



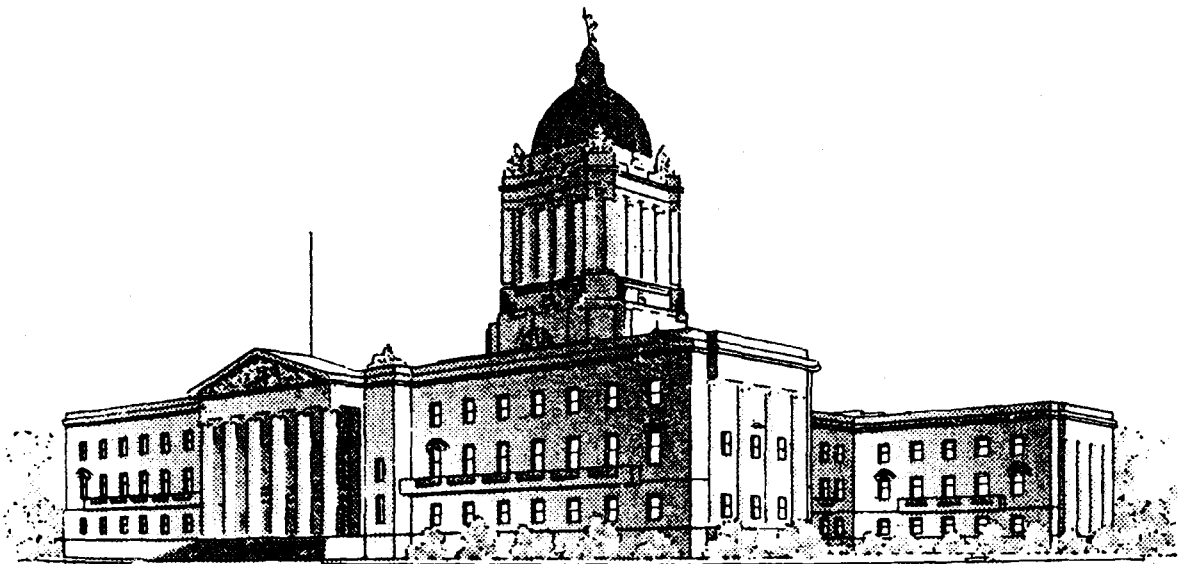
Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 21, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Seasonal Camping Fees

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Harold Lanings, Ken McMaster, Francis Asper and others urging the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I beg to present the petition of Audrey Sloan, Larry Hofmeister, Barbara Murray and others urging the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount—especially when it snows.

Home Care Services

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Delores Faulkner, Andrea Kaston, T. Knight and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to private home care services.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I beg to present the petition of Bruce Clark, Gale Haines and Gary Lawlor requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I beg to present the petition of J.A. Goodwin, Bonnie Cham, Dawn Kidder and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of John Hryshko, Joseph Cloutier, Larry Garipey and others requesting the Premier and the

Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It

complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (1335)

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the 1994-95 Annual Report of the Clean Environment Commission.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Status of Women.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1996-97 for the Manitoba Seniors Directorate and also for Manitoba Urban Affairs.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister responsible for Sport): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Estimates for Sport.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 26—The Labour Relations Amendment Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that leave be given to introduce Bill 26, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 57—The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 57, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act; Loi sur la divulgation de la rémunération dans le secteur public, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 59—The Powers of Attorney and Mental Health Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), that leave be given to introduce Bill 59, The Powers of Attorney and Mental Health Amendment Act; Loi concernant les procurations et modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 60—The Law Society Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 60, The Law Society Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société du Barreau, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 61—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1996

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst), that leave be given to introduce Bill 61, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1996 (Loi de 1996 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 54—The Municipal and Various Acts Amendment Act

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that leave be given to introduce Bill 54, The Municipal and Various Acts Amendment Act (Loi concernant les municipalités et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1340)

TABLING OF REPORTS

(continued)

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, may I ask leave of the House to revert to Tabling of Reports.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to revert to Tabling of Reports?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Rural Development Expenditure Estimates and also for the Decentralization Expenditure Estimates.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon forty-six Grade 9 students from St. George School. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

We also have twenty-five Grades 7, 8 and 9 students from Parkland Christian School under the direction of Dave Friesen. This school is located in the constituency

of the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Headingley Correctional Institution Temporary Absences

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, last week we were asking some very direct questions dealing with an unfortunate murder, an alleged murder of an individual in Inwood, Manitoba, by a person who is alleged to be on a temporary absence from the correctional system here in Manitoba.

When I asked the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) last week whether in fact the riot at Headingley played any part in the temporary absences, the Minister of Justice said in the House that there were no special criteria applied to the release of inmates, and further went out into the hallway with the media and answered the question that the Headingley riot played no part in the release of this individual or any other individual who was released with the temporary absence programs.

The next day we read, and it is certainly consistent with what we have heard, that many people in the correctional system stated that in fact the riot did precipitate the release of some inmates. Between 62 and 70 inmates were released.

I would like to ask the Premier, why can we not have in Manitoba a Minister of Justice who will just tell us the truth straight up on these straight questions, and will the Premier give us a Minister of Justice who will tell Manitobans the truth when tough questions are posed in this Chamber?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the Minister of Justice did provide the information accurately and that the releases were made within the existing criteria.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the minister refuted the fact that the riot played any part and was contradicted later on by line correctional officers that we talked to and by

senior correctional staff. It is regrettable today that the Premier has not taken action on a Minister of Justice who, to a large degree, is not being straight with the people of Manitoba.

Can the Premier explain to Manitobans how the government could release an individual on a temporary absence policy who had two previous convictions of assault causing bodily harm within the last 12 months? Where under the Filmon government criteria does this temporary absence policy fit, and how can this person get released if it was not for the fact that the government accelerated the releases due to the riot?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I think that the member opposite is being manipulative with the facts, but I believe that the person to whom the member refers is the person who is charged with an offence that will be before the courts and so I am unable to provide him with a response to that matter.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: I asked the minister and the Premier the question not only about the discrepancy between what she said, that the riot played no part on the releases—in Hansard—and the answer we received the next day from senior correctional officials, not only the discrepancy on the facts that were posed in this Chamber, I am also asking a policy question to the government that is responsible for the policy of temporary absences.

I would like to ask the Premier, how does the policy of releasing an individual after seven weeks of a 16-week sentence who has had two previous convictions of assault causing bodily harm, how is that consistent with the Premier slamming the cell door? He should have told the public he was slamming it open rather than slamming it closed on behalf of Manitobans. How does that fit? [interjection]

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, the member opposite says, sit down—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Vodrey: Do they want the answer or not?

Madam Speaker, I, too, am referring to Hansard and the questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition, not the questions that he posed. The question was: "Were there any changes in government policies based on the riot?"

That was the question asked.

Madam Speaker, my answers were clear then and are clear now. To my knowledge, there was not any change in our policies. As a matter of fact, I made it very clear that our policies are among the strictest across Canada. Individuals who were assessed, having met the time frame for temporary absences which is stricter than in most other provinces, and also the criteria, those individuals assessed by professional correctional officers were those inmates who were considered for release.

Had it been under the NDP when they were in government, those individuals would have been released long before that.

Headingley Correctional Institution Temporary Absences

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My question is for the Minister of Justice. Last Thursday it was our information from the Provincial Court that Mr. Rouire was serving on weekends. It has now come to our attention that indeed he was serving consecutive days at the time of the riot.

My question to the minister is if— and I quote her words—there were not any special criteria given for temporary passes because of the riot, would she possibly explain how she could authorize the release of an inmate like Mr. Rouire given our information that he was convicted February 6, '95, driver impaired, failing to comply with probation; April 10, '95, assault with intent to resist arrest, three counts of theft under a thousand; May 24 last year, assault, caused bodily harm, resist arrest; August 8, '95, assault, caused bodily harm, failure to comply with recognizance; March 4, break and enter, failure to comply with recognizance?

How could he be released if there were not special criteria? How could they release him, having served less than half of his time? How could she do that?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the member well knows that I am just not able to speak about an individual who is accused, what their past record is, what they are currently in the institution for. I am just not able to do that. As the Attorney General, the information which I have to speak about an individual does come forward in court when there has been a charge laid.

Madam Speaker, the member across the way, as he says even today, gave out information last week which was incorrect. He admits that today. He gave out and he continues to give out information. He has, over the process of more than a week, continued to try and put out information which he has had to later go back and correct, which is what he has done today.

Madam Speaker, I am not able to speak about—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, our rules are quite clear. A very specific question was asked about the policies of this government, and this minister of all people should not lecture our critic about misinformation. I would like to ask you to not only call her to order but ask her to withdraw the comment she made about our Justice critic who is trying to get some straight answers from this Minister of Justice.

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

* * *

* (1350)

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, to quickly complete her response.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you very much. It was the member for St. Johns who admitted that he was wrong last week and has attempted to correct on the record this week. Madam Speaker, he may feel the freedom within this Chamber to say whatever it is he likes about a

particular individual who is currently charged before the court. I am not in a position to say that; however, I have answered in the broad sense that there were not changes to the criteria which are among the strictest in this country.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, my supplementary is, would the minister who should recognize that we are not dealing with a case before the courts but rather her temporary pass policy and her truthfulness, will she tell Manitobans who made the decision to release Mr. Rouire?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, again, as in the case of all inmates who receive temporary absences or who were released at the end of the sentence, the decision was made, to my knowledge, as I am informed by my department, by professional correctional officers.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister who is responsible for this department, for this decision and who said last week, and I quote, that some inmates have been released within approximately two weeks of their sentence completion, now admit that the word "some" actually meant at least 63 and that "within two weeks" was wrong, that some had months left to serve, that she misled Manitobans? Will she admit that and just get out of the way of justice in this province?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, as I explained last week, last week there were questions regarding temporary absences. I am attempting to give the information as it is available to me. Some inmates, also, as I explained further Friday, were released at end of sentence time. So we are dealing with two separate opportunities in which inmates would be released. One is on a temporary absence, one at end of sentence, decisions as always made according to our criterion in Manitoba which was made stricter with our rigorous-confinement criterion in February 1995.

However, Madam Speaker, as I said, I have been informed that there was no change in criteria either for temporary absences or in the criteria applied against those eligible. However, members across the way have indicated some public debate. There is public interest in this area and so, in the interests of that public interest, I think it is important to have a third party review this because we believe that people should in fact know, and

though I have explained the situation, I am prepared to very specifically add this to Ted Hughes's review. Though he is able to review anything which is a concern to him, I will very specifically add the administration of temporary absences during and after the riot, whether or not correctional officials acted unlawfully, whether they acted unreasonably or whether they changed the criteria for release to increase eligibility.

Headingley Correctional Institution Early Release—Sexual Offenders

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, my questions are also for the Minister of Justice.

After the Headingley riot several sexual offenders were prematurely released into the community though some had refused to take the counselling which facilitates understanding, assists in preventing recidivism and is supposed to be necessary for early release. Furthermore, I understand that not one was referred to the community notification advisory committee, although one offender was serving 18 months, which suggests he posed a danger to the community.

My question to the minister: I want to ask the minister if she now is usurping the workings of the community notification advisory committee and personally deciding when it is in the public interest to alert citizens about the presence of a sex offender in the community.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, let me explain to the member that at the end of sentence there is a review and that in the past at approximately two-thirds of the sentence, inmates were in fact released. Though it was called earned remission when the other side was in government, there really was not anything earned about it at all. When we moved to rigorous confinement, we changed the regulations and at two-thirds we have now said to people, you must earn your remission. In earning your remission, you should participate in programs; yes, you should in fact show that you have made some steps towards your rehabilitation. That was this government's rigorous confinement, so do not let them ever suggest that there was anything rigorous about what they did.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, they can laugh, but they certainly did not support it even when it came forward to be more rigorous.

