux: One of the primary reasons why I asked for that sort of a debriefing, if you like, is

because when I go through different organizational charts from different departments, it seems that this particular department—you know, there are some, like the Department of Health, that would have more—but this one tends to have quite a few different boards or committees, advisory groups and so forth. I think that can be a very positive thing, depending on exactly what it is the nature and the missions of these boards and advisory committees, if you like.

I am very much interested—here we have these boards, and I know that there has been a great deal of discussion. For example, I will take the Minimum Wage Board, in terms of why it is that there was no discussion about increasing the minimum wage or how often boards will in fact meet. I can recall a couple of years ago, I believe—and I could be corrected on this—but I thought it was the Building Standards Board that was, for example, responsible for the fire codes. When the national government comes down with some fire code restrictions or new applications with respect to fire codes, I believe it is that particular committee that is responsible for reviewing, assisting and implementing and so forth, and a couple of years ago, there was a question mark in terms of why it is that the province of Manitoba seemed to be lagging behind.

We have a great number of vehicles to provide input and advice to the ministry. I am curious as to how often, if you like, these boards would actually meet. I do not necessarily expect to have a detailed answer right now because there is a finite amount of time—

An Honourable Member: There is also a section in the book for it.

Mr. Lamoureux: There are also different sections in the book that you could also raise questions with respect to this particular issue, but I do believe that it would be beneficial if the minister could get back, at some point in time, with reference to that.

The question that I was wanting to ask for today's purposes is again, the appointments. You make reference to the fact that the Manitoba Labour Board is an appointment through the L.G.'s office. How does the minister go about filling or making these recommendations, in not only that particular board but

the other boards? Are there mandatory positions in some of the cases with the boards, from union reps and management reps? How is that process put into place?

I remember quite well the debates on the final offer selection, and I am sure the minister himself would be familiar with some of those debates that occurred. Labour can be very divisive, along with management, on legislative proposals. That is why I think it is important that boards and advisory groups that are established through this particular ministry do not only appear, but in real terms are working for the common good of the province and that would also be for the worker and the employer. Ultimately, I would argue, for example, no one benefits from a strike, and to promote harmony from within is important and, in order to do that, I think that the appointments that are made have to reflect that.

I would ask for the minister just to comment more specifically on his role, or the government's role on appointments versus those that would be mandatory, like MFL is entitled to these type of positions. I am a bit at a loss with respect to—

Mr. Toews: In some of these boards, as the member for Inkster has pointed out, there has been a protocol established with the Chamber of Commerce on the one hand and the Manitoba Federation of Labour on the other hand. That would be the Manitoba Labour Board. On some of the other boards there is no such protocol, but I would point out that especially, let us deal with the technical kinds of boards, there is a natural limitation.

You cannot just appoint anybody to these boards, especially where you are dealing with matters of public safety. So, even where there is a measure of discretion in the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council in respect of appointing these members, they have to be mindful of the professional qualifications that these board members must have. To do otherwise would be to simply undermine the effectiveness of these boards.

Perhaps in other departments where general social policies are discussed, in those types of boards it is more important, I guess, to have a broad cross section of people who can input into that decision making of

those particular boards, but where you have power engineers advisory boards, it does not make much sense to load, if I could say, that board with people who know nothing about the area or who have no technical kind of background.

So, from time to time, there will be nontechnical people. That is clear, but the main mission of that board must be accomplished and that can only be accomplished through the appropriate appointment of board members. So technical qualifications play a great part in the appointment of some of these boards, and many of them are that way.

The Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health is a broad cross section of labour interests, management interests, professional interests and again many of these people are recommended by specific organizations, let us say the Mining Association or the Manitoba Federation of Labour. Again, they will bring forward a list or recommend a few appointments, and, from that, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council makes the choice and determines who in fact will sit on that board.

So there was another point that the member raised which I think we have to also be very careful of. You look at all of these boards and you say, there are a lot of boards there. What I think we have to do is ensure that these boards are in fact performing a useful function. In my brief time as minister, but more so as my time as a lawyer for the Department of Labour, for the Manitoba Labour Board, for Workplace Safety and Health, for Workers Advisors, I was always impressed that the people working there had a specific, clear mandate. They knew why they were there, and I guess sometimes the frustration level is not that the boards are not sitting, it is that perhaps sometimes the board's recommendations are for one reason or another not followed through.

And again that is government prerogative in terms of developing policy. Now I must say that in the types of boards that we have, again the advice that has been given consistently has been very, very important, very many important reports have been brought forward and, because of the sometimes explosive nature of labour relations, you do not want to just make decisions

in terms of amending The Labour Relations Act. Even if a committee says, this is the way we should go, it is sometimes important for staff to do further research into that area to bring information to these boards to say that perhaps such and such a recommendation would not be the best way to proceed.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair).

But I think without exception the boards that you see in this structure here are membered by people who have a clear sense of what their purpose is. They are by and large professionals or technical people of one sort or another and bring the government of Manitoba and the people of Manitoba an incredibly large wealth of information and expertise that we then try to put into regulations or into legislation.

* (1740)

Mr. Lamoureux: I have found in the past that this can be a very politically divisive department in terms of opinions that come across the table, and picking up on the point, if you take a look at two boards, the Minimum Wage Board for example, and it seems to be more politically driven in terms of what minimum wage is going to be than it is in terms of something coming from recommendations from the Minimum Wage Board. I would be interested for example to know what would have then been the recommendation from the Minimum Wage Board over the years, in particular the years in which there was no increase.

Point of Order

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I believe we agreed at the beginning of this Estimates process that we were going through the Estimates for the Department of Labour on a section-by-section basis. Now we have the member for Inkster referring to specific sections which we have yet to arrive at being dealt with at this point in time.

I ask that you call the member for Inkster to order until such time as he has the opportunity when we arrive at the section dealing with the minimum wages act.

Mr. Lamoureux: On the same point of order, just to alleviate the concerns of the member for Transcona, if he looks through the Executive Support and reads Objectives and Activity Identification and then reads Hansard in terms of types of questions that I have asked, I am not necessarily asking for specific breakdowns. What we are talking about is the relationship between the boards and the Minister of Labour, which I believe is most appropriate to be asking at this particular line. Where else would you ask questions about the organizational chart in its relationship with the department?

Mr. Reid: Minister's Salary.

Mr. Lamoureux: The member for Transcona suggests Minister's Salary. At that time, the minister does not have the support staff that would have some of the background information that he might require.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): As we are dealing with the Executive Support, the question should be in the Salaries and Employee Benefits for Other Expenditures. I would ask that questions be kept within that line.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I am not sure. Are you saying that I cannot ask questions in regard to the organizational chart?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): I think the questions should be dealing directly with Executive Support, Salaries and Employee Benefits and Other Expenditures, and I feel that you should deal with your issue under Minister's Salary.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Chairperson, I would disagree, and I guess that means we would be challenging the Chair. I look at it, and we are on item 1.(b). Is that correct?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Under 1.(b) Executive Support, the Objectives are to develop, implement and oversee departmental policies and programs which are designed to attain, over the long term, the goals set out in the department's role and mission statement.

I suggest that we take a look at the mission statement. Not having it at hand, I am sure you will find that it is fairly consistent with the line of questioning that I am asking. Under Activity Identification: Advises the minister on matters relating to labour. Provides overall policy direction for the department programs. I do not want to read verbatim the exact line.

If we take a look at what you are suggestion is in terms of asking specifically questions regarding to the money lines, I think that we would likely find that all of the different questions and answers that have been put forward, at least 50 percent of them, in all the other lines of Estimates would have been in all likelihood ruled out of order. I would like to be able to continue just asking some questions with respect to the organization chart and not have to challenge the Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): We gave you some latitude. You have already said you are going to challenge the Chair and I will follow it through.

Is the member for Inkster challenging the ruling of the Chair?

Mr. Lamoureux: At this point, Mr. Chairperson, I would seek clarification. Am I not right in what I just finished articulating?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Is the member for Inkster challenging the ruling from the Chair?

Mr. Lamoureux: If the ruling forbids me to ask these questions, Mr. Chairperson, then I am definitely challenging the ruling of the Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Do you have a second member to support this challenge?

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, at this point in time there is not a second member that would—unless you want to canvass the room and see if there is a second member that would want to challenge the ruling of the Chair. Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, I would then ask what specific type of questions I can ask, even though I personally oppose the ruling of this particular Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Although you have some latitude in discussing this, we feel that it has been given to you and we suggest that it come up under Minister's Salary.

Mr. Lamoureux: With respect to what it is that you are saying, Mr. Chairperson, I am going to forego questions with respect to the organizational chart. I do find, however, that it is most unfortunate.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: I would ask the minister then, under Transportation on line 11.1(b) if you could give some sort of indication or some sort of a further breakdown on that particular line.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Toews: In respect of transportation, that essentially deals with airline flights and motor vehicles and those types of expenses, all expended on government business.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess I feel somewhat limited in the types of questions that I can ask, not necessarily being able to ask questions which I have the right to ask on this particular line, and there are questions that I have with respect to the policy direction of the department in its programs. Can I ask questions regarding that?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Yes, the member for Inkster may.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister then indicate what sorts of programs that he is looking at in terms of additional or any new programs that are coming up dealing in particular with apprenticeship or training, or does he believe that the department has a role to play in that area?

Mr. Toews: It is my understanding that apprenticeship and training has been moved over to the Department of Education, and so my involvement in that area would be somewhat limited, more in terms of issuing certificates to people applying for various licences, power engineer licences and the like. And, of course,

the department still continues to issue those types of licences. But it was felt by government that it would be more consistent with putting those types of programs into the Education department.

* (1750)

Mr. Lamoureux: So, currently, certification is virtually what the Department of Labour does do on different professions that are out there.

I am wondering if you can give some sort of indication about, let us say, immigrants that would come to the province and would say, look, I have the training and background in this particular area, and I would like to be able to practise my profession, and, for example, we will use the profession of engineering. Is that, then, something in which the department, this department would be entertaining?

Mr. Toews: Yes, that is something that the Department of Education would be dealing with rather than the Department of Labour. I think you summarized it very well when you said the department, in many of these areas, acts as a certifier of professions or tradespeople.