However, Madam Speaker, there were in fact three inmates who were injured at the time of the riot and these three inmates were, to my knowledge, considered close to the end of sentence, and though they did not participate, they were in fact assessed by correctional officers. Their release was not on a specific authority or any paper that I signed. They were released under the direction of professional correctional officers.

* (1355)

Early Release—Domestic Abusers

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, given the minister's frequent commitment to end violence against women, both sexual and domestic violence, I want to ask the minister if any domestic abusers were released early and, if so, had they completed their counselling and anger management work?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the members across the way seem to be trying to put forward again further information to confuse the public. They are using the term "63." Sixty-three is not the number of people who were released at the end of sentence time period. That is the number that you are using and I do not believe that number is correct. However, in terms of the numbers of individuals who were considered at the end of sentence—now, be very clear about what we are talking about—I am aware of the three of whom I have spoken to you about today, three who were injured within the riot, who had met the more than two-thirds criterion of serving their sentence, who were injured in the riots and were released on medical and humanitarian grounds.

Further than that, I will have to check with my department about anyone released at end of sentence, which was what the question was.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, the question was, were any domestic abusers released early and, if so, had they completed their counselling and anger management work?

I want to ask the minister, if this is the case, how early release of these kinds of offenders against women and children help in ending violence and protecting community.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, well, as I said, we have a process of earned remission in which individuals are to take part in programs to assist in their anger management and to provide rehabilitation in the area of domestic violence. I have explained that there were three, to my knowledge, who at end of sentence were released because they had met the two-thirds serving requirement, somewhat more, and also were released. Their release was on medical and humanitarian grounds.

In terms of other information, I have said to the member I will have to check with my department and find out any details and provide her with that information.

Coalition to Save Home Care Report Recommendations

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, this morning we saw the release of a report on public hearings conducted by Manitobans. The report is superior to anything ever done by the government and strongly recommends against privatization. The report raises concerns about privatization such as private operators skimming money from the system, the confidentiality of information that the clients hold and private operators being given a private monopoly. The report calls for specific responses from the minister.

I would like to ask the minister today, will he commit to provide specific public responses to every single one of the issues raised by Manitobans who took the time and energy to produce this outstanding document, Madam Speaker?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to tell the honourable member that, as a result of the ratification of the tentative agreement, we will have full restoration of home care services. I would expect that by tomorrow we should have everybody who was admitted to hospital returned to their homes where they ought to be. The honourable member is looking for commitments; I commit my efforts to carrying out the spirit and the intent of that collective agreement arrived at by negotiation.

* (1400)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Health, who has avoided public hearings, who has avoided public scrutiny, at least commit in the House today that he will respond to the excellent suggestions and the excellent recommendations made by this group of Manitobans who on their own shamed the government into reversing their stand on privatization? Will he at least take the time to respond specifically to every one of these recommendations?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the only avoidance is the avoidance of the honourable member. He avoids the fact that we live in the real world. The honourable member was there at the Holiday Inn when I was there with about 500 or so home care workers and we were addressing the issues that evening. I was not avoiding any issues when I was on the picket line in Brandon with the strikers and talking about home care and health care.

The only way we are going to all get through the changes that are being imposed on us by the federal government with their cutbacks is together, working together, locking arms and working together to see that we can bring about the best outcomes that we can for the clients of our home care system. That is what I have been doing and will continue to do.

Home Care Program Privatization—Nursing Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Health work with the overwhelming majority of Manitobans who have said they do not want privatization in the health care system, and will he tell us today, now that his plan to reduce privatization has gone from 100 percent to 20 percent, will he outline for us what the plans are for the nursing component of home care and the home support workers who are not part of the collective agreement? Will he tell us what the plans are for the nursing component privatization and the home support worker privatization that are not part of the collective agreement?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member has just proved what I have been saying about he and his colleagues all along: when you do not have the evidence, make something up.

He just finished saying that we moved from 100 percent to 20 percent. He knows full well that what was on the table initially was a 25 percent competition in the city of Winnipeg only and through negotiation we worked that to 20 percent. That seemed to me an honourable kind of compromise to be making. The union agreed with the competition in the home care marketplace to the extent of 20 percent. The honourable member cannot have it both ways. His own union friends have, by way of negotiation, come up with an agreement that we are prepared to live with, that they are prepared to live with, so the honourable member cannot come here and call it something that it is not.

Community Health Centres Home Care Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question too is for the Minister of Health. The Coalition to Save Home Care did something which this government should have done and that is to have some form of public hearing to allow for clients, home care workers and other interested Manitobans to make presentations to the government. One of the recommendations is No. 6 and it states: examine other alternatives to the existing system, notably the Quebec model, which are also not-for-profit publicly funded.

We have, in the Liberal Party, been encouraging this government and this Minister of Health to look into the possibility of community health centres as providing home care services.

My question to the Minister of Health is, what is this minister prepared to do to ensure that community health centres will have a prominent role to play in the delivery of home care services?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): We will certainly take the honourable member's suggestion, Madam Speaker. If the community health centres want to make some proposals, if they want to get involved in the process that we are about to embark upon, that would be welcomed as well.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what is the Minister of Health prepared to do in order to facilitate community health centres to be able to participate in the process in terms of a workshop that would allow them to be better

able to put in a bid through the whole process of the tender?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, we are extending to all interested parties as much assistance as is necessary for them properly to put their bids before that part of the organization that would be evaluating the bids, so that if a community health centre or some other agency out there has an interest in putting forward a bid on these contracts, let them be in touch with us.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister if he would concur with the remarks set forth by the community health centres, which was sponsored by the Manitoba Nurses' Union, in which it states, 30 years worth of studies in Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan have demonstrated that community health clinics are a better way to deliver health care.

Does the minister concur with that and, if so, what is he prepared to do?

Mr. McCrae: In their more recent reports, the Manitoba Nurses' Union has indeed made some helpful observations and even some recommendations which, if carried forward, might indeed improve the outcomes in health care in Manitoba. We have said that we appreciate those types of recommendations coming from the Manitoba Nurses' Union. I think we have been working—and our budgets demonstrate, I believe, that we have been working closely with the community health centres to ensure that the work they do in our communities is relevant to what the communities require, and there is lots and lots of evidence that is happening, Madam Speaker.

Hughes Inquiry Temporary Absences Examination

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

Given the minister's reporting that she has asked Mr. Hughes to include the matter of the T.A. policy in his review, would the minister possibly explain to Manitobans that if in fact there has been no change in the temporary pass policy, why is Mr. Hughes asked to examine no change in policy?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the reason that I will be asking Mr. Hughes, as I will be very specifically now asking him to examine this issue, is because this has become a matter of public debate, because it has become a matter of public interest and because I think it is very important that then a third party review the process and be able to report to Manitobans. That is why I will be asking him specifically, though I did say earlier, on the areas which he is free to examine he could examine that on his own. I believe it is important to specifically ask him to do that in the interests of the public.

Minister of Justice Examination

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My question to the minister is, would she explain, given that the issue before the public of Manitoba is her truthfulness and her lack of responsibility, accountability for what has happened here—would she agree to allow Mr. Hughes to examine her under oath so Manitobans can understand what this minister is saying to them?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I think it is very important to make sure that Manitobans know that I have been truthful to the best of my knowledge at all times in the answering of all questions. To suggest anything less is just plain wrong. I have in fact been truthful to the best of my information, the best of my knowledge at all times, the information that has come to me from professional correctional officers. Of course, I and others will be happy to co-operate with Mr. Hughes in anything that Mr. Hughes asks.

Manitoba Hydro Customer List Availability

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

With today's announcement of an agreement in principle to undertake a joint venture between the two major power utilities here in this province, Manitoba Hydro and Centra Gas, we have seen another step in the eventual road to the privatization of our Hydro utility.

My question to the minister is, will the minister tell us if Hydro's customer list and other account information

will be made available to its largest power competitor in Manitoba?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, first of all, I must take issue with the premise of the member's question. This is a step that I think creates great efficiencies for these two utilities. They are allowed to service their clients in a more efficient manner and as the Public Utilities Board has indicated, in fact demanded, that Manitoba Hydro just do that to ensure that rates are sufficiently low cost.

With respect to the member's question about lists, obviously part of this is for this joint venture to share services such as meter reading and billing, and that involves exchange of information with respect to customer lists and where we have joint customers.

Manitoba Hydro-Centra Gas Joint Venture

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, will the minister guarantee that the ownership of this new joint venture will be controlled by Manitobans?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, this is a joint venture between two utilities. The part of the joint venture that is Manitoba Hydro's is owned by Manitobans. We are the trustees of that investment.

You know, members opposite want it both ways. When Manitoba Hydro went to the Public Utilities Board and asked for a rate increase, the Public Utilities Board in giving them a less-than-requested rate increase challenged them, in fact demanded of them to find ways to deliver services more efficiently. I ask honourable members opposite, should we have two people going to the same house to read meters when one can do it? Should we be charging the ratepayers of two utilities double postage to send out two bills when one would do? Surely not.

What they are asking is that Manitoba Hydro take money out of their customers' pockets to pay for inefficiencies and that need not be the case.

* (1410)

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, my final question to the minister: Will he confirm that the newly reorganized Manitoba customer services business unit, which this minister and his Hydro executives just announced over a month ago, is now a prime target for elimination as a result of this joint venture?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, absolutely not. If members opposite would take the time to get out of Jurassic Park for awhile and look at the future, they would realize that in the energy business today it is absolutely critical that our customers for energy are able to find competitive sources for that energy. Manitoba Hydro and the gas utility working together to find new ways to be efficient and to provide new services between the two utilities that meet the needs of our common customer base is the future. Quite frankly, if we took the advice of the members opposite, we would ensure that Manitoba Hydro would have no future and would become an inefficient company and have to be privatized.

This is the future to ensure a strong, competitive utility that is on a very strong financial footing.

Linnet Geomatics International Inc. Contract Cancellation

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I want to table a document entitled Towards Developing a Vision and Action Plan for the Advancement of Manitoba's Geomatics Sector.

The seven-year agreement with Linnet Geomatics has been an absolute failure in terms of its own directions. We have less than a third of the jobs of Canadian average in this sector. We do not have a base map in Manitoba that comes up to national standards. We are 10th out of 10 in terms of the quality of the base mapping information we have in Manitoba.

I want to ask the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) whether he accepts now that on the basis of this study we are way behind the rest of Canada. Will he cancel this contract, end the monopoly and let Manitoba's industry begin to develop in a rational way?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I have not had an opportunity to see this study, but I do not accept very much of the analysis that is normally provided by the member for Crescentwood.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, in light of the fact that virtually all other players in the geomatics industry are prepared to go on record now saying that this has been a failure as a strategy, will the minister responsible for this agreement announce now that the monopoly will end on schedule, December 1996?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I have to express a little bit of disappointment at the approach that the member is taking because I have always been very open with information to the members opposite whether it is to do with flooding, whether it has to do with a European fur union and the same thing with Linnet.

A few months ago, I had a two-hour briefing for members opposite trying to bring them up to speed of the complexities of the Linnet operation. At that time—[interjection] Madam Speaker, it is a complex matter. At that time, I offered, after two hours of briefing, to any member interested, that the CEO from Linnet would open his doors and give them all the information basically that anybody would want. Nobody has taken up that offer.

I will tell you something. The disappointment I have is that the information based in the news release that the member for Crescentwood has just put out today does not have all factual information. In fact, there is a lot of the information that is not right.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister responsible for Linnet and the Linnet contract not agree that the information in his own study by the Nordicity group in Toronto is in fact factual and correct, represents the truth in regard to the development of this industry in Manitoba, points out that many of the things that this government said had to be done seven years ago have not been done yet and that the jobs target is only at one-quarter of what it should be in terms of Linnet's own promises to the government?

Mr. Driedger: What I would like to confirm is the fact that Manitoba and Linnet are known as leaders in terms

of data information. We are known as leaders, and that is an accepted fact out there as well.

Madam Speaker, the member is making reference to the 320 jobs and the \$80-million investment that was required to bring it to that point. That was part of the projection at that time. I have to tell you that Manitoba has invested \$5 million over the last years and we have 65 jobs that are involved right now, and that \$5 million that Manitoba put in has basically been work in kind. So the record is good.

I extend the offer again to members opposite, anybody that wants to have more detailed information, the CEO from Linnet. Bruce Graham, has offered, come and have a look, come down and investigate instead of making stupid statements to the public.

Treaty Land Entitlements Status Report

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs.

About a month ago the minister was indicating that the settlement of treaty land entitlement was imminent, and he made similar comments last week to the Manitoba Mining Association meeting. I would like to ask the minister what stage the negotiations are at with respect to TLE and Manitoba

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Madam Speaker, a very timely question from the member for Rupert's Land.

Over a month ago, we held a very top-level series of discussions with the treaty land entitlement chiefs and agreed to or arranged a method, I think, of settling the outstanding issues. The federal government was brought into that by the chiefs. There was an exchange of correspondence which I believe lays the basis for that arrangement. Currently, I understand, over the last month or so the treaty land entitlement chiefs have been working with their own members.

Going back, there have been a couple of particular issues that had to be dealt with internally by those chiefs, which I understand is now happening. There was also an

outstanding issue between the Government of Canada and the treaty land chiefs with respect to legal costs for their solicitor which is in the process of being resolved.

So, from a provincial prospective, I think we have worked through, in principle at least, most of the detail and we are awaiting the treaty land chiefs and the federal government resolving their outstanding issues so that we can get on with pencilling or signing an agreement in principle.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, to the same minister: I would like to ask him about the status of negotiations with the Mathias Colomb First Nation as well.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, again, another very timely question. A key to our involvement on treaty land entitlement was the offer we as a province have made to the treaty land entitlement chiefs to get on with selecting specific land and getting agreement on specific land selections and flowing that land to specific communities as those selections are agreed to.

With respect to Mathias Colomb, we made that offer to them to get on with specific selections in the area which was under dispute with Repap in the cutting area. They have gone back. There has been some exchange of correspondence, and I think we are getting very close to actually sitting down and getting to specific land selections. One problem that has delayed this is the Mathias Colomb band, quite frankly, in that area had not made their own decisions yet as to which land they would request, and they have been undergoing a pretty extensive process to make those decisions before they came to the table with their requests.

* (1420)

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, my final question is a very brief one. Given the support of the town of The Pas, of Repap, the Manitoba Mining Association, amongst others, encouraging this government to settle TLE in this province, I would like to ask the minister whether or not this government is committed to making this issue a major priority.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, not only are we absolutely committed to settling this, part of the discussions we had with the treaty land chiefs was that even if Ottawa would not conclude an agreement with

them, we as a government were still prepared to get on moving specific agreed-to selections into a trust or some vehicle in which those communities could then use the land while they were waiting to finish their negotiations with the federal government. So we in the Filmon administration are fully prepared to move land, as we get an agreement, without an agreement with Ottawa. So we have been prepared to do that.

With respect to Mathias Colomb, as I have indicated, as we get specific selection—some has been done to date—but in the area that was the subject of controversy, as they pick specific lands and we reach agreement on those specific lands, we are prepared to move them into whatever legal vehicle is necessary pending transfer to reserve status.

Elk Ranching Disease Transmission

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on December 21 of last year, the Minister of Agriculture announced that his government would be implementing elk ranching without any public input on what is a very controversial subject. Since then, there has been a case of what is equivalent to mad cow disease diagnosed in Saskatchewan in domestic elk.

Will the Minister of Agriculture agree that, in light of this diagnosis, this is not the time to start elk ranching in Manitoba, and will he put this plan on hold rather than putting at risk the domestic cattle herds in Manitoba?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, as a modest cattle producer myself, I certainly am more than aware of the current difficulties that the cattle producers are having not just in Manitoba but throughout the country, so let me assure her that I would be very concerned about putting at any risk that promising agricultural industry.

With respect to the question of elk ranching, I hope to be in a position to introduce for second reading into this House very shortly the principles of the bill, and I would invite the honourable member to take up the issue at that time.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: I have two rulings for the House.

During Question Period on May 8, 1996, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) concerning words used by the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) in responding to a question. It was contended the First Minister imputed unworthy motives to the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) when the Premier said, "The only sadness, Madam Speaker, is that this member opposite should stoop so low as to try and profit by a situation in which people's lives were at stake and people suffered."

Having reviewed Hansard, I am ruling that there was a point of order, and I am calling upon the First Minister to withdraw those comments.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I accept your ruling and withdraw those comments.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister.

* * *

Madam Speaker: I have a second ruling for the House.

During Question Period on May 13, 1996, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) concerning words spoken by the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) in responding to a question. The opposition House leader's point was that the Deputy Premier stated that the member for Thompson had broken the rules of the House in making reference to the Premier who was out of the country. The opposition House leader, in raising his point of order, stated that he had made no specific reference to the Premier's immediate presence or absence in the Chamber on May 13.

Hansard shows that what was said by the opposition House leader was, and I quote, "since I did ask this question of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) before he left on his overseas trip" and he further went on to say, "or do we have to wait now for the Premier to return from an overseas trip before we can get any resolution of this critical issue?"

I believe that there was implicit in those statements a reference to the absence of the First Minister, and that is

contrary to our rules and practices. I would ask the opposition House leader to withdraw the words he spoke.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I withdraw them.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable member for Thompson.

Further, I am asking the Deputy Premier to withdraw what he said in regard to the honourable member for Thompson, that is, and I quote, "I get equally as upset with the member for Thompson who keeps breaking the rules of the House", as it is clearly unparliamentary to allege that another member breaks the rules.

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable Deputy Premier.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YM-YWCA Women of Distinction

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): It is my pleasure today to bring to your attention the winners of the YM-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards Dinner held Wednesday, May 8, 1996. Each year this event gives us an opportunity to honour those women in our community who have excelled in many fields of endeavour, fields such as community volunteers, teachers, professors, businesswomen, scientists, nurses, doctors, lawyers, fitness, recreation and sports professionals, artists, musicians, public servants, athletes and cultural activists.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the awards dinner. The original format for the awards was to choose winners from specific categories such as the arts or community service. In 1991, the format was changed to the selection of five award winners without defining categories. This year, the women of distinction were: Diane Dwarka, first multicultural information specialist of the Manitoba Education and Training Library; Yvonne La Freniere, Manitoba's Special Olympics coach, fundraiser, strategic planner and communicator; Anne Jorowsky, founder and director of Share Christmas, a

program that collects, refurbishes and distributes thousands of toys for needy Winnipeg children each year.

* (1430)

The fourth was the Women Business Owners of Manitoba. This group provides peer support and ideas and sharing among female entrepreneurs. The fifth award winner was Ginnie Hasselfield who introduced new concepts to business, education and social groups, established cross cultural consulting, created and developed the first computer-based training program in North America on diversity management.

Although there were only five award winners, it should be noted that all of the 25 nominees are outstanding women who are dedicated to their work and to their communities. I am especially pleased to tell you about the recipient of the Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise. Her name was Hygiea Dela Cruz from River East Collegiate.

Madam Speaker, I now ask you to join with me in congratulating all of the YM-YWCA women of distinction.

Evergreen Foundation of Manitoba

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, this spring I had the pleasure and opportunity to attend the Evergreen Foundation of Manitoba Third Annual Dinner at the Arborg Community Centre. This event was held to honour this year's inductees to the Evergreen Foundation Hall of Fame.

All of this year's inductees have contributed a great deal not only to the education system but to the community as a whole. Their dedication and contributions to improving their communities will not soon be forgotten. In recognition of their achievements and contributions, I would like to honour the hard work and dedication over the years of Mr. John H. Menzies, Miss Sigurbjorg Stefansson and posthumously to Mr. Sigurdur G. Wopnford on being included into the Evergreen Foundation Hall of Fame.

In addition to recognizing the new inductees, Madam Speaker, the Evergreen Foundation also took the

opportunity to award scholarships to two outstanding persons from within the community. One of the scholarships was awarded to Tanya Kozera from the community of Fraserwood, who is a mature student currently attending the University of Manitoba with the intention of receiving a physiotherapy degree. Miss Kozera is currently studying in England for four months.

The Evergreen Foundation also awarded a scholarship to Kimberly Arnold. Miss Arnold, who is from Gimli, is currently in the third year of a bachelor of arts program at Brandon University. She hopes to pursue a masters degree in either social work or psychology.

Again, Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate both these students on being awarded the Evergreen Foundation scholarships, and I wish them luck and good fortune.

Brandon Wheat Kings

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, over the course of the past few weeks this House has heard many well-deserved accolades credited to Manitoba's Western Hockey League champions, the Brandon Wheat Kings.

This past weekend, in Peterborough, Ontario, the Wheat Kings took their quest for the Memorial Cup to the semifinals against the host Peterborough Petes and fell just short of their goal.

Yet, while I am certain that the members of the team and all of their loyal fans had hopes of a tournament victory, this Wheat Kings team will be remembered as champions for its own special reasons. I have been fortunate to get to know many of these players and their families personally, and I had the pleasure to be in attendance this past weekend to bear witness to see these quality individuals in action. While they did not bring home the Memorial Cup, I am proud of their gallant effort.

Picked to finish fourth in its own division by many at the beginning of the year, this team, led by 17 Manitobans, ignored the hockey experts as with a combination of speed, size and solid goaltending, they proved themselves to be the class of the western division.

The Wheat Kings did more than represent themselves well on the ice, however. This group of young men travelled throughout western Manitoba, the northwest United States and Ontario and represented our province as worthy ambassadors. Madam Speaker, at a time when the media seems focused on what is wrong with our young people, I hold this group up as an example of what is right with Manitoba's youth.

Madam Speaker, in the years to come, it will not be the scores or the standings that this team or its players will be defined by, it will be the character and class with which they conducted themselves and represented our province. In that regard, every member of this team is a true champion.

While I am certain that each member of this Legislature joins with me in congratulating the Memorial Cup champion Granby Predateurs, I am equally certain that each Manitoban recognizes the best team, defined by more than what takes place on the surface of the ice, calls Brandon home.

Along with my colleague the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), we offer sincere congratulations to each member of the team and their coach Bob Lowes, and I wish them well as they prepare to defend the Western League championship in the 1996-97 season.

Congratulations are also in order to Bob Lowes and his wife Shelley who gave birth to their son while the team was in Peterborough. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Entertainment

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation runs three casinos in Winnipeg, controls the operation of video lottery terminals in lounges and bars and runs all of these at great profit, to date more than \$230 million annually. Apparently this is not enough.

The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation plans to spend over \$1 million on robotic sirens to lure gamblers into the casinos. McPhillips will have a mechanized barbershop quartet and Club Regent a robotic calypso band. Whatever happened to real music? Manitoba has long

been recognized as having talented, successful local musicians. Money spent on robots could have been spent on local bands which would generate employment and add to the tax base. Manitoba could have copied the intelligent Regina casino model but, instead, the Minister responsible for Lotteries (Mr. Stefanson) went to the U.S. and spent one million Manitoba dollars on robots. The current government claims to be worried about gamblers crossing the border and losing their money. This is a problem that will not be redressed with wailing, windup toys. Living, breathing musicians might have helped people.