Mr. Lamoureux: If you are the certifying body, ultimately, are there appeals and, again, I want to use the specific example. Someone that believes that they have the accreditation to be able to enter—

Point of Order

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I believe that the questioning that the member for Inkster is raising would fall more directly under the subsection 2.(b) Mechanical and Engineering, dealing with the examination, licensing and certifying of certain types and classes of tradespeople. I believe that is where that discussion would more likely apply, and I ask you to call him to order and wait his turn until we have arrived at that section to ask that question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I would just like to point out to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that he can ask questions as a more general policy in this area, but in specifics he should

wait till the line, and the line was indeed pointed out by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I am somewhat confused in terms of the line of questioning and the approach that is being used from the member for Transcona, being somewhat sensitive possibly with respect to earlier remarks that he has made. Asking whether or not immigrants, in particular, that come to Canada that have skills that they have acquired and that were possibly certified to do in other areas and what this particular department is doing with respect to an acknowledgement of those skills or the certificates that they would have acquired from foreign lands, I do believe is a general policy question, and I would ask the minister to comment on that.

Point of Order

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I am going to have to ask you then to rule on whether or not the question that has just been put by the member for Inkster is indeed a general question relating to the certification of new immigrants to the country. I have already indicated what is my understanding of where that would more likely apply in the section of the Estimates for the Department of Labour, which is Mechanical and Engineering 2.(b), page 26 of the Supplementary Estimates. If you look under the Objectives, second paragraph: to examine and license or certify certain types and classes of tradespeople.

I believe that would be the more applicable section on which this member can raise his general questions relating to this topic, and I ask you once again to call him to order.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I think that all members of the committee know that we could go on for a considerable length of time riding the fine line of policy or getting down to particulars within a certain line. We all know that we could do this.

I would ask for a little bit of understanding from both members, and I think there has been. I would just ask for a little bit more understanding, perhaps to let the

minister answer this question, and perhaps then we can get on with line by line. Would that be agreeable to the member for Inkster?

Mr. Lamoureux: I believe that there is a point to be made, and I will attempt to make that point and then will be prepared to pass the line.

I find that it is indeed unfortunate in the seven years of Estimates that I have gone through that we have a member from the opposition trying to dictate in terms of what it is that I am entitled to ask, even denying an opportunity, a courteous opportunity, to be able to say a few words. It was not necessarily my purpose—

Point of Order

Mr. Reid: I think that the member for Inkster is indicating that I have an ulterior motive in the comments that I have made and the points of order I made, and I have at no time indicated to the member for Inkster that I want to limit his ability to ask any questions.

All I ask is that we do it in the appropriate section that the Supplementary Estimates provide for and that he will have that ample opportunity to ask those questions that are on his mind.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I do not believe that the honourable member for Transcona had a point of order. I would once again, though, ask the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to finish his comments or to make them reasonably short, so that we can get on with the line by line, and at different points throughout the Estimates of Labour, the member for Inkster will be able to ask any and all questions, specific questions, that he would like.

I would like to point out to all members of the committee that the more we speak to general policy or particular questions, and we want to almost, I guess you could say, play with these words, the less time we are going to have within the Estimates of the Ministry of Labour.

I would like to point out that we do not have too many hours left in Estimates. I would ask that the

member for Inkster complete his comments, and perhaps, then, we can move on, and we will ask the minister to make a short comment on the general policy part of your question or comments.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, as I was saying, any question that could possibly be asked within the Executive Support area could also be posed in any of the following pages after page 20, no doubt, and one could get into great detail through that. It has been at least the practice that I have seen in the past to allow for a bit more of asking of policy, general policy questions, and understanding the sensitivity of the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), I am prepared to pass the line at this point.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1. Labour Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$266,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$69,700—pass.

The time is now 6 p.m. Committee rise.

HOUSING

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply, sitting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Housing. When the committee last met, it had been pursuing a general discussion, as had been previously agreed, on the Estimates of the Department of Housing on pages 93 to 96 of the main Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I do not think we will pass. We will just give ourselves a chance to get ready here, and wait for the minister's staff.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Take your time.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, the issue that we were dealing with yesterday when we adjourned had to do with the ability to repair and maintain public housing

stock in the face of the declining resources from the federal government. I had been referring to policy from Ontario that recommended that in all new residential housing developments or subdivisions there should be 25 percent of the units affordable. They do not say what that means, if that is in fact subsidized or social housing, but I guess something like this would be becoming increasingly impossible.

I am wanting to have the minister explain in more detail what he has done, what research has been done in the department, to support the call for not going in this direction of decreasing the support for social housing across the country.

*(1640)

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Mr. Chairperson, the member is right in her assumption of what is happening with the housing stock and the availability of funding and the direction that has been implemented. It should be pointed out, this is all relatively new in a time frame that has come about since 1994 in which the federal government has indicated their positioning regarding the pulling out of the monies for new housing stock here in Canada.

So the evaluation that we are doing within the department is still lobbying in a quite strenuous manner with the federal government to try to recognize the importance, the implications of this sudden withdrawal of funding and to try to see whether there is a redirection or reallocation or, as they have indicated, that there are savings involved that they are instituting somewhere through the department and that these savings are transferred back to the provinces or to the areas of concern.

It is an excellent time for us to take this type of message forth because of the fact that there is a Housing ministers' meeting coming up in St. John's and that it will give us an excellent ability to talk directly with the federal government and convey our concerns about what may be happening and how we should be proceeding with this.

Ms. Cerilli: Maybe I was not clear enough in my question. I was referencing a policy from Ontario that

recommended 25 percent of all new residential subdivisions were to be for low-cost or affordable housing. I also have in front of me another document that I am going to reference.

What I want to find out before I do that is: What is this government department doing in terms of research to prepare a case to take to the meeting of the Housing ministers across the country to make the case for social housing with the federal government, to not abandon this important program for low-income Canadians and Manitobans?

I am wanting to know what has been prepared by the department to show that this is a valuable and important program to be funded by the two levels of government.

Mr. Reimer: I have been informed that there have been discussions, and they are ongoing discussions, on the deputy ministers' level in regard to what the member for Radisson is alluding to. The discussion paper, from what I understand, is being initiated through the federal government and the Newfoundland minister, because Newfoundland is acting as the host for the conference that is coming up in early July. I would suspect that there would be some sort of indication coming out of that meeting as to the study that the member for Radisson is alluding to.

Ms. Cerilli: So the preparations are at the deputy minister level. Is there no research going on in the department to look at the advantages of social housing for the province?

Mr. Reimer: I think there is the existing commitment by the department for social housing. Part of the mandate within the Department of Housing is recognizing the need for social housing. The fact of allocation of fundings and where the fundings would come forth are more of a primary importance. The recognition of social housing as part of this government's mandate is there.

Ms. Cerilli: I think the minister has said before that there is a commitment. I guess what I am looking for is a rationale so that we could go forward to the Liberal government federally and say, what you are doing is

going to make life worse for low-income Canadians. I think that case can be made well for social housing.

I will refer to a paper that I received recently. It was presented to the social security review committee of the federal government, the standing committee on Human Resources Development. It was prepared by the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, and it was a response to the review that was headed up by Mr. Axworthy. It makes a very strong case for social housing. I am wondering, first of all, if the minister and the department are familiar with this document.

Mr. Reimer: From my indication, the department has been made aware of the document. To the best of my knowledge, I have not had the document come across my desk as yet.

Ms. Cerilli: I would be happy to share it with the minister later on. One of the things that it looks at, though, is money spent on housing through social assistance programs and if it is providing adequate housing. It shows clearly that those on social allowance that are in public housing are much better off than people who are using their social allowance to pay for private accommodations.

I will quote directly from the report. It says, a survey of over 4,300 dwellings in the older inner city area of Winnipeg, it was determined that over 70 percent of households on welfare lived in an accommodation needing repair; 21 percent needed major repair and 50 percent needed minor repair. Then it goes on to speak specifically about the comparison for households living in social housing experienced a better overall living environment than households on social assistance living in private rental accommodation. Social housing is credited with providing a better overall living environment and greater residential satisfaction. The following comments from a number of studies highlight the additional benefits provided by social housing.

* (1650)

This is the kind of thing that I think would be very useful to us as we are trying to convince the federal government that it should not be doing what it is doing

in abandoning its responsibility for providing for social housing. So this was why I was asking the minister what kind of materials like this are being prepared by the province in preparation for the cross-Canada Housing ministers' meeting.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairman, the member has brought forth some excellent suggestions through the paper that she is referring to, and I would think that in preparing a case scenario to be presented to the federal government with this conference, any type of additional help or any type of ammunition—if you want to call it—to strengthen our case and to show that our concerns are genuine in trying to evaluate the strength and the importance of the social housing that we have committed ourselves to, not only as a government but as a department, is of use.

I can point out to the member that the previous minister in the portfolio was of the same mind and she sent a very strong letter to Minister Dingwall, outlining our position when the announcement was made regarding the funding. I am sure we can make that letter available to the member if she would like that.

Ms. Cerilli: I would appreciate that and I would be happy, as the minister suggested, looking at how we can work together to make the case for social housing in Manitoba and across the country. This report has very specific benefits identified in the area of physical design and layout which reflected more sensitivity on the part of housing for the special needs of families. It says that social housing units were less crowded than private accommodation, there was better security, the social housing projects were better managed and there was a security of tenure. So these are all things that I think we want to see happening in communities, particularly for low-income families.

When I was dealing with the Estimates of the Minister responsible for Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst), which has the Residential Tenancies division, we spent quite a bit of time dealing with the issues facing low-income renters and the difficulty they are having. One of the big issues is the difficulty with having such a high percentage of the income of low-income people going towards housing

accommodation and that is the area I want to get into now.

My concern is, although we have a good report that says there is a real positive case to be made for social housing, my concern—and I have raised this before with the previous minister—is that that whole purpose of ensuring that low-income people are not spending upwards of 50 percent of their income on housing is now starting to occur in social housing, so we are starting to lose some of that benefit. I know that can be blamed on what is happening at the federal level and their policy to move towards 30 percent of the rent geared to income, but one of my concerns is that, particularly in two areas for people on social allowance, there has to be a better system to connect social allowance with public housing.