The government continues to display greed when it comes to the operation of lottery schemes in the province. They drag their heels when it comes to sharing revenues with rural municipalities and First Nations communities and now with local musicians. It is time to take a close look at the progressive revenue sharing plans of sister provinces, first Saskatchewan but even Alberta. It is time to show some regard for our culture and heritage. Leave off the Philistine practices and stop insulting Manitoba by purchasing expensive Disney products with our Manitoba revenue. Thank you.

North Dakota Museum

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony and an opening of the North Dakota Museum located at Pembina, North Dakota, and accompanying me was the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) for this province and his wife Linda. The Pembina state museum will serve as a regional museum and a state historical society for North Dakota and a state tourism centre.

The people of Pembina, North Dakota built a 110-foot high tower with an 85-foot observation deck which will allow visitors to view the whole of the Red River Valley in that area. The museum store offers regional books and gifts for sale and it will offer also a permanent exhibit gallery featuring fossils, tools of the fur trade, of the steamboat era, and of the American Indians and the Metis people. Also, of course, one of the features will be a display of the Selkirk colonists and agriculture, and the importance of the transportation industry to the region and this town.

I think it is important to note, Madam Speaker, that Manitoba finished a \$100-million twinning of Provincial Trunk Highway 75 this last year to the town of Pembina, and the American market that has opened up to Winnipeggers and Manitobans in export of agricultural and manufactured goods is only second to one other province in this country. We have increased our export sales by 31 percent this past year to the U.S. The people of Pembina, North Dakota recognize the potential of the traffic down I-29 and 75 highway and also the potential that the trade-negotiated agreements have offered to them. They have taken advantage of that. They are building a tourism industry and we congratulate them for doing that. That is, of course, in conjunction with the Manitoba tourism centre that was built last year, and we certainly welcome that new initiative by North Dakotans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty. As noted, it will be in the Chamber, Labour followed by Civil Service Commission followed by the Department of Natural Resources and the continuing consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services in the committee.

* (1440)

Madam Speaker, before I moved that motion I should have indicated that I believe there is agreement amongst all members of the House that for Thursday morning next we would waive private members' time in lieu of the Estimates process which would start at 9 a.m. instead of 10 a.m.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House waive private members' hour Thursday morning, and continue in Committee of Supply from 9 a.m. to 12 noon? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: And the Supply motion, Madam Speaker.

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 Family Services; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Labour, the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Natural Resources.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services. When the committee last met it was considering item 1. Administration and Finance (e) Management Services (4) Policy and Planning (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 52 of the Estimates book and that is \$704,700.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Chairperson, on a couple of previous sittings of this committee I undertook to get some information and provide it to my honourable friend the critic for the New Democratic Party and also for the Liberal critic, so I am now going to table with the committee the grants to external agencies for 1996-97. I believe the critic for the Liberal Party would be the member for The Maples if it is the same critic as last year.

Also, I undertook to get some information on overexpenditures in the deputy's and the minister's offices for my honourable friend for the 1994-95 fiscal year. Under the transportation line, the overexpenditure was \$16,900 and that was as a result of three trips, one the deputy, myself and staff went to Chicago to visit Project Match which is a project run by the community for single parents on social allowances. That is when we were doing our consultation and work around the single-parent initiative. The other two were international conferences that the deputy attended. One was by invitation of the federal government, the U.N. Summit on Social Services in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the other was the Global Welfare Conference in Norway that were attended.

There was an overexpenditure for \$2,900 on the Communications line, and that was as a result of a very busy year in the Department of Family Services with us

being the lead department on International Year of the Family and the public consultation process that was part of a single parent initiative that ended up in our decision to implement the Taking Charge! pilot project with the federal government. On Supplies and Services, there was an overexpenditure of \$8,100 and that was increased costs for fax, for photocopying, computer maintenance and office supplies, again because of the very busy year with International Year of the Family and the single parent initiative.

Under the Other Expenditures there was an overexpenditure of \$11,100, and a considerable amount of that money was as a result of the conferences attended by the deputy internationally and the Chicago trip that both the deputy and I attended. Staff training, business meetings regarding program planning, all of those things were a result.

I would like to indicate, although there was a considerable overexpenditure in 1994-95, although the final figures are not tallied for 1995-96 with the exact actuals, that we are almost at budget, maybe slightly overexpended, very slightly, and that would be a result of my travel by invitation of the Premier to the Western Premiers Conference—it was in Saskatchewan—and my duties on the ministerial council by request of the Premier. So we are down; 1994-95 was an unusual year as far as expenditures go, and those kinds of trips were not foreseen when the budget was set.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Chairperson, I would like to thank the minister for providing answers to those questions and also for providing the grants to external agencies list and also for agreeing to have staff here for Family Disputes later this afternoon. Is the minister prepared to answer questions about the grants to external agencies this afternoon?

Mrs. Mitchelson: They are within various divisions. I will answer what I can if staff are here to provide those answers. Rather than having staff coming back and forth, if there are certain questions that need to be answered at a later time, we could put staff on notice when they are here under their line, and we can answer those questions then.

Mr. Martindale: Okay. I really only have questions specifically about CNIB. I think most of the other

questions will come under departments like Child and Family Services, and I think my questions on CNIB are mostly policy issues. If the minister is prepared to answer those this afternoon that would be appreciated.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think, yes, we probably have some staff here in the room that could help with answers to questions on CNIB, if we could just take a minute to have them come to the table.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to begin with general questions and then move into more specifics.

Could the minister tell me if she believes that in a general way, because her department gives substantial amounts of money to the external agencies, and using CNIB as an example who get a grant this year of \$968,000, whether she believes that the government has an important role to play, or even has a role to play in providing some guidance and direction to these external agencies?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson. I thank my honourable friend for that question, because although we do provide support to external agencies to deliver a lot of the service that very vulnerable people need through the Department of Family Services. I think we always have to measure the success of those dollars spent by the outcomes that we see as a result of the expenditure. In many instances it is a considerable expenditure.

* (1450)

I think from time to time it is important that we evaluate the kind of service that is being provided with taxpayers' dollars to those organizations that are there to deliver a service for the people who require that service. I think it is extremely important that, although we do not want to be hands-on as a government department—otherwise we would deliver the service ourselves—we do expect there is value for the dollar that is provided and that the people who need the service are getting that service.

Mr. Martindale: I can appreciate that the minister does not want to run these agencies. On the other hand, in the past, when there have been problems in external agencies, staff from the minister's department have gone in to help them through their problems or crises. I think the

government has a role that is greater than just measuring outcomes, so I would like to ask the minister if she is willing to provide direction to agencies, because in many of these cases the government is the major funder.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Over the last number of years, the Department of Family Services has embarked upon a process to have service and funding agreements with all of the external agencies that we provide funding to, so we know what service we are purchasing at what cost. CNIB, if that is what my honourable friend is referring to, we are attempting yet to get that service and funding agreement with them. Absolutely, if there are people who are supposed to be receiving a service from an agency that we provide tax dollars to and those services are not being received, it is important for us to find out why and to try and ensure that those who are being served are receiving the help they need.

Mr. Martindale: If the minister's department are in the process of negotiating a service and funding agreement with CNIB, then perhaps my questions are quite relevant and timely here. I guess I will get down to some more specifics. Individuals have raised concerns with me about the membership process or the membership by-laws of CNIB, saying that they are not open, because it is a very complex formula where people have to be nominated for membership, which is really quite unusual.

I think part of the problem here is that their constitution I believe goes back to something like 1918 and has not been modernized. Is this the kind of issue that the minister, in negotiating the service and funding agreement, would be willing to raise with CNIB and suggest that they at the very least democratize their membership process?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We too in the department have heard the issues that have been raised today by my honourable friend. We have been in dialogue and discussion with CNIB, and they have agreed to conduct an internal review of their organization and operations. It certainly is one of the issues that can be looked at in conjunction with negotiations towards a service and funding agreement.

Mr. Martindale: I guess I would like the minister to take a little stronger action than just acknowledging that there is an internal review underway. My understanding

is that clients of CNIB wishing to become members must complete an application form, acceptance of the application for membership must be proposed and seconded in writing by two members in good standing, and the application is forwarded to the council for consideration. The application must then be approved by a majority vote of the council.

I think this is a very convoluted membership requirement which I have never heard of before in any other organization, and I am wondering if the minister would be prepared to say to CNIB that this is really unacceptable.

Mrs. Mitchelson: My understanding is that the rules and regulations that govern CNIB come from their national body. I do not know whether at the local level how much impact they actually have on making change in that respect. But I want to go back to saying—and my honourable friend raises a good question—there is an issue always around support to people who need support, whether it be directly from a government department or those external agencies that we fund. This is one issue that my honourable friend raises. There are others that have been raised around CNIB, and we have attempted through the department to the best of our ability to try to facilitate a positive resolution to some of those issues.

There was an issue around the deaf/blind community that we worked very aggressively on to try to find a solution. I think we have come up with a solution that everyone can live with. I want to assure my honourable friend that if there are issues and circumstances where people are feeling that the money that we are providing to an external agency is not doing the kinds of things that need to be done for the people who need their service, that we look into that and we try to find a resolution.

I make a commitment to that and to the community. We collect and spend, on behalf of taxpayers, a considerable amount of money in the Department of Family Services, and if the dollars that are being spent are not going to serve the people who need our help, we need to look at ways of finding better ways of ensuring that the services and the programs get into the hands of the people who need those programs and those services.

Mr. Martindale: Well, it seems to me that it is an issue of more than just the quality of the service that is

provided. I am also concerned about how consumers of the service are involved in delivery and in decision making, and some organizations I think have been quite progressive involving consumers. In fact, the first time I heard the expression "consumers" was when I cochaired a conference for the Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba branch, and they involved consumers on their board and in all their committees. I think that is a very good model that other organizations should try to follow. With CNIB, there is no reason why they cannot have more consumers providing service and on their board of directors and on committees so that there is more accountability in terms of the service that is being delivered. Right now, I think there is a lack of accountability and I think there could be improvements.

* (1500)

Is the minister in favour of seeing more consumers on the board and on committees so that they have a greater say in how services are delivered?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I cannot ultimately determine who might be included on a board or on committees. What we can do as government is ensure accountability for the dollars that we provide to agencies or organizations to deliver services on our behalf, and if those people who are needing the service are not getting that service, we want to ensure that there is accountability. We will have to look at some way of ensuring that whoever is delivering the service is doing it to best meet the needs of the people who require the support.

I cannot and should not, as the minister, interfere with an organization and their by-laws or rules and regulations, but I can say to you that if an organization that is delivering service on behalf of my department is not delivering the service in the appropriate, accountable, efficient fashion that needs to happen, we can take steps to indeed ensure that that service gets provided in a way that is accountable to the people who need the support and the help.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think that this minister has considerable clout, because the grant to CNIB is almost a million dollars a year, and I think that is reason enough, since this minister controls the purse strings, to exercise some of her authority and provide direction to the organization.

One of the complaints that was passed on to me and I assume to the minister as well is that the agency is managed from the top down and that, although divisional regions and branch offices can set up advisory boards and committees, they are prevented from initiating policies or actions unless approved by the national council or are within existing national policies. So the organization appears to be quite hierarchical. The Manitoba division is a division of a national organization, but their funding is from the province of Manitoba in large part, so I think that the accountability should be to the taxpayers of Manitoba. I think that the minister has the authority and the wherewithal to require more accountability in Manitoba. Would the minister agree?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, although my honourable friend and I might be saying things a little differently, I think we both agree that tax dollars that are spent to deliver any service to people who are in need, need to be spent in an efficient and an effective and an accountable way, and the dollars should be going into the hands of the people who need the service through programming or direct service delivery. If, in fact, that is not happening, I cannot control the exact direction that any organization or agency takes, but I can, in fact, control how the dollars are flowed to ensure the service is delivered.