One of the things I want to ask the minister is, if he is aware of the number of tenants that are in public housing. Are we able to ascertain the numbers of those people who are social allowance recipients in the province?

Mr. Reimer: I could not help but recognize when the member was mentioning about 50 percent for housing, and then she further alluded to the 27 percent of RGI income, that no one in our public housing pays more than 27 percent. For the bachelor suites, in fact, and in some remote areas, it is 25 percent.

In regard to the percentages of people who are on social assistance in Manitoba Housing, in Winnipeg, it is upwards between 65 percent and 70 percent of the occupants, and in the rural areas, it is between 35 percent and 40 percent of the occupants in the housing.

Ms. Cerilli: Just following through with this from this report then, there are still concerns that, as we have just been discussing for the last hour or so in these Estimates, the maintenance and the standard for the housing for these recipients, even if they are on social housing, it is below that for people, obviously, who do not have such a low income.

I am just trying to decide. There are a number of issues I want to raise in respect to this, so I am just

trying to organize my thoughts so I can deal with each one in some sequence.

I guess just to conclude on the issue then of maintenance of social housing for these low-income renters, I will quote from the previous Minister of Housing back in '92. He said, there is not enough money in Manitoba to carry on a program of any significance at all without having CMHC as a funding partner no matter how limited they restrict their resources.

To conclude this issue then of whether the government is keeping up with maintaining social housing in the province, I would ask the minister to give his assessment of that. Are we keeping up with maintaining and repairing the social housing stock in the province considering the serious incidents we have had recently?

I know in my own constituency there is public housing that has flooding problems because of cracked basements. These are very serious expensive repairs to make considering what we were saying the other day about not wanting the repairs to get so far along that it is going to be so expensive to repair them that it is going to be outside the chance of a cost-effective program.

So I want the minister to be able to assure us that we are going to be able to ensure that people living in social housing are going to be living in safe, decent and affordable housing.

Mr. Reimer: Before I answer the member's question, I mentioned briefly that there was a letter sent by my former predecessor in the department to Honourable David Dingwall, in fact, very recently on March 20, and I will just pass these across to the member and the other member from—

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Tabling?

Mr. Reimer: Okay, they are being tabled then.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister for that information. The Clerk will copy and distribute.

* (1700)

Mr. Reimer: To continue answering the question that the member was asking me regarding the commitment to Manitoba Housing, I can tell the member that the commitment has been and will continue to be that Manitoba recognizes there is a strong need for social housing and its components in the structure of Manitoba. The funding allocation and the continual maintenance are naturally on an ongoing basis. It should be pointed out there is a large investment that the government is involved with, a large capital investment of the housing stock that is in the existing areas.

So there is an awareness and a conscious effort being put forth to protect that stock in a manner that warrants regular inspection. It warrants a maintenance program that is on a continual basis. It warrants the upkeep and the upgrading from time to time as necessary in the various components of the housing stock so the recognition that there is a large capital government investment and to keep that up into a level of affordable housing is on a continual basis, an ongoing basis within the department, so there are regular maintenance inspections that are carried out.

There is an evaluation of where capital costs have to be incurred where we are talking about possibly roof repairs or something of a major structure. These things are put into the budget and if there is an emergency the repairs are put into place. So it is an ongoing, and it is a departmental function that is of a certain amount of priority.

Ms. Cerilli: I will ask a more specific question then, because I appreciate that there is a recognition that this is a huge investment. Obviously it is, that we have had public housing in Manitoba for a number of decades.

My question, though, is, what is the system for deciding how the repair and maintenance is going to be scheduled? Are there criteria, particularly for spending of the \$14-million capital budget for repairs that is in this year? Would the minister explain the criteria and how that scheduling is done so that we can find out which housing projects are scheduled for repairs over the next few years?

Mr. Reimer: What has been outlined is that the department works on sort of a three- to five-year plan regarding the vision of where the existing stock is and where the emphasis should be going. It is annually updated, the plan, so that there is an awareness of where the acute problems are and the direction funding is going in that way. I should point out, too, that one of the primary functions and the first consideration is the health and safety of the tenants. That becomes the primary function. In that way, that would be an overriding first priority of any type of project in its maintenance or repair or upkeep in the evaluation.

Ms. Cerilli: Could the minister provide me with the criteria for how that three-year plan is developed, and what the three-year plan is that we are working on right now for Manitoba?

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairman, in looking at when we talk about a three-year plan, usually when the department looks at initiating something of a major area, they look at a certain housing project or a certain area, and they make the evaluation that because of the age of that complex, that within three years we have to budget a new roofing type of scenario for all the roofs in that area. Is that the right word, roofs? I do not know, something like that—or new doors or windows, things of that nature, so those are what we would call on a large scale.

On a yearly basis, we look at, as was mentioned, health and safety. Also, there is the evaluation of lighting. There is the approach to the best utilization of where the priorities are within the parameters of that particular complex. So those are going on, on a yearly basis. There is a yearly inspection of all the units, and then from there, it is built into the model of priorities of what is needed and what goes into sort of a long-range approach for replacement.

Ms. Cerilli: The minister has listed some criteria. Is there a report that has been done on the status of social housing? Has there ever been publicly made available the criteria for allocating the dollars for repair and maintenance?

Mr. Reimer: I would think that because of the aging of complexes from—for example, there is social housing

that came into being shortly after the Second World War, in the mid-40s, compared to housing that came on stream and is still coming on stream because of the commitments that evolved from the funding that was still allocated from 1994. There are still units that are coming on stream which are brand new. So they would fall into a different category of inspection and evaluation.

There is a standard criterion in the sense that everyone is yearly inspected, but the overall criteria of maintenance can vary from place to place, from rural to urban, and all the variables that would come into being are hard to standardize into a one-shot and one area of evaluation because of the fact that at a lot of the places, the incidence of repair may be a lot higher than what is available for the upkeep of the housing. So it is brought forth and the MHA board has an opportunity to look at the scheduling of it and has input at that time, too.

* (1710)

Ms. Cerilli: I do not want to spend too much time on this specific question, but I think it is important. I am sure the minister can see that there is a potential here for accusations of pork barrelling, but the challenge is to balance all those variables or make decisions with respect to all those variables in terms of rural versus urban, roofs versus basements, you know. That is what I am trying to determine, is how the department decides what to do with its resources each year.

We have a situation with subsidized housing on Flora Place, and I do not think we want to see that happen with very many other areas, where it is getting so deteriorated that I think there is a concern that the province is going to walk away from it and they are just waiting for people to move out. I do not want to see that become a trend or a policy. So I guess one of the other questions I could ask is, in these repairs, does the government ever have to spend the cost of replacement? Are we often spending the amount of money in repairs as it would cost to replace?

Mr. Reimer: I imagine historically, if we looked at some of the complexes, the amount of money that we have put into the repair and upkeep on some structures,

we could have bought and sold them two or three times maybe, with the total amount of monies that maybe have gone in there historically over the years over time.

The member mentioned certain areas. I guess the spending of monies in those areas is always of a concern, but it should be pointed out, as I mentioned before, that safety and security are always the primary decision making in the evaluation of the housing complexes. The allocation of funds on that area is there for that particular area, so those would be some of the primary areas of decision making and not so much preferentials in other areas, delicately putting it.

Ms. Cerilli: I would appreciate being directed to any kind of document that would assure me that the criteria are there to put safety and security ahead of other issues or other ways of making decisions. I am not convinced of that. I have just been looking at the government of Manitoba's housing program strategic assessment that was done back in '88 by Peat Marwick consulting group. I would love to say that I have read this, but I have not as yet. Maybe this is my summertime beach reading. I am wondering if this has a recommendation for that kind of criteria, or if it does, in fact, review criteria for repairs of the housing stock in the province? [interjection]

Mr. Reimer: Yes, excuse me, it was pointed out that it may be beach reading for other people, too, but it is eight years old. At that time, the report that was generated was with the existing funding that was available through the federal government for new housing, and the report would be very involved with that type of venue. Right now, as we are faced with the fact of no funding, the report may be a bit dated as to its direction and recommendations.

Ms. Cerilli: So that report is not providing the direction for the department in this area or other areas.

Mr. Reimer: Being six or seven or eight years old, to jog the memory of my department at this particular time, they cannot remember some of the recommendations of it.

Ms. Cerilli: I will not wander down that path right now.

Just to finish up on this area then, I am wondering if we are losing social housing. I referenced Flora Place. The minister confirmed the other day that we have not had any new housing designated or allocated over the last two years, since 1994.

So are we losing social housing in the province? I remember I wrote a letter to the previous minister asking if there were plans to sell off any public housing properties. I was particularly concerned about single-family units, but I am wondering if we are now at a steady state, or if we are already, because of deterioration or sale, losing public housing units.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, I guess what could be pointed out to the member is that the greatest activity of selling off, as was related by the member which is very small, in fact, some of the public housing has been in the rural area, where there has been a recognition of no demand for it, where there has been a high vacancy and chronic vacancy, and to a degree, I guess, even vandalism has crept in and has made the units just not that attractive because of the location.

So there has been some selling off in the rural area mainly. I understand that there was some sell-off in the Brooklands area, I believe, that was also alluded to, but those are the areas that have warranted action.

Ms. Cerilli: So I do not have to worry about this government, or I do not know if this government feels that the federal Liberal government is using this as a way of rationalizing its stepping away from a commitment to social housing.

I also see from the report I referenced earlier by Peat Marwick that there was a section on expanding the role for the private sector, and there is a comment that a number of the housing initiatives, expenditures currently undertaken by the department, could now be undertaken by the private sector without significant deleterious social impacts and at considerable cost saving to government. The minister has also already said that this report is not necessarily directing the department.

I am wondering if he would like to comment on the idea that this is a chance or a way that the federal

government and this government could be moving away from social housing because of not being able to keep up with the repairs.

Mr. Reimer: I think I alluded to it a little earlier that there is still new housing that is coming on stream. This is housing that was committed from fundings that were still in place back in 1994. So there is still a trickling-down effect of some new housing still coming into the market, so that there is still that type of slow growth or small growth.

I should point out that one of the areas when we talked or alluded to in the private sector is through the use of rental supplements that can be made available to the private developer, private landlords, if you want to call it, and their housing complexes. So there is that type of availability of accommodation that can be made available through rental supplements also.

* (1720)

The member is correct when she alludes to the fact of the federal government in its direction of funding. They have not, to the best of my knowledge, come out in a direct manner and said that they are not going to be involved with social housing to any degree or cut back totally in a housing degree.

In fact, the letters from Mr. Dingwall to the minister have indicated that they are still of a strong mind to continue with social housing. They use the words of redirecting of savings and the reallocation of fundings, but it still is a significant amount of money when we look at across Canada of approximately, I believe, it is \$240 million, give or take some, of a cutback in their allocation of funding. I believe that relates to about \$5 million in Manitoba or approximately \$5 million of less funding, which I believe we talked about the other day, of less funding for Manitoba housing.

I guess what it is going to entail is a closer analysis of cost not only within the department but costs of the allocation to maintain and sustain the housing market and the housing responsibilities that we as a government have, and it will mean that there is a recognition of where the funding is and how it is spent right.

Ms. Cerilli: Would the minister provide me with a list, even after the Estimates, of where the loss in social housing has been, the locations, over the last few years in the province?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, the department will work on those figures for the member.

Ms. Cerilli: I will move on then to the other issue I was raising as we started talking about this difficulty in ensuring that low-income Manitobans have adequate housing that is well maintained and repaired. I have had constituents tell me that they are paying as much as 50 percent of their income to the rent for social housing when they look at including in their utilities, so I guess the first question I want to ask is: How do you account in the rent geared to income for different properties that include the utilities or do not include the utilities? Simply put, are the renters who are paying their own utilities paying more money?

Mr. Reimer: The 27 percent is the basic criterion for paying for rent. If the utilities are included in the rent at the building, then there is an amount taken off the rent that is paid. For example, say on a two-bedroom unit that the electrical heat is \$67, that amount is taken off the 27 percent, and that is then paid to the utility company for that particular unit. But the 27 percent is the constant within the framework of what is charged to that individual, or what that individual pays. Everyone has to pay the 27 percent, plus the electrical utility, and the 27 percent or the RGI, as we refer to, includes the heat and the hot water. If they have to pay separately, then they pay less of the RGI.

Ms. Cerilli: Okay, I understand that. I would also appreciate then getting—I see that the minister is working from a chart, having access to that as well.

Mr. Reimer: Sure, I will file it with the Clerk. It is what is called an Info Key. It is a reference guide on the Core Need Income Thresholds, the Rent Geared to Income, as we mentioned, the Amenity Rates, the Utility Rates, the Social Assistance Rates, so the member has all these figures.

Also I should mention, too, that there is an appeal process available to the tenants regarding the utilities

and the charging so that they can be looked at. They can talk to the staff through the tenant relations officer for their concerns. I should not say that there is an appeal board. There is not a formal process, but there is the tenant relations officer that is available to help them, to be understanding and the notification of any anomalies that the individual renter might be experiencing.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister for that information. The Clerk will copy and distribute.

Ms. Cerilli: I have spent quite some time on the issue of the rent increase, the rent geared to income increase from 25 percent to 27 percent over the last couple of years.

I have in front of me another very good document put out by the Institute of Urban Studies, and it again makes the case for not increasing the rent geared to income to 30 percent. I guess I will start off by asking if the minister and his staff are familiar with this, and if again they have used any of this kind of rationale in making the case with the federal government for not moving forward with its policy change on the rent geared to income.

* (1730)

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, the article that the member is referring to, I have been informed the department may not have seen that article as yet. So, to comment on the content of it, I am not that familiar with it and no one in my department is as of yet.

Ms. Cerilli: I am getting a little concerned here. This is from winter '94. I remember using this, I think, in the House in my first debate as the Housing critic because there are a number of things I am going to address in here that were quite a surprise to me. It is a concern, then, that the department, through its research section, is not doing this kind of work to make the very strong case that there is to be made for social housing and for not increasing the rent geared to income.

According to the article, it used to be that the rent geared to income was on a sliding scale so that public

housing rent would increase from approximately 17 percent to 25 percent. I am wondering if there has been any analysis to having that kind of a sliding scale now. There is also the concern that I have that when you get people who are working and living in public housing, they are getting to the point where it does not make any sense for them to pay 27 percent of their income because that puts them beyond what they could pay for accommodation in the private market.

So there are a couple of things happening, I think. We are not dealing with the reality of what the situation is for the term often applied to these folks as the "working poor." I remember the previous Minister of Housing making quite a to-do about this when we raised it in the House that she was going to champion their cause and go to Ottawa, but I am concerned that this analysis has not been done and, I guess, to get back to the issue of looking at some kind of a sliding scale, looking at some kind of a cap so that people who start to finally have some stability and decent income are not forced to move out of public housing as soon as they are able to have a small increase in their income by getting more hours at work because that, as we know, tends to force a lot of instability in communities because then these people will be forced to move.

Mr. Reimer: It has been alluded to a little earlier, regarding the article that the member is referring to—I should point too that I do not have all the staff for the department here. So there is a good possibility that some of the other staff within the department are cognizant of that report. As I only—I should not say only, but with the four staff I have here now, they have told me that they, in particular, have not seen the article. But the report may not be in the department, and somebody else may be using it as a reference in his or her evaluations.

The member alluded to a scale of rent to income; it should be pointed out that, to a degree, there is a bit of a scale when we look at the 25 percent for bachelors and 27 percent for the RGI evaluation on it. But it should be pointed out too that the public housing is hopefully a transitional type of scenario for the people.

It is offered as a place where, because of a person's position or their social outcome at that particular time

in their life, there is an availability for housing or accommodation that they can go into. As their income goes up, they pay more when they are based on the percentages, and inversely, if they are caught in a situation where their income is decreasing, they are paying less rent also. So the figure of 27 percent is fixed in a sense of what is there now, but the opportunity or the availability of living in a bachelor suite for 25 percent is also available for recognizing that is a different scenario.

Ms. Cerilli: I think that the 25 percent for bachelor suites is just to introduce that element of the markets to try and lure people to rent those suites where we have already determined there is a higher vacancy. So I am not really looking at that as—it is not really the same issue.

I guess what I have raised before is that moving even to 27 percent is not looking at the reality of the poverty that a lot of these people live in. I will make some reference to the article here, which was quite surprising, for one thing that the average income of families on social housing in 1990 was \$12,000, and approximately 56 percent of all tenant families and senior citizens had incomes below \$10,000; 81 percent were below \$15,000.

So I am not convinced that what the minister is saying applies. I think the people that we are targeting with social housing are still in transition. Unfortunately, with the economy that they are in, it is taking them years to make this transition, and as soon as they start getting a leg up, because of the formula, the public housing is not really providing any greater advantage to them.

I would ask if the minister has any information from his department to convince me otherwise, to show that someone who is earning this kind of salary is better off once they get up to earning, you know, even \$20,000, if there are a few kids involved in the family and they are starting to look at the amount that they are paying in public housing as opposed to the private market.

I will let the minister answer that question if there is anything that he could advise me of to convince me otherwise.

* (1740)

Mr. Reimer: I guess it can be pointed out that there is not an ongoing research that has been done in the department as to the quest that the member is alluding to. It could be pointed out that, because the rent is based to the RGI of 27 percent, as the individual becomes better in his or her positioning of income, they have the ability to make decisions at that time that they feel they want to go on to either private-market accommodations or possibly even the availability of buying for their own type of housing.

It is meant to be transitional type of accommodations for the people, and the most equitable way is to give it towards their income. As mentioned, if they go down in income, they have the luxury of still staying in the—pardon me, I should not use that. They have the ability to stay in the unit itself, recognizing that if their income goes up, then their rent goes up accordingly with their income. The people have the ability to enjoy the accommodations that are available based really on their income. It is meant to be sort of a transitional period for them.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess I will just end by saying that I think, with the changes that we have seen, not only most recently but historically of its even moving to 25 percent of rent geared to income, that social housing, even though, as I said earlier, there have been shown to be a lot of advantages, still is not ensuring that low-income people are going to be treated in an equitable manner.

I would like to ask the minister if he thinks it is fair to expect that social-housing tenants, with their lower incomes, would pay the same rate for housing as people with a higher income, even considering that they do not have the equity that is being built up from home ownership.

Mr. Reimer: I guess there is an interpretation of really two areas: the income that the individual has for himself or herself and the availability to generate income; and the area that we are involved with or that we are addressing, which is the housing and the accommodation for that particular individual. The correlation actually, I guess, is looking at the social

consequences of where monies are going and the welfare system, to a degree, the social safety net that governments set up and initiate and the overlap between the two.

The interpretation, I guess, is something that is hard to see, where the justification and the priorities of decision making are as to which is proper and which is more valid and which falls into line with the other.

It makes the whole area sort of an evaluation of the social responsibilities of government in various areas, not only within the housing area but in the social responsibilities within the social welfare department through the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), and I guess we overlap into social security with the federal government and the income that is derived through that.

There are a lot of variables in regard to what is justified and what is so-called fair as to value for dollar, if you want to call it, where the person is living.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess this gets at the issue of—

Mr. Reimer: Social philosophy.

Ms. Cerilli: Yes, very much so and how our attitude to what equity means and creating equity, if part of the purpose of social housing is to provide equal access to decent housing even for people who are of lower income.

I guess it begs the question then that treating people of different means the same, that is, assessing that they should pay the same percentage of their income for that housing, is not going to create equality. We have to, I think, consider that we have to have people with lower incomes paying a lower percentage of their income for housing.

I think that, when you look at what is actually happening, though, people of lower incomes are actually paying a greater percentage of their income for housing. That is the real problem. That is why this is such an important issue in terms of dealing with poverty. We talk a lot about Manitoba being the child poverty capital of Canada.