So I do not think we are saying things differently. I think we both have the same objective, and that is to see that the clients or the consumers have the best program possible to meet their needs, and I am committing today, as I have committed in the past and to many who come into my office and sit around my table and express concern about the service that they are receiving, if, in fact, there is not accountability for the tax dollars that are being expended, we are going to have to find a better way of delivering that service, and I am committed to that.

Mr. Martindale: I am wondering if the minister believes that the most effective way to provide this service is through an agency that has a monopoly on providing the service and is not controlled by a group that it is supposed to serve.

Would it not be better to have control in the hands of people who understand the needs of the client group the best and to make changes to ensure that that is possible?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I need to clarify that we are not the only funder of CNIB. The service that we purchase from them and the service agreement that we are trying to get put in place provides for vocational rehab. That is for job finding, job placement, for vocational counselling and for career path development, so that is what our dollars flow for through CNIB.

The United Way is another fairly significant funder of CNIB, and I know they get some money from their national body or national organization. I still go back to saying that we will, we do, and I do, meet from time to time with consumers of the service, plus the CNIB, and my ultimate goal is to ensure that the dollars being granted to CNIB are used in the way they should be used to ensure that the services that we purchase from them are being provided to the clients that need that service. I am prepared to meet at any time with any group of consumers or any individual consumer that feels that their needs are not being met, and we will try to facilitate a solution.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for those answers. She can be sure that the people who met with her staff and the people that I met with will be given all those answers. They will be happy to hear that the minister is going to meet with them as well.

On the list of grants to external agencies, can the minister tell me if the grants are frozen at the previous level or increased or decreased?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The grants provided on this listing all received a 2 percent reduction in this year's budget, as did grants right across government, except for daycare centres and homes and child and family services agencies.

* (1510)

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask some questions on line 9.1(e). I have been reading the annual report, and it is just a little gold mine of information. If I can go back to that line—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. 9.1.(e) 4 or 5?

Mr. Martindale: Policy and Planning.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Policy and Planning, that is where we are.

Mr. Martindale: Well, just to help the minister and her staff, I am on page 20 of the '94-95 annual report, and I read with interest the section on intergovernmental relations. I would like to ask the minister how much money was spent approximately on the International Year of the Family?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There was an International Year of the Family Secretariat that was set up that was separate. You have to remember that this was back in 1994-95. It was not this last fiscal year, or it is not this fiscal year, so any current information, I think that may be available, but it is not information that would be here today. I can try to get that information. It has probably been answered at some point in time. It may have even been answered in Question Period last year or the year before. I know there was a certain budget appropriation for International Year of the Family, and I could try to get that information and provide it, but it is not readily available today.

Mr. Martindale: I think it was in the area of \$200,000 or \$300,000, approximately. Could the minister tell us why no staff or money has been allocated to the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My honourable friend may recall, I arrived in the Department of Family Services partway through International Year of the Family or the organization of that, and the organization had been going on for about a year previous to the actual year that celebrated International Year of the Family. My honourable friend will recall, and I am just reminded that it was the federal government that reached out to provinces and asked all of us to participate in International Year of the Family in some manner, and they had an organization or a secretariat that came out and spoke to all provinces and were partners in that initiative, spearheaded by the federal government.

So provinces did respond, and I have to say that for the dollars that were spent in organization in the province of Manitoba we received great benefit. I think that communities responded in a very major way, and there was a lot of media participation, a lot of in-kind contribution and a lot of organizations that participated, but it was spearheaded by the federal government and the

information and the packages were distributed to provinces by the federal government. So it was by invitation to participate that we participated, same as the U.N. Year for the Eradication of Poverty. I would have anticipated that the federal government would have coordinated something. We have not been contacted in any way, and there has been no initiative to respond to by provinces.

Mr. Martindale: Well, it really does make sense for this minister not to sponsor an international year for the eradication of poverty in Manitoba since she reduced social assistance rates and increased the level of poverty in Manitoba. So at least the minister is being consistent.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess Manitoba is not unlike British Columbia, which has a New Democratic government, or Saskatchewan, that has a New Democratic government. I think both of those governments participated in International Year of the Family by invitation of the federal government. I have not heard from or been communicated to by the NDP minister of social services in British Columbia or Saskatchewan that they have any initiative that they have undertaken to respect this year, so I take some exception to the comments by my honourable friend that he would single Manitoba out when he knows that his cousins in the New Democratic Party across the country have not initiated anything to, I am not going to say celebrate, because it is nothing to celebrate, to do anything in a proactive way in their respective jurisdictions.

Mr. Martindale: The minister had a role in hosting and chairing meetings at the official ministerial level when, I guess, she was the senior minister for social services for all the provinces or when it was her turn as the minister to host, and hosting that meeting in Winnipeg has already garnered considerable publicity. Since the minister has already apologized on national TV for some of those expenses, I think it would be unfair of me to repeat them on the record here. However, I would like to ask a couple of questions about things that are not a matter of public record yet, and that is, how much did it cost to hire a comedian for the dinner at Le Beaujolais restaurant, an impersonator, I understand?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we do not have a breakdown for that. I understand that the request that came from the media around the Folk Arts Council

entertainment was provided to the media, and I will have to get some breakdown and some detail and provide that information on specific breakdown.

Mr. Martindale: Were there any expenses that might have been paid for by the minister?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, in what respect?

Mr. Martindale: Were there any expenses that were not paid for by the minister's department that might have been paid for in some other way, for example, by the minister or even reimbursed by the minister personally?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, in relation to expenses for the ministerial conference, I may have had personal expenses that I paid for, but there would be nothing that would be related to the conference.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 9.1.(e) (4) Policy and Planning (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$704,700—pass; 1.(e) (4) Other Expenditures (b) \$223,000—pass.

9.1.(e) (5) Residential Care Licensing (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: I believe that this was part of the minister's department that I asked the staff to do an investigation, and they did and some recommendations were made. I appreciate the prompt follow-up to my inquiries by the minister's staff in residential care licensing and, in fact, they are going to do a reinspection I believe in June of this year. So I will probably be in touch with the staff again to see if the problems were permanently cleared up or whether they had to reprimand the agency again. I have no questions for 1.(e) (5).

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 9.1.(e) (5) Residential Care Licensing (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$311,200—pass; 1.(e) (5) (b) Other Expenditures \$33,300—pass.

9.2.Income Security and Regional Operations (a) Central Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,149,900.

* (1520)

Mr. Martindale: I believe this is the part of Income Security that is responsible for investigating allegations

of welfare fraud and responsible for overpayment recovery. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, yes.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I have a number of questions here. Could the minister tell us how many phone calls were received by the welfare fraud line in the fiscal year '95-96?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, from the end of June 1994 until the end of February 1996, there were around 6,200 calls.

Mr. Martindale: What was the result of those calls? How many were considered for charges of some kind or another?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, as a result of the calls, there were 723 cases closed, and there was corrective action taken for assessment of overpayment for 297 cases.

Mr. Martindale: How many charges were laid?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, charges are laid in conjunction with the Crown and the police. There have been very few charges laid. There are two different processes that can be used. One is charges under the Criminal Code, and the other is charges under The Social Allowances Act.

I do not have the exact numbers, although I can indicate to my honourable friend that it is a small number, and I will get those numbers and provide them.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for that. We will come back to that later today or tomorrow then.

I see the minister's staff have their calculators with them today, so could they tell me what percentage 723 files closed is of 6,200 complaints?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it is about 12 percent.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what percent 297 is of 6,200?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is about 5 percent.

Mr. Martindale: I assume that in addition to the welfare fraud line that staff are constantly doing investigations. I wonder if the minister can tell me how many investigations were done by staff in the department in addition to the welfare fraud line.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have that here, but we will get some stats and provide that information.

Mr. Martindale: I understand that the investigation unit or audit unit are looking at all kinds of government records. I wonder if the minister can confirm that staff have access to wills and estates.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The information that we do obtain from time to time, and it is all information that is publicly available, if it is through the Land Titles Office or whatever, if it is public information, that is information that we can use through the department to check.

Mr. Martindale: Well, let us just go through the list here. I understand that court information regarding wills and estates is being checked for possible welfare fraud. Is that correct?

* (1530)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, yes.

Mr. Martindale: And alimony payments?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is sharing of information between Maintenance Enforcement and our office.

Mr. Martindale: And Autopac settlements?

Mrs. Mitchelson: When we are providing for basic needs through social allowance for any individual, there is a waiver form that is signed that allows us to check information in order to receive the payment. We use that, I guess, in various ways to determine eligibility.

Mr. Martindale: I am familiar with the form and the authorizations but, if the department is going to get information about Autopac settlements, then presumably they are making contact with Autopac and, if so, do they have some sort of agreement to get that information?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have a formal agreement with Autopac, but there is some informal dialogue and discussion. But we would not check anything unless there was written consent of the individual.

Mr. Martindale: I have been told that the reach is going back approximately 10 years in order to verify possible welfare fraud. Is this accurate or not?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It all depends on the nature of the case. There may be instances where if there is an indication that there may have been some fraudulent activity that we would go back several years, but it is on a case-by-case basis. I am informed that it is based on the information that exists around the individual circumstances.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that the key to ensuring financial accountability is frequent contact between clients and program administrators. Can the minister tell us what the average caseload is of financial workers to clients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have two types of workers. We have financial workers and the case counsellors. Financial workers have a caseload of about 400, and the case managers have a caseload of around 250.

Mr. Martindale: Have those caseloads been going up in recent years or are they relatively stable?

Mrs. Mitchelson: They are relatively stable.

Mr. Martindale: My understanding is that city Social Services staff may have ratios of staff-to-cases of up to 1 to 800. Is the minister aware of this?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have that kind of detail on the City of Winnipeg and their staffing arrangements, but it is very difficult for us to compare, because they do organize their workload, I am told, in a considerably different fashion than we do. We may gain more information and have a better understanding of how the City of Winnipeg manages their caseloads and their staff-to-client ratio as we move closer to understanding what a one-tiered welfare system will look like in the City of Winnipeg. We do not have that information. They are not employees of my department. I guess the question might best be asked of officials at the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister plan to keep most or all of the city Social Services staff on when the two systems are amalgamated, so that we do not end up with very high ratios of staff to clients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is premature to even speculate on what a one-tier system might look like in the City of Winnipeg. Presently, we have a steering committee and a consultant working together to develop a business plan. Once we have an understanding of what that business plan might look like, then we will be able to determine more easily what needs to happen with the one-tiered system.

I guess the main focus of that system would be to try to ensure that the best service available for the client is there and that we run an efficient and an effective system with support, where it is needed for employment opportunity or for training, recognizing that the focus on any system that we have in place has to be on employability first. That is what welfare reform is all about, trying to ensure that everyone who has the ability to work has the opportunity to seek employment or to find training that would lead to employment.

Mr. Martindale: Is the minister moving to direct deposit for provincial social assistance clients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, that is one of the systems that we will be looking at when we look at building a new program for one tier. We are not doing it in the interim, but we will be looking at the feasibility of that.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister realize that in addition to possibly some advantages of direct deposit that one of the disadvantages is that there is less contact between clients and social assistance recipients, and with electronic banking it means that someone could potentially be out of province or out of country and it would take much longer for this kind of welfare fraud to be detected?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, of course, all of that will have to be taken into consideration. I think we need to look at the pros and the cons of any change. As we are building a one-tiered system in the City of Winnipeg, one system or the other will have to change and there will

have to be something take place, so we will pursue that as we move along.