This same article from the Urban Institute talks about how the average shelter-to-income ratio for all homeowners in Canada in 1990 was 95 percent and for renters it was 23.9 percent. That is a pretty astounding statistic to me, that people who are least able to pay are paying a greater percentage of their income for housing.

I guess I could just recommend—the minister has said on a couple of these issues that there is not the kind of analysis going on in the department. I guess we could look specifically at the Research and Planning section to identify what that section is doing if they are not looking at these kinds of issues, to do some analysis to see if our social housing program is actually doing what I think it has set out to do: to provide some quality housing for low-income citizens. I think the recommendation, then, would be for that division to look at some of these equity issues. Does the minister want to comment on that?

Mr. Reimer: I think that the article that the member is referring to is something that, if possible, we can get a copy of, or if we are given the information of where it came from, why, then we can make sure that gets into the library at the Housing department and is used as a reference and a sort of analysis.

Ms. Cerilli: Could the minister answer the question as well of what the goals, objectives and the outcomes are of the Research and Planning division of this department?

* (1750)

Mr. Reimer: I should point out that in that particular area there are five employees in Research and Planning. As their objective, I can just mention that it is to provide the planning, the program development, the program co-ordination, the forecasting and statistical support services to the department, the MHRC and the MHA in support of strategic and operational decision making.

The activities that are identified, there is co-ordinating the department's planning activities, intergovernment/interdepartmental negotiations, program development, co-ordination of the federal-

provincial delivery, policy analysis, and they assist in budget preparations. There are others that are mentioned: monitoring and evaluation of program operations and also the recommendations with respect to corporate assets. There are a fair amount of other so-called duties as assigned in the Expected Results that I can refer the member to in the Estimates book on page 30.

Ms. Cerilli: I appreciate the minister reading what is in the Estimates book, but I guess I am looking at the specific issues that I have just raised here. For example, it sounds like this division has the mandate to do this kind of research. Let us simply ignore for a moment homeowners; let us just look at renters. They could look at high-income renters as opposed to lower-income renters—we are talking about people who are living at the poverty level here—and compare the percentage of their income that they spend on rent. Could the division do that kind of analysis?

Mr. Reimer: I should point out that the Research and Planning department was very actively involved prior to the decision by the federal government regarding the funding that was cut back for new housing.

This department was used extensively in the recognition and the identification of where housing and accommodations should be located, where the needs were, where the assessment was done, a lot through this department at that time. Having the five employees in that department and, as pointed out, some of the objectives that are being done right now, they also prepare the manuals and the operating manuals for the MHA. They look at the vacant bachelor apartments, which was mentioned a little while ago, the review of the utility rates and also the review of the housing needs in the areas.

I could point out to the member that the article that the member is alluding to can be sent over to this department for their information and input as to usage.

Ms. Cerilli: I do not know how often it is that the opposition MLA critic does the research for the department, but I am certainly willing to do that. I am just, again, concerned that the minister says it has had the mandate to assess needs, but it does not seem that

it is really looking even then at evaluating if the programs are meeting the need that is there.

I am going to bring up another study, Canadian social trends magazine. The most recent spring issue has a couple of good sections on housing trends, and it says that 80 percent of renter households with an affordability problem in 1991 had an income of less than \$20,000. So I think this supports what I was just saying earlier, that there is a disparity. There is a problem for low-income people in paying a greater percentage of their income for housing and of having a problem with finding affordable housing.

I guess the other thing that I am suggesting is, with the trends in social housing across the country, social housing is no longer really addressing that problem. It is not keeping pace with the very real decrease in real family income. So, again, I want to just encourage that the Research and Planning division in the department would undertake to ensure that this kind of analysis is done, it is going to be incorporated into the programming.

The minister had mentioned earlier, when I referenced the possibility of moving to more private-sector involvement, and talked about how now there are more rent-subsidy programs where the rent is given to private landlords to assist low-income renters. I guess we will talk later about some of the problems with that approach.

I am going to conclude this area but just want to encourage the minister to look seriously at some of these trends and the fact that perhaps these programs are not addressing the severity of the situation for people on low incomes.

Mr. Reimer: I just wanted to point out to the member that there are studies that have been brought forth by this Research and Planning department. Two of the areas that I should mention are within the Alzheimer's group—there is a study being initiated by the Research and Planning department as to working with them on a study—and also a study regarding the women's shelters that was also a part of this, still going through this department. So there is an evaluation of not only within the department regarding the Research and the

Planning, but there is also the evaluation when this is brought forth for analysis as mentioned with the Alzheimer's.

With that, I guess, we are at time. Is that right, Mr. Chairperson?

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: The hour being six o'clock, committee rise.

OTHER APPROPRIATIONS

Aboriginal Justice Initiatives

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. The committee is dealing with the AJI. The minister's staff to come into the Chamber at this time.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Last night we talked a little bit on the First Nations' policing policy, particularly relating to the Island Lake tribal council. The minister will recall that I left with her some of the correspondence that has been forwarded to her office by the leadership of the Island Lake tribal council. I am wondering if the minister has had an opportunity to peruse the contents of the correspondence as well as the Letter of Intent that has been drafted by the Island Lake tribal council with respect to initiating a policing service for those four communities in the Island Lake area.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I would just like to check with the member that he received his letters back. Good, thank you. I just wanted to make sure for the record that he had and he has.

The negotiation process with Island Lake has started, but having looked at the matter I find that the Island Lake tribal council has asked for substantial funding for the negotiation process. I can tell the member that no one else has asked for this funding in the agreements which we have completed or in others which we are near to completing.

Those other negotiations have in fact been very long and protracted, so I understand they are seeking this money from Canada. This is a federal policy, I

understand that they have not had an answer yet from Canada. We will be very interested to see what Canada's policy may be in this matter.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I do not really want to pursue that issue until such time, I am sure, that we will have an opportunity to get further information at a later time as to where the proposal is going, but I do know that the Island Lake tribal council has informed us they would like to begin the process of negotiations with both levels of government. They would like to begin the process of developing their initiative in their four communities that we know as Island Lake.

I would like to get the opinion of the minister and perhaps her reaction on certain issues on the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Indigenous Women's Collective, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg jointly forwarded to the Province of Manitoba an official response back in February of 1992.

In their letter they indicated the sentiment of Manitobans and Canadians in supporting the inherent right to aboriginal self-government and measures to implement aboriginal justice systems is clear. They further said it was illustrated by the clear endorsement of these concepts by such diverse entities as the AJI itself and the Saskatchewan Indian justice review committee that concluded their report, as well, a couple of years ago, the Canadian Law Reform Commission, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and most provincial governments in this country and also the provincial constitutional task force that did its work here in the province of Manitoba.

* (1640)

The aboriginal leadership of this province have always maintained that they are prepared to be responsible and flexible and determined in seeking justice for aboriginal people and accordingly are prepared to work with the provincial government toward this goal provided that the following principles formed a basis out of that relationship. First of all, full and equal participation in defining objectives and

decision making in a process to develop a policy in the area of aboriginal justice and as well the recognition for the inherent right to self-government and aboriginal jurisdiction over justice are viewed by aboriginal people as being indivisible, also the establishment of an open process of dialogue on substantive matters between a government and aboriginal government representatives. This includes, of course, the recommendations of the AJI and the rationale for these positions.

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

The aboriginal leadership also said they would like to have this government reconsider its position on aboriginal justice issues and encourage this government to recognize their responsibility to join with First Nations and with Metis people and aboriginal people in general in this province in a partnership arrangement to begin a process of bringing about significant and fundamental reform in a relationship between our peoples, meaning the aboriginal people, and the government of this province and also the Government of Canada.

I just want to get the opinion of the minister on whether or not there are vehicles that she has considered in implementing some of the—I know that last night we got a good outline of what is currently happening in this province with respect to meeting some of the recommendations. On the more substantive matters of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, what consideration has the minister given to keeping in mind with what I said in developing a partnership arrangement in implementing the outstanding recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry?

Mrs. Vodrey: I just wanted to go back to the previous question. As a starting point the member was speaking about the negotiation with the Island Lake tribal council and indicated their willingness to move ahead. I just want to, on the record, indicate that certainly this government is also prepared to move ahead into negotiation. To my knowledge one of the issues that seemed to be standing in the way was whether or not the federal government was prepared to grant to the Island Lake tribal council any dollars for that

negotiation process, and to my knowledge that had not been done for others. Certainly, we as a government, I can say, are ready and willing, and I am happy to have the opportunity to put it on the record to proceed through the negotiation process.

As we discussed last night, and I hope it is still agreeable for the member, my colleague the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) is also here for the discussion on the AJI. The member has raised some issues relating to the broad issue of self-government which would then lead us into any detailed issues on Justice, so with the member's agreement I would ask my colleague the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs to deal with the question.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Is the honourable member for Rupertsland agreed? The honourable member for Rupertsland indicating his agreement. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Perhaps it is the heat, one gets crotchety, I am not sure.

An Honourable Member: Never.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am very glad the member asked that particular question because we had a chance to discuss it at some length in the Estimates of the Department of Northern and Native Affairs. I just want to make a statement more for qualification, I think the historical record than anything else.

I know as a member of the Meech Lake constitutional task force committee and the various all-party committees that we had, Manitoba and the positions that were developed in that committee, from time to time I see that some parts of our recommendations are referred to.

I think it is worth noting that the compromises that were made in coming up with that all-encompassing package were in fact very much tied to one another and many of the trade-offs in a constitutional debate that take place. One issue is given up for another or positions are developed in the context of the whole, and

I think it is important to note the commitment of many to that report. It was a commitment to the entire report which ultimately was voted on by way of referendum and was defeated soundly in this province. Although there were a variety of principles enunciating that agreement, it is important to recognize the package as a whole was defeated and those who were party to the package were parties to the entire package. It just must be put into that context.

With respect to aboriginal self-government which is obviously an important part of the AJI report, we as a provincial government were not invited to be part of the dismantling exercise, and the dismantling exercise, of course, is obviously the front edge or the front end of aboriginal self-government initiatives in the province of Manitoba.

We were not invited, but I would agree it was not appropriate we necessarily be invited, because the issues being dealt with were between the First Nations and the federal government. It is important to note that point, and the member for Rupertsland and I have had this discussion and this exchange in other committees.

We, as a provincial government, as we develop our position, as we see the issues that come forward out of the dismantling process with which we will have to deal and to date we are just beginning the process. We started today with an excellent opening meeting with the representatives of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. We hope to be able to build on that as the issues develop. But I say this to the member for Rupertsland, what is important to note and a position Manitoba has advanced on issues, Child and Family Services, for example, that have come forward to date, is that we want any jurisdiction that is being passed to First Nations to be done in a proper and legal and constitutional manner, which means the federal Parliament, the Parliament of Canada, must exercise its authority to make any such dispositions or advances of power, legislative authority or jurisdictions, to First Nations, so very much the ball is in the court, so to speak, of the Parliament of Canada.

My colleague the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) spoke at great length last night about a host of administrative efforts that we are taking, things that we

are able to do within the general framework of our responsibility for administering of justice, but the transferring of the authority for the administration of justice to First Nations in whatever form or to whatever degree has to be done, as I understand it, by the Parliament of Canada, and we would be very insistent that the Parliament of Canada take what legislative steps are necessary to deal with those issues.

* (1650)

Again, the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and I have been involved in this discussion and exchange, and that view on issue by issue is being expressed to the Assembly for Manitoba Chiefs. Of course, we would want to have those discussions about practical matters, et cetera, but we are very insistent that the Parliament of Canada use its authority under the Constitution to do the things that are being asked for because that, quite frankly, is the proper legal way to do it, and we would want that to happen.

Mr. Robinson: I want to again reiterate my question to the Minister of Justice. I want to get a sense here as to the idea, as was recommended by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, about an aboriginal justice commission to be composed of the different levels of government, including to some degree the city government because to some degree the Winnipeg City Police has implemented some aspects of the recommendations with respect to employment equity and bringing the number of aboriginal people in the police force up to a better number than it was prior, and also bringing the main players from the federal side, the Metis, the government side, the First Nations community, and begin the process of a true partnership in implementing the recommendations. I just want to get the view of the minister whether or not this is a possibility for aboriginal people in this province.

Mrs. Vodrey: To my knowledge, government gave its response on the issue of the commission back when government gave an overall response to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. At that time, I am told that government took the position that the commission might be interested in the budget and in the management of the budget. The position of government is that the government of Manitoba feels the need to retain

management over the budget on behalf of the people of Manitoba because that is our responsibility.

If the Parliament of Canada, the Government of Canada, chooses to exercise its parliamentary opportunity, which my colleague has just spoken about, and begins to deal with that matter in terms of jurisdiction, then we will perhaps have a different lay of the land. But, at the moment, the position which was given in our government's response, I believe, in 1992, is the position that this government still holds in relation to the commission.

However, the member had a second part to his question, and that was working groups. Is there another way then that we can in fact work together? It is our position that, yes, we can certainly work together in the area of working groups, and we are interested in doing that. I mentioned last evening, the Justice department working group is currently working in partnership with numerous aboriginal groups on developing justice initiatives. Many of these initiatives are the initiatives which have come directly from the community.

MKO views working in partnership with the Justice department as part of its self-government initiative. Also, other communities are focusing on seeing justice work better in their communities, and they want to work with Justice to achieve this. We spoke about lots of mechanisms which are possible, the things such as the appointment of community magistrates, the community participation agreements which we spoke about last evening which give some real opportunity within the communities to work directly within the justice system.

Certainly, working groups, partnerships, that is more than a possibility. We are in fact doing that and look to continue to do that and do more.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I am aware of the working groups that were proposed; the aboriginal organizations declined to participate in them a couple of years ago.

Am I understanding the minister correctly in that these working groups have in fact started with the

participation of the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Indigenous Women's Collective? I am just wondering if those people are participants of these working groups.

Mrs. Vodrey: The process has been that we are not approaching any groups specifically. We are dealing with those groups who are approaching us, those groups who are approaching us with an idea that is in fact coming from the community. One of the risk factors, if we had approached groups, is that we would have been perceived as trying to push our ideas onto that group, so the process has been one where we work with groups who have approached us.

Mr. Robinson: As the minister may be aware, including her staff, the four organizations that I mentioned earlier were in agreement on the process that they would like to take with not only this government but also the federal government with respect to implementing the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. The united front proposed a secretariat, again going back to my interpretation of what a partnership arrangement should be in the eyes of the aboriginal people, and that was to have total and equal participation in a joint strategy with the federal government, the provincial government and those four organizations. Has there been any more?

I know that there was a letter recently requesting that the Province of Manitoba become involved, again from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Have there been any attempts made again—and quoting the aboriginal organizations that I talked about—to have the government of Manitoba quarterback a process that would meet the needs of all the parties concerned?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that in relation to certain projects or possible initiatives, our government has been interested in putting money forward, but I am also told and have seen since I have been minister that the federal government has not been as willing to put their money on the table and to participate, and this is particularly in the area of courts where the federal government has not been a participant in terms of developments in the area of courts with the aboriginal communities.

* (1700)

Mr. Robinson: I know that we could talk about this particular issue probably for a long time, but I would like to move along.

Another recommendation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was the idea of an aboriginal justice college to provide training and ongoing education for aboriginal people required to assume positions of responsibility within both the existing justice system and also aboriginal justice systems that may develop in the future.

I would just like to get the view of the minister with respect to that recommendation, whether or not any moves have been made to investigate that idea further.

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, though we have not moved in the area of an aboriginal justice college, I do want to speak a little bit about what is available within the Department of Justice, within Corrections, a mentorship program which is training aboriginal staff to take greater levels of responsibility. I am told two staff people have been identified for September, and we are looking to bring others into the mentorship program in December or January. So there is an individual kind of training program there.

In addition, within other divisions of the Department of Justice, we have divisions who are promoting the training of aboriginal people to take more and more responsibility within the justice system. We have spoken several times about aboriginal magistrates within communities to bring justice more directly to the community. We have been speaking today about First Nations' policing agreements which allow communities to determine what type of policing they want and to have control over the development of that police service. In Corrections we have also been speaking about some of the other significant changes in the area of corrections.

So the training is in fact going on, though it is not going on under the umbrella of an aboriginal justice college, but the facts are and the reality is that there is in fact training going on to encourage aboriginal employees to begin to take more responsibility or at

least to even enter into the justice system, for example, community magistrates.

Otherwise, we have our community colleges now which have moved to board governance. That board governance allows the community colleges to develop programs virtually at any time of the year for intake virtually anytime.

Unlike the old system when the community colleges were directly tied to government, programs were approved once a year by the minister and it was a much more rigid system, the system now is one in which programs can be developed and entered into on a much more as-needed basis where the need has been identified, and I know that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has spoken frequently about the support to aboriginal students within our three community colleges. So we already have a system which is attempting to provide training in a culturally sensitive way within our community colleges, and that is currently available.

In answer to the member's question, the system of community colleges currently available, making efforts to be sensitive to the needs of aboriginal people, aboriginal students and staff as well as developing programs, having the ability to develop programs, and then within our system of justice, looking to make sure that there are opportunities for individuals to take up and the training that would go along with them.

Mr. Robinson: I wonder if the minister would just give an indication as to the current number of people who are in training programs as she indicated.

Mrs. Vodrey: The programs are quite widespread throughout the colleges as well as through government, so I do not have a number available. I am told that the correctional officers training program which operates through Red River Community College, there was an estimation that close to half of those individuals graduating were aboriginal people who then would be able to enter into the correctional service.

As I had said last evening, we have nine community magistrates who are aboriginal people. I gave numbers in terms of probation officers who are aboriginal

people. In order to give the member numbers, it would really require a survey of several departments and independent colleges.

Mr. Robison: Last night we talked a little about the underrepresentation of aboriginal people working within the justice system. One of the other very important recommendations made by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was the creation of an employment equity act. I wonder if the minister has given any consideration for such.

Mr. Praznik: I offer some comment on this particular issue, having served as a civil service minister for a number of years in this province. We, as a provincial government, and the type of employment, in many cases, that the member is suggesting, where the report identified that it would probably be a good thing to have more aboriginal people working, these areas are under provincial jurisdiction. We are the direct employer in many cases, whether they be provincial jails, court system, probation services, et cetera. These areas, of course, are governed by the Affirmative Action Policy of the Province of Manitoba.

As I pointed out to one of the member's colleagues when we discussed the same issue in the Energy and Mines Estimates, it has been very difficult over the last few years to increase the representation in our target communities simply because we have not had the job openings.

We have gone through a very significant reduction of staff across the provincial civil service, and, to be very blunt and honest, the first priority of the administration was to reduce to a minimum the number of actual staff that we had to lay off, even as we were reducing positions.

So we have been using vacancy management, voluntary separation incentive plans, et cetera, to keep most of the people working whose positions were eliminated in past budgets. So the opportunities generally to expand the number of new hirings, which of course would provide an opportunity for increasing the number of aboriginal people in these areas, qualified aboriginal people in these areas, just quite frankly have not been there.

* (1710)

I would tell the member, as well, the greatest detractor of affirmative action, the people most opposed to it that I had to deal with as minister were the Manitoba Government Employees Union. They took a very strong view in many meetings of the joint council that they were opposed to affirmative action other than at entry-level positions. We were never quite able to resolve that issue with them, so I would ask the member for Rupertsland, in fairness to us on this side, to use his contacts through the New Democratic Party with the MGEU leadership that are there to pursue this issue as well, because it is difficult for us on this side of the House one day to be criticized for not having an affirmative action program moving ahead quickly enough and, on the other, hear from the leadership of the MGEU who have publicly aligned themselves very closely to his party, saying to us privately, in joint council meetings, that we are opposed to affirmative action for other than entry-level positions.

I share that with the member and ask for his recommendation or him to pursue this issue with his friends because it certainly has been an issue with our employees. When we are talking about these areas, one must remember that the major institutions of the justice system, the province is the direct employer, and we must live with collective agreements and work with the representatives of our employees.