I want to indicate to my honourable friend that we are a little ways away from a one-tier system. We are looking a year down the road. I do not think we want to rush into something. We have made the commitment to do it and we will do it, but I do not think we want to rush into putting in place a system until it is thought through in a very comprehensive way to ensure that we have the best system possible when it is up and running.

* (1540)

Mr. Martindale: Well, if it is only a year down the road, I better ask my questions now. It might be too late next year in Estimates, although given the amount of time it took the minister to proclaim The Vulnerable Persons Act which has not been proclaimed yet and Taking Charge! program which took a long time to get off the road, I may get a second crack at this.

But just in case I do not, my concern is that when the two systems are amalgamated that the worst possible outcome would be that the lowest common denominator of each system would be adopted, so a number of questions flow from that. For example—and the minister and I have had this out in Question Period before—I believe that many of the staff in the city Social Services system are better trained because, for example, they have many more people with social work degrees, Master of Social Work degrees, than I believe the province has. So I would like to ask the minister if she plans to keep on those staff who have social work degrees.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is premature to comment even on what the system might look like. We have a steering committee comprised of senior officials at both levels of government that are working together. There has been a commitment by the City of Winnipeg at the political level to pursue a one-tiered system, and they have asked us many times to—it just does not seem to make sense to them to have two levels of government delivering a welfare service. Given our welfare reform initiatives, and the announcements that were made most recently, some of those that are now on provincial welfare will become employable. We have always had the unemployable caseload at the province, and the city has had the employable caseload.

It is very timely when we look at changing the definition of who is employable and who is not to determine how to best manage that system. You can imagine there would have been a fairly major outcry if we had—once we made the decision to change the work expectations for single parents with children in school, if we decided to transfer those over to the municipal caseload because they were now employable, you might have heard a major outcry from the City of Winnipeg. So we are going through a time of change and a process of change.

You know, my honourable friend thinks that the staff at the City of Winnipeg is better than the staff that is hired in the Department of Family Services to deliver a service. I mean, he has an opinion. I am not sure what that opinion is based on, but I guess the key issue for me is not what qualifications, whether it be a social work degree or a financial management degree or whatever. What is the proper mix of professionals in our new system to deliver the best service possible to the clients that need that service? I cannot tell him today. Unless he has got better information than I have, I cannot say today who is best to deliver that service.

I think we have to go through the process, recognizing that it is a significant change, a very major change, and we are looking at two levels of government coming together as one, with the province having the ultimate responsibility to deliver the service. I would not even suggest today that staff at the City of Winnipeg are better able to deliver the service to those that will be part of a provincial government program in the future, whether it be a year or two years from now. We may have to go through a transition period, but I have confidence that we have many good employees at the province in the Department of Family Services and I am sure they have many good employees in the City of Winnipeg. What the mix will be when we move through the process, I cannot predetermine today, but I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that I think our focus has to be first and foremost on the client who needs the service.

We have to build a program around how we can best respond to those client needs. I say again, I am not an expert today, and I am not prepared to make any public statement confirming or denying who will be there at the end of the day to deliver the service. I would hope that any responsible minister or government, in fact, would

make the right decisions when all of the facts and all of the information are presented in front of that minister or that government to make those decisions in an informed way, understanding that there will be a new system. There will be an amalgamation of two departments, one from the City of Winnipeg and one from the Province of Manitoba.

I just say to my honourable friend that I am not sure I would have the answers; I am not sure he has the answers or has any expertise in the field to make the determination on whose staff is better, the province's or the city's. I think it is unfair to the staff in both systems to try to make those comparisons without any accurate informed process that has taken place to date. I have to say that I prefer to wait to have those who have been challenged with the job of coming up with a new system and a new process put the options on the table for discussion and for decision making, once those options are there that are fully researched, and I can be fully informed. I would hesitate to make any comment one way or the other.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister.

An Honourable Member: Not yet.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for the promotion, Mr. Chairperson.

I think there is a connection between the qualifications of staff and service to clients. I think trained staff such as those in the city's Social Services have been very good at providing counselling and providing referrals, both to nongovernment agencies and to employment training programs. I think the city has done a much better job in terms of the number and variety of employment programs and in the adequacy of benefits, which we will get into in a minute.

Could the minister confirm that the province will absorb approximately \$20-million worth of expense that the City of Winnipeg taxpayers currently bear, namely the cost of social services, and that when that happens, the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) is going to cut the grant to the City of Winnipeg by approximately \$20 million?

* (1550)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, my honourable friend, without being informed in any meaningful fashion, it is sort of predetermining what might take place. The whole basis in all of the discussions that we have had at the political level with the City of Winnipeg has been that in fact this will be a revenue-neutral process. [interjection]

You know, my honourable friend again says, well, is that not how you are going to do it? In fact, if I had all the answers today, I suppose I could just go ahead and do it, but I do not have the answers. That is why we have a steering committee, both levels of government, officials at both levels of government, and we have a consultant who is looking at the business plan. Then, if we approve that business plan, how do we go through the implementation, the transition? All of those issues will be dealt with at that level and through that process, but the premise and the understanding has always been that it will be on a revenue-neutral basis, and that will be the basis for negotiation between the two levels of government through the steering committee as we move through the process. I do not have the answers to those questions today. If I had all the answers I would be able to make the final announcement and start moving on a one-tiered system, and I do not.

Mr. Martindale: A few minutes ago I said that the key to financial accountability is frequency of contact between clients and workers. Is the minister aware that the City of Winnipeg Social Services have cut off home visits for the time being because their clients are so hostile due to this minister's reduction of benefits for single individuals to \$411 a month?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I am informed that staff at the city level have indicated that, yes, they have cut back on home visits, but it is more a workload issue than anything.

Mr. Martindale: Perhaps the minister could explain to me the Free Press article saying that the caseload went up considerably in the city of Winnipeg recently. I wonder what the explanation is for that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess my honourable friend is doing his research from the Winnipeg Free Press article of last week, I think it was, that does indicate that the caseloads have gone up. I think the article indicates that staff at the city level have indicated that because they have not been

able to fill vacant positions, have not been given the authority to do that, that they have a backlog. I have not had that confirmed by those at the political level at city hall but, nonetheless, our staff have met with officials at the City of Winnipeg and will continue to meet to try to determine what the issues are surrounding that and how that issue can be addressed.

Mr. Martindale: On April 1, 1996, the City of Winnipeg Social Services reduced their monthly social assistance rates for children. Will this provincial minister admit that the main reason for this reduction was the standardization of rates which was brought in by this government, I believe, in 1993?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have to indicate that it was the federal government that was cost sharing with the City of Winnipeg the additional rates that they provided for children. Money was just flowed through us. There was no contribution by the provincial government over and above our standard rates and, you know, I think we have mentioned many times before that the rates for children in the city of Winnipeg were the highest across the country, bar none, higher than in the NDP city of Vancouver, where there is a New Democratic administration.

Now, you cannot tell me that the cost of living in Winnipeg is higher than the cost of living in Vancouver, and yet the City of Winnipeg made a conscious decision to have the highest rates across the country, and the federal government did in the past share the increased rates that they provided on a 50-cent basis. That money was no longer available for the City of Winnipeg when the federal government eliminated CAP. I met with the City of Winnipeg and said that they could, on their own, see if they could get federal commitment to continue to cost share. I think they tried that and were flatly refused. So they made the decision to reduce their rates based on the federal government decision. It was their decision to make. I know my honourable friend has tried to blame me for that, but, you know, the City of Winnipeg, the councillors at that level, are elected to represent the taxpayers of the city of Winnipeg, and ultimately they have to be held accountable for decisions that they make.

Mr. Martindale: Why will this minister not just admit that the City of Winnipeg entered into a special agreement with the federal government, possibly the only municipality in Canada to cost share with a city on a 50-

50 basis, in order to keep the rates higher, and that at the end of March this year they had a very difficult decision to make, which was to either continue shouldering millions of dollars of expenses by keeping the rates higher or dropping them part way, because they did not drop them entirely to the provincial level, and that the main reason for reducing the rates was that their agreement with the federal government ended, the province had much lower rates, and they reduced the rate in order to reflect the reality which really came in in 1993 with standardization, which was a policy of the provincial government?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I go back again to saying that I suppose we could eliminate the government of the City of Winnipeg and take it over as a province and make all their decisions for them. I am not sure that I would want to do that. The city councillors are duly elected to make decisions on budgetary expenditures and the use of taxpayers' dollars that they collect. I repeat again that they have to be held accountable for the decisions that they make, and we have to be held accountable too for the decisions that we make through our budget process. Ultimately, it will be the taxpayers of Manitoba and the voters in the province of Manitoba who will determine whether we have done the right thing or the wrong thing.

We know that every decision that we make is not going to be supported by 100 percent of Manitobans. There are going to be people that are unhappy with our decisions, and there are going to be people that are happy, but ultimately the voters of the province of Manitoba will determine whether, on balance, we have done a good enough job as a government to be re-elected. If the majority feel that way, we will continue to govern, and, if the majority feel that we have made too many mistakes and someone else deserves the chance to govern the province of Manitoba, that decision will be made. It is out of my hands, and it is out of my honourable friend's hands, to some degree. Ultimately, we will be judged. I will be judged based on the decisions that I have made as the Minister of Family Services or whatever other area I have responsibility for within government, and my honourable friend will be judged on how successful he has been at being critical of government policy and direction. I stand to be accountable for the decisions that I have made. I think city councillors have to stand and be accountable for the decisions that they make.

* (1600)

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am grateful that this government has not taken over the City of Winnipeg since they have consistently provided higher benefits, to use the current example, social assistance rates for children, and I do not know how this minister in good conscience can defend her welfare cutbacks and also defend standardization knowing that the result was that when the city was forced to lower their rates, for children under one year the reduction was \$65.25 a month, a reduction of 26 percent, which is inadequate even by an analysis by this minister's own government done by the home economics section of the provincial Department of Agriculture.

In their family living costs guides for 1996, the cost of food at home for an infant is calculated at \$129.31, and the amount of allowance that children under one year are getting for everything is \$182 a month, so food makes up a major portion of what those children need, but according to this government's own home economists, I would say that this amount is inadequate, and I would like to table the chart provided by the City of Winnipeg for their reductions with the percentage reduction for each age group that I have calculated.

I would like to ask the minister some questions about the reduction to allowances announced, I believe, on March 14 by this government which took effect on May 1. First of all, could the minister verify that the percentages that she used to calculate the reductions, which I believe is acknowledged in her backgrounder to the press release, are based on the total amount of income and are not based on a reduction for the items that were actually reduced?

Mrs. Mitchelson: They were based on the total amount of support provided to individuals.

I just want to go back to my honourable friend's comments just a few moments ago. I think he might have forgotten that from time to time we have been in agreement on certain issues, not often, but from time to time, and I think in his comments that he made regarding the city being forced to reduce their benefits to children, he has to remember who forced the city.

If, in fact, the federal government had maintained the status quo and continued with the Canada Assistance Plan and cost-sharing rather than reducing significantly

the amount of transfer dollars that went to provinces, in fact there would not have had to be a change. The city would not have had to make that decision. I think my honourable friend and I both agree that we may not agree on the decisions that had to be made as a result of less money coming from the federal government, but we both agree that the federal government has offloaded significantly onto the provinces for services and programs that they used to provide.

So as difficult as the decisions were to make, we, in fact, had to make some difficult choices, but they were forced upon us by the federal government. My honourable friend does know, too, as we know, that they reduced to a greater degree their transfers to the provinces than they did internally. So we took the major hit, and obviously, the City of Winnipeg took a major hit, but those decisions would not have had to be made by the City of Winnipeg if, in fact, the Canada Assistance Plan still existed and the dollars still flowed to the provinces.