Anything that he could do to perhaps make the MGEU somewhat more co-operative certainly would advance the cause that he is putting forward at this committee.

Mr. Robison: I am not familiar with what the minister is saying in committee this afternoon. However, I will investigate, certainly, what he has brought to the attention of this committee.

I would like to revert again to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and some of the recommendations contained therein.

The commissioners also found, and we talked a little bit about this last night, that aboriginal women and

their children suffer tremendously as victims in contemporary society. They are victims of racism, sexism and uncontrollable levels of domestic violence. The justice system has done little to protect them.

At the same time, the commissioners noted that aboriginal women have an even higher rate of overrepresentation in the jail system than aboriginal men, and the commissioners concluded that they believe that the plight of aboriginal women and their children must be a priority for change in the justice system.

Further to that, Mr. Chairperson, aboriginal women's groups agree that short-term crisis intervention often is needed, and they want to go from that point to one where there is treatment provided for the family as a unit—I know we talked about this last night—including both the parents and the children. Many aboriginal communities, including Hollow Water that the minister alluded to last night, had developed these very impressive holistic practices, holistic treatment programs which also include the spiritual needs of individuals, along with the emotional, physical, intellectual support that is often required in situations like this.

I know that the minister has spoken on this, spoke on this last night, but it is a very, very important need of most aboriginal people throughout the 61 First Nations that are scattered throughout this province, and I am wondering if her department has given any consideration to such healing initiatives to address the many, many socioeconomic needs of aboriginal communities in this province.

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, on that whole area of domestic violence I think it is important to note this government's position is one of zero tolerance, and that zero tolerance applies wherever you are and wherever you live in the province.

We very aggressively pursue that policy of zero tolerance across the province. We do have the Domestic Violence Court, a very specialized court of its kind across this country, to deal with areas of domestic violence, with judges who are specialists, with Crown attorneys who are specialists. In fact that

training has now gone beyond the Domestic Violence Court. For those people who work for us, our Crown attorneys, I understand that most now have had training in the area of dealing with spousal abuse.

Speaking of women who are within our institutions, as the member spoke about, within the Portage Correctional Institution, there is aboriginal programming for inmates within the institution. We do have elders who attend to the institution, and those elders also are able to develop programs. There are traditional cultural programs available within the Portage Correctional Institution.

I am also told, though this falls to my colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that there is an aboriginal halfway house for aboriginal women, and it is called Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad. If the member has further questions on that, I am sure the Minister of Family Services would be happy to answer them at another time.

I think the important part is the co-operation across government in an attempt to deal with those issues relating to people who have both been the offenders and also those people who have been the victims.

Within our institutions, we have anger-management programs, and we have programs that deal with domestic violence, both short-term and long-term programs. Those programs also continue when people are released from the institution and are the responsibility of our Community Corrections.

We also have, in relation to youth—this moves away from the domestic violence issue, but I think it is important when the member is asking about the holistic treatment of offenders. We have a family group counselling for youth who are offenders. This deals with not only the immediate family but also the extended family.

When the member asks about a more holistic treatment in terms of bringing together the offender and the victim and the children and perhaps other family members, across the province, there really has not yet been a recommendation of how or when that would be the most successful. I think there are some

developments in that area to be considered, really on behalf of all Manitobans who may be victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I will again communicate with the minister on these and other issues. There are some that I would like to ask that are very important, in my opinion.

* (1720)

In 1990, I believe the Manitoba Aboriginal Court Worker advisory council, which consisted of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the MMF, the Indigenous Women's Collective, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, asked the then-chief provincial judge, Kris Stefanson, to develop an aboriginal court model, which the committee did, and recommended an aboriginal court model which would have included aboriginal judges, hearing officers and magistrates, paralegal prosecutors, paralegals acting for the accused, community justice workers, under the direction of specific communities and responsible for developing a wide range of justice issues.

Also, a part of this component was something that was very culturally sensitive and very appropriate considering the aboriginal circumstances in this province, a council of elders and also Metis senators in each community, which would assist the presiding judge or magistrate in carrying out his or her duties.

What the aboriginal circuit court model proposed was to focus in on regions of this province. For example, Cross Lake, Norway House, Oxford House, Nelson House, Wabowden, Split Lake, Loon Lake, Gods Lake would function as one region; and, for example, nine communities like Barrows, Mafeking, Pelican Rapids, Shoal River, Duck Bay, Pine Creek, Camperville, Sandy Bay, Winnipegosis, Waterhen, Waywayseecappo would be another region; and also the other areas of Manitoba. This was considered to be partners in court reform.

I am just wondering whatever happened to that initiative that was brought forward to the Justice department by those organizations.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am told that flowing from that recommendation, which had been termed at that time the aboriginal court model, we assigned two staff, and we tried to begin to develop that model. We consulted with 62 communities involved, I am told. However, what the consultation revealed was that the communities did not want to have that single model.

The communities in fact wanted us to work with them community by community to develop a model within their own community. That made it very difficult then to proceed based on a recommendation which envisioned a single model, a sort of more unified model which was what the communities were not interested in at that time.

I am told that at the moment, in terms of our work with MKO, they have had some interest in that proposal, and I understand they may be willing to identify some communities within their umbrella who might be willing to participate in developing a model that may be broader than a single community. The results of it were really at the request of the communities who did not express an interest in that particular style of recommendation.

Mr. Robinson: The youth justice committees that we talked about in this committee last night and alluded to a little today, I have had the opportunity to be in different parts of this province over the years and I have had an opportunity, particularly in the last two years since I have been a member of this Legislature, to be places like Gods River where they have taken the initiative of developing a youth program, taking into consideration some of the traditional skills of our forefathers with respect to trapping, fishing and hunting.

I am wondering if the department is working with such groups like the one in Gods River headed up by Councillor Tom McKay. They also have initiatives in the works in Berens River, headed up by the mayor of the Metis community Lawrence Disbrowe and Chief Joe Ross and Councillor Steve Berens over on the First Nations side of the community. As well, in Bloodvein there were some innovative ideas of these youth camps headed up by Chief Helen Cook and others from that community.

I am wondering if the department has worked with these communities and other communities in developing these youth camps as an alternative to the high incarceration rate that aboriginal youth currently face and is an everyday reality in this province.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that we have a probation officer in Gods Lake Narrows. That individual I am told is the chief—I beg your pardon, he was a former chief and very well known and well connected within the area. He works with a group of communities in that area, and so we would expect certainly that there would be work within those communities and some possibilities that would flow from that work.

Mr. Robinson: Last year I believe we received copies of a guideline to develop a proposal to operate a youth camp that was submitted or produced by Manitoba Corrections, the Department of Justice. I am wondering if this is the basis to allow communities to develop proposals to forward to the Department of Justice on such ideas as I described in Gods River.

Mrs. Vodrey: Several communities told us in response to an announcement that they were interested in looking at developing some proposals. So the guidelines have been developed. What we did was make sure that communities who expressed an interest had the opportunity to see the guidelines and certainly to make proposals. Those guidelines still stand today, although they were circulated approximately a year ago. The guidelines still stand today.

Mr. Robinson: I am wondering how many proposals have been submitted to the department and how many have been approved for assistance.

* (1730)

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told we had about six or seven proposals submitted. Several groups asked to meet directly with me, and groups had the opportunity to meet with Corrections. None have been approved at this point because it was government's decision that we would proceed with the two boot camps, one wilderness camp model and one intensive custody model, which we put in place with the announcement in mid-September.

Government's position was that we would like to evaluate those areas in which we actually are in charge of the facility and then, with that evaluation complete, we would be interested then in exploring what further expansion might occur. Rather than have individuals invest dollars and time and training and not know whether this would be the effective model in Manitoba, we ask first that we do an evaluation on those of which we are in charge.

Mr. Robinson: I would like to thank the minister for the answers that she has provided to my questions. They are somewhat helpful. I am sure we will be in further dialogue in the time to come, including her and also the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik).

Mr. Chairperson, aboriginal people are survivors. There is no doubt about that; there is evidence of that. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry dug that up. Aboriginal people have survived racist policies and attitudes of churches, residential schools, jails and governments and society in general over the years. I believe that we will constructively, on our part anyway, continue to recommend to this government that they develop these partnership arrangements that I was talking about earlier, partnership arrangements to implement the recommendations of the AJI.

I believe this would be a just and proper course of action and a credit to this government and also to this minister if we can indeed begin the development and also the implementation of the recommendations of the AJI.

I would like to thank the minister for answering my questions, and I look forward to further dialogue with her with respect to the initiatives that are currently happening in Manitoba.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The item under discussion was item 27.1: 1. Aboriginal Justice Initiatives \$1,000,000—pass.

Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,000,000 for Other Appropriations, under the category of Aboriginal Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 1996.

Decentralization

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Mike Radcliffe): The committee will come to order to discuss the issue of 27.4 Decentralization. The first item concerns Decentralization \$100,000.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I would like to just make a brief opening statement. It gives me great pleasure to present the budget Estimates for our government's decentralization initiative. As members of the House know, the decentralization of government offices gives Manitobans living in rural and remote areas access to services they deserve and expect from government.

I had the opportunity yesterday, Mr. Chair, to witness first-hand the positive and beneficial results of decentralization when I attended the office opening of the Textbook Bureau administration offices in Souris. Because of decentralization, the community has 13 new jobs and the many benefits, of course, that go along with them. Nine of those 13 positions represent Winnipeggers who chose to call Souris their new home, thereby creating demand for housing and services that are being supplied by local residents.

As of March 31, 1995, 669.15 positions have been relocated to 61 communities, all like Souris and all in receipt of growth opportunities that would not have otherwise occurred if it had not been for decentralization. While the task is nearing completion, it is certainly not over yet. During the fiscal year ended March 31, 1995, 27 positions were decentralized, 15 of which were new or vacant positions, while 12 employees chose to relocate with their decentralized positions.

Decentralization is providing a major economic stimulus for rural Manitoba along with a number of other significant benefits. Rural economies are being stimulated and strengthened. Program delivery is more efficient through the restructuring and reorganization of staff and expansion of computer technology in program relocations and consolidations. Meanwhile, government services in rural Manitoba are benefiting from increased input and are now more sensitive and responsive to local conditions and priorities.

What does this mean in real terms? For one, it equates to the transfer of \$26 million in direct payroll to rural Manitoba. If only half the net take-home pay were spent in rural Manitoba the economic spin-offs would lever about \$3.6 million in additional service-sector wages and 130 additional jobs.

The decentralization initiative creates other opportunities as well: up to 3,500 weeks of work for local trades and traders through new construction, new buildings worth \$9.1 million, and tenant and leasehold improvements amounting to something in the neighbourhood of \$3.8 million. What I have listed here are just some of the many economic benefits that result in rural communities because of decentralization.

Another example of the benefits of decentralization that will not show up on a balance sheet include the relocation of 311 Winnipeggers who decided to call rural Manitoba home, bringing with them their varied skills and talents. Whether they are all involved in a local church group, sitting on a community board, coaching a local sports team or volunteering in the community in some other worthwhile capacity, these new rural residents are helping to reinvent the rural economy.

Meanwhile, over the long term, these jobs will remain in rural Manitoba. As positions become vacant, opportunities will open up for rural Manitobans, particularly rural youth, who will have more employment options than would otherwise exist if it were not for decentralization. This will give them the chance to live and work where they grew up.

This government remains just as committed to decentralization as when the initiative was first announced. Efforts will continue for the 1995-96 fiscal year to complete our initiative. The \$100,000 that is being requested for appropriation 27.4 for the coming year is expected to cover any outstanding expenses related to decentralization. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

* (1740)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Does the member for Interlake have an opening statement?

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): I thank the minister for his words with respect to this department. I believe that, since I have been a part of the Rural Development critic area, I have always insisted in debate or in discussions with the minister on how important the Decentralization program is to rural Manitobans.

We see over the last year or two few increases basically in the Decentralization program as far as jobs moving to rural Manitoba. I would like to say that my feelings and the feelings of our caucus are that the program should be enhanced, and perhaps could be enhanced for the future, to provide further services to the areas that we feel are needed.

There are areas and communities, and the minister knows this well, that I have talked about that are in need of the kind of services that should be provided, whether it be in Agriculture, Rural Development or whether it should be in water resources, Natural Resources, and I hope that, with this minister and with co-operation from all the departments, we are able to provide some of these communities with the services that are needed.

I mention another one being Environment; I mentioned Agriculture, of course, and Natural Resources. There are the northern rural communities that I think we should be able to look at providing those kinds of services and the jobs available in those areas. We are having, of course, different economic developments occurring throughout northern and rural areas, and I feel that perhaps—and the minister, hopefully, will agree with me—there is further need, more need of the type of services and the job opportunities in these areas, one of them being Environment.

So I look forward to a further development after these Estimates of Decentralization. Hopefully, yes, we will be able to provide the young people of the future the opportunity to get jobs in rural areas that hopefully will be provided by the Decentralization program in the services that are needed.

So I look forward to our Estimates' process, and we will ask the minister a few specific questions on this department and hopefully—I know he will co-operate.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): At this time, we would invite the minister's staff to join us at the table. We would ask the minister to introduce the staff when they enter the Chamber.

Mr. Derkach: By way of introduction, Mr. Chair, we have the deputy minister of Rural Development, Mr. Winston Hodgins; and also the assistant co-ordinator of the decentralization initiative, Mr. Robin Hall.

Mr. Clif Evans: The minister mentioned in his opening statement that in the year ending March 31, 1995, there were 27 decentralized jobs. That seems, over the past few years, like a significant drop in the total number and specifically when we see that 13 of these 27 new positions via decentralization were actually promised or made aware of two years ago when it came to the Souris book, education department, the new—I am lost for the word I am looking for. So, out of 27, 13 were already promised a couple of years ago. So you are talking about only 14 positions having been decentralized in the past fiscal year.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, the decentralization that took place in this past fiscal year was done as a carry-over from the commitments that were made in the original decentralization initiative. The Textbook Bureau was committed to move to Souris in 1990, I believe, when I was still with the Department of Education and Training at the time. Since then we have worked pretty diligently to try and accommodate the administration offices in Souris. The office opened in November. We officially opened the Textbook Bureau in Souris yesterday.

Of all these positions, of the 27, all of them were communities that had been identified in the beginning, and we are simply trying to live up to our commitment. That is what we will continue to do over the next year.

When the member says that the activity has declined from what it was previously, that is true. We had 27 positions decentralized in this past year, again trying to make sure that we live up to the commitment that was established under our administration. Combined with the budget adjustments that had to have been made over the last number of years, I think we have done significantly well to make sure that we live up to our

commitment, and it has certainly been appreciated by rural Manitobans.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, has the minister's department or the government succeeded in their original commitment and all the original applications of the communities or the departments or the services that were required to be decentralized, has the minister met those commitments?

Mr. Derkach: In the beginning, in the announcement that was made we had initially committed to moving 693 government positions and Crown corporation positions to rural Manitoba. We are about 96 percent complete now. We have moved 669 positions. Indeed the initiative is being slowly committed to its full extent, but it does not mean that it will stop at 693. If there are, in fact, positions we identify that make sense to decentralize to rural communities, we will continue to press in that vein.

Mr. Clif Evans: What criteria does the minister suggest for relocation for the different positions or the different departments? What is going to, let us say, have Environment people be decentralized to an area in rural Manitoba? What would be the requirements?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, the two criteria that we pay significant attention to are: No. 1, that we do not compromise the services that are being delivered by the branch or by the department that is being decentralized; and No. 2, that it is cost-effective to do that. When I say that, I mean we can either operate the offices as effectively from that rural community as we can in the city of Winnipeg or, in fact, at a lower cost. Those are two significant factors that are looked at whenever we decentralize or look at potential candidates for decentralization.

* (1750)

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, can the minister indicate today whether there has been a large or significant increase within the rural communities applying for decentralized jobs, and what are they?

Mr. Derkach: No, there has not been an increase in the number of communities that are applying for

decentralized positions. However, there are those communities that we have heard from, from the very beginning, who continue to lobby for decentralized positions.

As I have indicated, we are trying to fulfill our commitments that were made in the beginning. Not every community in Manitoba is going to have decentralized positions. I think that only stands to reason. If you look at the regions, we have tried to ensure that within the regions of our province we decentralize as many positions as possible.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, the minister has indicated, of course, that 669 positions have been decentralized. I might have asked this last year. I looked through my notes, and I could not find it. Of course, the beginning of the program or announcement of the program was in 1990, so of these 669 were there any incumbent positions where you just moved people into a position that was already located in that area, or are these 669 totally new positions of people moving to rural areas?

Mr. Derkach: The 669 positions that are referred to in the Supplementary Estimates are positions that have been decentralized from the city of Winnipeg. They are not positions that were present in rural Manitoba and simply filled and then called decentralized positions. So these are all positions that have been decentralized from the city of Winnipeg to rural Manitoba.

Mr. Clif Evans: So positions, for example, that were in Selkirk or in Brandon and some of the larger centres were not affected by any decentralization moves to rural areas that required the services of that specific department that might have gone to the rural areas?

Mr. Derkach: Of the 669 positions that we referred to, Mr. Chairman, those were all positions that were moved from Winnipeg to rural Manitoba. However, there are shifts from rural Manitoba as well. For example, as the member knows, the Brandon mental health unit that was being reorganized is also moving positions to various communities in the Parkland and rural Manitoba. Those are over and above, if you like, what we count in the decentralization numbers of 669.

Mr. Clif Evans: Out of all the commitments that this department has made to decentralized rural jobs, can the minister indicate whether there has, for example, been 50 promised or 40 promised to a specific area, 20, whatever the number may be, and that commitment was not fulfilled?

Mr. Derkach: As I have indicated from the very beginning, what we had done in the beginning was to identify branches and areas of departments that could be candidates for decentralization. In restructuring of government, in fact some of those areas were candidates for seeking efficiencies. When we could identify those that may have meant that a department instead of having 13 positions could operate with 10 or 12 or 11, and when that branch was decentralized it may have meant that instead of 13 positions going out to a particular community, only 10 were decentralized.

We have examples of those types of projects throughout the province. I do not think any single community has been singled out in that respect but, indeed, there are examples of that throughout the rural part of the province.

Mr. Clif Evans: I thank the minister for that answer. Again, and I wonder out loud, if a community wants to get the Highways department, they feel that the area needs extra people in Highways or Natural Resources, does a local jurisdiction or community apply through the department itself, or do they come to the Decentralization office with an application or resolution to have the department look at the positions being brought to their area?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, it is done in a variety of ways. Some communities will come directly to me as minister and will bring their request and suggestion to me; others, in conversation with departmental staff, will do that. I know my deputy does meet with communities almost constantly, and, in many instances, they will bring that to his attention. It has also been brought to departments.

So there are a number of ways that communities get their message to the government. We try to respond in the best way possible. We look at every situation to see whether or not there is possibility, whether the

suggestion makes sense and whether it is practical. If it does, we certainly would move on it.

Mr. Clif Evans: One concern that I do have, and I hope the minister has too, and without really speaking to the communities specifically about it, is the fact that in some of the communities very close to the larger centres, where the positions are decentralized—I am sure we cannot tell anybody basically where to live if they are working in the area, but is there some indication that a large percentage of the people who are decentralized, especially closer to a larger centre, are commuting or are actually living and spending their seven days a week right in that community after work? In other words, are they situated—is there a percentage that we know of?

Mr. Derkach: It varies. Some communities will have people who have decentralized live right in the community; others, for example, yesterday, I talked to people in Souris, and the manager of that branch lives in Brandon. We cannot dictate where people should live, but in an overall sense approximately 40 percent of people who are decentralized to rural Manitoba move with their positions, and approximately 10 percent will commute, and 50 percent of the positions were filled with the re-employment list and local hirings. In other words, people right from the area were hired for about 50 percent of the positions. So it is a mix and, indeed, we cannot dictate where anybody lives.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): There being no further discussion, it has been resolved that:

Resolution 27.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100,000 for Other Appropriations, Decentralization, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

The hour being six o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 27, 1995

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