Mr. Martindale: Would the minister agree that the actual amount that people lost, first of all in the category of single parent with two children over six, rather than being 2.7 percent of the total income, it was actually over 5 percent of the disposable income items that were cut, namely, food, clothing, household needs, personal needs?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, my honourable friend is correct if you look at the basic benefit, but what he is not including is the new supplementary benefit that was added to a single parent with two older children. So, in fact, the impact that looked like it was 5 percent could have been 4.5 percent or less. We cannot use the standard 5 percent, because the new supplementary—I am having difficulty explaining this except to say that a total overall reduction that we announced of 2.7 percent could have been as high as 4.5 percent rather than 5 percent because of a new supplementary benefit that was added into the basic rate.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister explain the new supplementary benefit and the amount of money involved?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, there no longer is a supplementary benefit. What used to be the supplementary benefit is now rolled into part of the basic benefits.

* (1610)

Mr. Martindale: Would the minister agree that the reduction for our single employables to \$411 a month was not 10.2 percent, as the minister said in her background to the press release, but was really in the area of 21 percent of the items that were reduced?

Mrs. Mitchelson: What we did for our basic benefit for single employables was near what the province of British Columbia just did, and that was to provide \$175 of basic benefit, and then when you include the shelter cost, because the cost of shelter is less in Manitoba than it is in Vancouver, shelter costs are independent of what the basic benefit is. So our basic benefit in Manitoba for single employables is exactly what the basic benefit in the city of Vancouver would be. I know that our cost of living is less in the city of Winnipeg than it is in Vancouver.

Mr. Martindale: Would the minister agree that for couples with no children the reduction is not 10.5 percent but in fact much closer to 21 percent of the discretionary items that were reduced, food, clothing, household needs, personal needs?

Mrs. Mitchelson: This is exactly the same issue that we just discussed with the single employables. [interjection] I am informed that our rates are still higher for childless couples than New Democratic British Columbia.

Mr. Martindale: My understanding is that the budget reductions for social assistance clients, wherein of their budget, will save the government approximately \$10 million. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take a 10-minute break?

An Honourable Member: Five.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I believe it is the will of the committee to take between five and 10-minute break.

This committee is in recess.

The committee recessed at 4:15 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:26 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. We will resume the Estimates of Family Services. We were on 2.(a)(1).

Mr. Martindale: I think when we left off I was asking the minister if the total of budget reductions to individual clients is \$10 million. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: By discontinuing personal tax credits, how much money does that amount to?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I believe it is \$7 million.

Mr. Martindale: By withdrawing the personal tax credit, how much is that worth?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is \$7.7 million for both, those last two.

Mr. Martindale: I understand that there were other budget reductions for individuals that were not announced in the minister's press release but were in the Orders-in-Council, since the minister's staff very helpfully briefed me on the Order-in-Council. Could the minister verify that one of those is that people newly enrolled on the system after May 1 will no longer receive an additional \$60 a month? I believe that would be for a couple with no children.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is for couples with children on the municipal caseload; they used to get an extra \$60 a month after they had been enrolled on social allowances for six months. Anyone new coming into the system will not receive that.

Mr. Martindale: How much money does the government anticipate that will save over the course of the next year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it is included in the \$10 million figure, but it is around \$300,000.

Mr. Martindale: I believe that, when I was briefed by the minister's staff, we came up with a figure for the total cuts of \$23.1 million. I wonder if the minister could verify that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is correct.

Mr. Martindale: So far we are up to \$17.7 million. I wonder if the minister could identify the other items and the amounts of money.

* (1630)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the rest is not really reduction; it is sort of an estimation of a saving of around \$5 million for all of the employment-first initiatives that will help get people off welfare and into the workforce.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us how those savings are arrived at? Is it because of the improved work incentive?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it is through interventions such as Taking Charge!, the community services projects with the City of Winnipeg, the Rural Jobs Project, the Conservation Corps, Opportunities Manitoba, which was announced with the package, the Youth NOW initiative announced by the Department of Education, and direct referrals to the call centres, to the fashion industry, the single-parent program, employment connections, work placements, the truck driver training, Pathways, SEED Winnipeg, all of the partnerships that we have announced in the development of initiatives with the private sector, with other levels of government. All of those things combined, we believe will achieve the savings through employment opportunities for those that are presently on social allowances or would be coming onto social allowances.

Mr. Martindale: Is that estimate based on an assumption that a certain number of people will be in the paid workforce and no longer on income security?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is roughly in the area of about 700 people off of the welfare caseload going into the workforce.

Mr. Martindale: The minister informed us that people no longer getting an increased benefit on municipal

assistance, that is couples with children, will save the government a certain amount of money. Would the minister agree that that is about a 10 percent cut to people on municipal assistance with children?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No one that is currently on social allowances and has been on for over six months, families with children on the municipal caseload, will lose that money. It is not a cut. Those that would be enrolled in the system into the future would not receive that benefit.

Mr. Martindale: So is it not true that their rates would be approximately 10 percent less since they will not be getting that money?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I indicated earlier, anyone that is receiving the additional \$60 per month will not lose that \$60 per month, so there will not be a reduction. Anyone that is newly enrolled into the program will not receive that \$60 a month after they have been on social allowances for six months. It is our expectation, and we are very hopeful that you are looking at families with two people, two adults in that household, we certainly consider one of those people employable, and we will work very aggressively to try to ensure that those are the people that have opportunities for employment immediately upon entrance into the program so that indeed they will not require social allowances but they will in fact be in the workforce.

Mr. Martindale: Under the old schedule and regulations, people on social assistance were given I believe \$12 a month for one person for coin laundry and \$3 for each extra person in the household. My understanding is that the change in the regulations means that in future people will get no money for coin laundry, is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, that is grandfathered. Anyone that is receiving that allowance will continue to receive that allowance. Anyone newly enrolled into the program will not receive it.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us how people are supposed to pay for coin laundry from now on?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That amount was over and above the allowances that are recorded. I want to indicate to my honourable friend that in NDP B.C., again, there is no

laundry allowance over and above the basic benefit. As a matter of fact, most provinces right across the country, I do not want to just pick on B.C., but I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that in a province where the New Democratic government is in power, they do not take into consideration any extra needs for laundry.

Mr. Martindale: We could get into comparing provinces here and point out that Manitoba refused to backfill any of the cuts in the federal government but Saskatchewan backfilled, dollar for dollar, millions of dollars cut for social services and that in B.C. the provincial government is paying for education and training up to and including university for one layer of categories of people. However, let us pass 2.(a).

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 9.2.(a) Central Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,149,900—pass; 9.2.(a)(2) Other Expenditures \$633,200—pass.

9.2.(b) Income Maintenance Programs (1) Employment and Income Assistance \$215,501,100—pass; 2.(b)(2) Health Services \$15,834,800—pass.

9.2.(b)(3) Municipal Assistance \$106,223,500.

Mr. Martindale: I wrote to the minister about the R.M. of Lorne and I think she has replied to my correspondence, so I assume I can expect it shortly and that the minister has taken corrective action and told the council to stop violating the municipal assistance act?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My deputy minister has written to the R.M. of Lorne and indicated that it is against the law to publish names of welfare recipients, and I believe I have copied my honourable friend with that letter and a covering letter. It should be on its way.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 9.2.(b)(3) Municipal Assistance \$106,223,500—pass; 2.(b)(4) Income Assistance for the Disabled \$9,100,000—pass.

9.2.(c) Making Welfare Work \$3,500,000—pass.

9.2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,400.

Mr. Martindale: I have a question about a story that was in the Free Press I believe last fall. I do not have it

with me but I wrote a letter to the minister about it. It was a banner headline on the front page that said that the minister would top up wages of Income Security recipients who went to work in the garment industry. The example that she used was a single parent making \$800 a month, and she would top up their wages by \$200 for a total of \$1,000 a month. So I got out the social assistance administrative manual and figured out the work incentive program, which was in existence at that time. According to my calculations, an individual would have been better off under an existing program under this minister's department than under the scheme that was in the news story. I am wondering if the minister could verify that my figures were correct or not.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that the facts that were in the newspaper article were rather confused and not necessarily accurate.

Mr. Martindale: Is the minister saying she was misquoted?

* (1640)

Mrs. Mitchelson: My recollection is that there was not a direct quote but if my honourable friend has information that—it is unfortunate. I do not have the newspaper article in front of me either, and it might be interesting to have that information.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister, in the interests of time, could get back to me on that. We do not need to get an answer right now.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, just reviewing the article very quickly, I do not see anywhere where I am quoted specifically. So it might be sort of a misinterpretation of things by my honourable friend. Okay, I do not see anything here where I am quoted.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I will look forward to the minister answering it by corresponding to me or talking to me in person.

Could the minister tell us why under Making Welfare Work there is a budget reduction of \$100,000?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we had the Rural Jobs Project, pilot project, ongoing for the last couple of

years, and there has not been full uptake on that program, so the \$100,000 reduction is reflective of what the true uptake of that program has been over the last couple of years.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me what happened to the staff in the Single Parent Job Access Program and how many of them were hired by Taking Charge!?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not have that detail, because Single Parent Job Access Program is under the Department of Education and Training, and I believe that there were some people from that program hired by Taking Charge! I do not know the exact number, but that would have to be appropriately asked of the Minister of Education and Training.

Mr. Martindale: Is Taking Charge! buying spaces at private business colleges and at Red River College?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it is my understanding that they are not directly buying spaces, but in fact if there is someone that is presently providing the kind of expertise that is needed for training and job placement that Taking Charge! has partnered with those organizations or institutions.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if there is a difference in the cost between supporting someone at a private business college and at Red River College?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that it will vary depending on what the individuals are training for. I think that Taking Charge!, now that it is up and running, is looking at partnerships right throughout the community and trying to place people in training or job opportunities. We will be evaluating or monitoring how successful that initiative is. Part of their mandate is to try to ensure that they take the broadest approach possible and work with as many community organizations or institutions as possible in order to try different methods and measure the outcomes of how successful they are in placing people into job opportunities or training people for the job market that presently exists.

Mr. Martindale: The reason for my question is that I understand it is more expensive to buy spaces at private business colleges than Red River College, so I would be

concerned if that was true. Secondly, I understand that Red River College is forming partnerships with other organizations and businesses, and I am wondering if arrangements could not be made with Red River as opposed to more expensive alternatives.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There are some arrangements through Taking Charge! with Red River Community College. I think that they are accepting proposals from a right-across-the-broad cross section of our community and searching for ways to help single parents in the most efficient and effective way possible to enter training or for job opportunities. So they have programs that they are delivering in partnership with Red River Community College, with South Winnipeg Technical Centre, a children's home, Alicia Rae and associates and others as those proposals are approved to deliver programming to the clients that they serve. I commend them for taking a thorough and broad approach to trying to find the solutions and ultimately the job opportunities for single parents, wherever they might be.

Mr. Martindale: So the minister does not agree with my premise that private business colleges are more expensive than places like South Winnipeg Tec or Red River Community College?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can I reiterate again that it all depends on the type of training, the level based on an individual plan that has developed with each client that enters the Taking Charge! program, what their needs are and where the most appropriate place is to find the training and the support for those individuals. They are testing several different models right throughout the community. The ones that are successful will be the ones that will continue, and the ones that are not will be set aside for another initiative.

* (1650)

The focus is to try to find the training that leads to a permanent job for single parents. So you know in their initial stages of being set up and organized and running, they are entering into partnerships right across the community, and all of those projects will be evaluated based on outcomes. In co-operation with both the Department of Education and Training and our department, as we move through the evaluative process, we are going to be determining what is working and what

is not and supporting those initiatives that are working and seeking new solutions for those that are not. Some will be more successful than others; we know that. But, until we give them a fair chance to see what they can accomplish, I think it is premature to be critical.

Mr. Martindale: Since Taking Charge! took so long to get up and running, why could they not have negotiated agreements with public institutions like Red River College, rather than buying seats at private business colleges?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is important for me to point out that Taking Charge! did take a little longer to get off the ground than we had initially anticipated or expected, and I am not going to lay blame on anyone. I think it took some time to get the proper mix of board members appointed, and then they as a new organization had to incorporate and go through the orientation and the learning curve that would bring them up to speed and hire the appropriate staff and look for accommodation and all of those things that do take some time. I was hopeful it would have happened sooner, but it did not. I guess that, when you are changing the focus and the direction of a program, it is best to do the legwork, the groundwork up-front and be certain that it is going to get off to a good healthy start and to take a little bit of extra time initially to get the project up and running than it is to rush into something and do everything wrong.

I think that they have had the opportunity to do exactly that, to ensure that they were oriented and up to speed and went through a proper search to hire the right executive director and negotiate the best deal possible for lease space, and all of those things do take time. I guess I had high expectations that things would move a little more quickly, and I was wrong. It took more time, but I do not apologize for taking the time up-front to try to get the best program possible in place.

I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that the partnerships with community colleges and South Winnipeg Technical Centre, those kinds of partnerships are far greater and far more significant than any within the private sector.

Mr. Martindale: The Estimates book says that an estimated 1,100 single parents will obtain employment after graduating from Taking Charge!. Can the minister

tell me how many financial years this will be spread over?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, Taking Charge! is hopeful that they will serve 1,100 individuals in this fiscal year. I know they have over 500 registered with the Taking Charge! program. Will they all be employed at the end of the fiscal year? I cannot say that for sure, with any certainty, but I can say that there will be a significant number employed or in training that will lead to employment. There will be 1,100, they anticipate, who will be registered through the Taking Charge! program, and many of those will be on their way into some stream that will lead to employment.

Mr. Martindale: I do not know how I could do this, but I forgot that there are no employment goals for Taking Charge!, so I am glad the minister reminded me.

Could the minister tell me why Taking Charge! clients are guaranteed child care to get training, but other individuals going back to school or into training are not guaranteed child care, and, in fact, child care is going to be much more difficult to get as a result of this government's budget decisions and the so-called freeze or reallocation of subsidy cases.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, those clients who enter training or employment opportunities under Taking Charge! will receive child care support, just as any of those who do not go through the Taking Charge! stream but are going to receive training or job opportunities under our welfare reform initiatives under employment first.

There is a pool of child care spaces within the department right now. It is approximately 400 this year that will be available for those who require training or job placement experience, outside of Taking Charge!, so there is a pool of resources there should they be required or should they be needed for single parents who will enter the workforce or receive training as a result of our new focus in the Department of Family Services.

Mr. Martindale: So anyone who approaches me who says that they need child care in order to go back to community college or university or to enter any kind of training program is guaranteed that child care will be available. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If, indeed, people are on social allowances and they come in and go through an orientation and a job-plan process that is worked on with the Department of Family Services, and a critical component of all of this is a job plan, in fact an independence plan, that leads to a job at the end of the training, and we know that there will be the ability for job opportunity at the end of that training process, child care will be provided.

I would welcome my honourable friend forwarding names of people to the department who want to develop their own independence plan, and we will make every effort to see what we can do to support that plan.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 9.2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,400.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me why 55 Plus has been discontinued for municipal assistance recipients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, that was done, in fact, to streamline administration. In the past, anyone on social allowances could apply for 55 Plus, and they would have the evaluation or the assessment done through the 55 Plus office and receive a check and then the welfare office would claw that back, so in fact there was no benefit. That benefit is there for those who are in the workforce, not on social allowances, so in fact we had an administrative duplication, people applying on one hand and receiving a check and then going to the social allowance office and having that clawed back. So it did not make sense to us to be doing it that way, and so we have streamlined it and made it more effective and cut back on the administrative side. People are receiving no less as a result.

Mr. Martindale: So 55 Plus is now strictly a targeted program for low-income seniors. Is that right?

* (1700)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it always has been.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what footnote 1 on page 49 means, "The decrease in staff years reflects workforce adjustments"?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As a result of administrative efficiencies, we are able to streamline the process and make do with three fewer staff; therefore, there are three fewer people working on those programs.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,400-pass; (2) Other Expenditures-\$407,700-pass; (3) Financial Assistance \$10,370,400-pass.

2.(e) Regional Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$22,453,600.

Mr. Martindale: Just before we leave this section, I would like to leave the minister with a question and have her get back to me tomorrow or in writing, and the question is: Did Mr. Hugh Goldie or the Exchange Group undertake any work in the department or with any staff of the department? I will leave that with the minister unless she is prepared to answer it now.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I can say with a fair amount of certainty that, no, he had not undertaken any work with the Department of Family Services. If there is anything different, I will certainly get back to my honourable friend, but I can say, with a fair amount of assurance, that he has not undertaken anything.

Mr. Martindale: As soon as we have passed these lines, we will move on to Family Dispute Services, and I would like to thank the minister for accommodating myself and the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(e)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$22,453,600-pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$5,385,700-pass.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$391,190,300 for Family Services, Income Security and Regional Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1997-pass.

9.4.(e) Family Dispute Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$296,900.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chairman, I, too, would like to join with the member for Burrows (Mr.

Martindale) and thank the minister for rearranging things so that I could be here today. I think it is very gracious of her and I certainly do appreciate it. [interjection] She is very accommodating.

Basically I want to ask some very general questions about family disputes, then I want to ask some questions about the cuts, and then I think I would like to ask some questions about service agreements.

Anyway to begin, I notice that family disputes has a total of 5.26 staff years and that 3.26 of these people are involved in technical at the professional/technical level which, of course, is a decrease of approximately 0.75 for the year before. I am curious about exactly what the responsibilities—or it does not have to be exactly, generally what the responsibilities of these positions are. I am particularly interested in whether all of these people are directly involved with community agencies.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we have a director, an administrative assistant, a policy analyst, and two and a half agency analysts that do hands-on work with the community, as well as a director that is very hands on and works very closely with the community.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, obviously, the lion's share of money in family disputes goes in grants to external agencies. I wonder if the minister could tell me what the criteria are for funding these agencies.

Mrs. Mitchelson: In the 10 years that programs and supports have been in place, it started off very small and I think the department responded to the community-based needs and proposals that came forward, and some communities came forward with proposals requesting shelters, others requesting resource centres.

Presently and over the last 10 years as we have evolved, we fund 10 women's shelters, two crisis lines, three crisis offices, four committees, four residential second-stage programs and other urban support programs. We have evolved and expanded basically, I think, a response to community needs, what is articulated as a need in a community, and we try to work with that community to develop the appropriate resource that they feel is needed.

Ms. McGifford: I am wondering if there are any written criteria for obtaining funding.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, anyone who expresses a need or a desire to develop services, there are guidelines and criteria that the branch does have and can provide to that community organization that talks about how does it fits into the community and what organizations are you going to work with and who are you going to work with in the community. We do not have a copy of that here, but I can provide that to my honourable friend fairly quickly.

* (1710)

Ms. McGifford: The reason I was asking the question, Mr. Chair, is I am wondering how a community group goes about obtaining funding. If a new community group, for example—and I appreciate the minister listed for me the number of groups who already have funding. If a new community group decided it wanted to have funding, as well, what would be the process or the procedure? What would they do?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess approaching the branch is the first place to start if there is a community group out there that believes there is a community need. They can approach the branch and discuss with staff in the branch around the guidelines and the criteria that are set out in the information that I will share, you know, what they believe the needs are, and then the branch will work with them, helping them to understand what resources are presently there. I guess, at this point in time, there is not a lot of additional resources, financial resources available, but we would want to work with any community group that came forward to see whether there is an ability for them to tap into anything that presently does exist and work with them. I think we have people working in the branches who are very sensitive to the issues and to the needs. So I think the first place to start would be to set up an appointment with the staff in the branch and open the dialogue around what the need might be in the community and, then, how we can try to accommodate that within the present circumstances that we face.

Ms. McGifford: I know that the staff are very well thought of, so I just wanted to put that on the record.

Could the minister tell me whether new submissions are encouraged, accepted, rejected, none of the above, and have there been recent requests for grants?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, right now, as we speak, there is not any proposal that is before the branch and the department. I have been given a couple of examples, and I certainly would be prepared to sit down with my honourable friend and staff from the branch at any time to discuss things in greater detail, but one of the examples that I have been given is that the community of Gillam had an issue around family violence. So, in partnership with the community, with Hydro and the branch, we were able to develop and work with—they have a crisis office and a safe home, and we were able to get safe home rates for people that needed that kind of support. Staff went up to Gillam and worked in a very hands-on fashion with the community, and we think we have been able to help to resolve some of the problems. I think this is one branch within government that looks for the creative solutions and brings community and all of the different resources that might be available out there together to see whether we can provide better service within the resources that are available.

I would be prepared to sit down on other community- or neighbourhood-type issues with my honourable friend and have that dialogue with staff in the branch if that would be helpful in any way to determine the kinds of creative thinking that go around trying to ensure that supports are there as they are needed and as issues are identified.

Ms. McGifford: I thank the minister for her answer. I would certainly like to do that and perhaps when the House adjourns would be the most appropriate time for doing it. I think the minister rightly understands that my concern is that the services that are available to women in urban areas also be available throughout the province and particularly in northern areas and particularly in rural areas where I think people tend by and large not to be serviced in the same way that they are in the city. I wanted to ask the minister if Family Disputes has been asked to provide funding for Alpha House?

* (1720)

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have not had a proposal from them for funding. What we have done in working with Alpha House is work with them to ensure that they met the criteria. We supported very strongly their proposal to the federal government for housing and worked with them

to ensure that that proposal was up to speed in order for them to receive that funding. They take great pride personally in doing things on their own, but that does not mean to say that we do not have a very close networking relationship with them. We do case consultations and work to support them in their endeavours in a very significant way.

Ms. McGifford: I thank the minister for her remarks. I want to note here that the closing of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre is still something that disturbs many people living in the Flin Flon area. Many people, and especially women, still feel both overwhelmed and abandoned by its closure. They feel that it was an absolutely essential service. It certainly is part of my concern about northern services, and I wonder if the minister would like to comment.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that there still is \$139,000 going into that community through the Northern Women's Resource centre to provide services for women. It is my understanding that the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre and the Northern Women's Resource centre are working in a very meaningful way to see how they can blend the services that are provided for women and children in that community. So I have to say that there is some progress that is being made, and we are working through the branch very closely with the community to see how the resources that are available can be used in the most appropriate fashion.

Yes, it is my understanding also that when the boards of the two organizations started working together, they were surprised themselves at how much the services that they provided overlapped with each other. It has now created the ability for them to work closely together to ensure that the dollars that are going into that community are going to meet the needs in a more co-ordinated fashion to the benefit of those people that need the services.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chairperson, my concern is that one being in Flin Flon and one being in The Pas. I suppose there are many different definitions of community, but 60 miles apart or whatever the distance is—I know it is at least 60—would preclude that being known as a community, to my thinking anyway.

I know the minister told me the number of second-stage housing agencies there are in the province, and I know she told me the number of women's resource centres, but I did not write it down. I wonder if she could tell me again the numbers and also tell me where they are located.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are getting that information, but I just want to go back to the comments made by my honourable friend just a moment ago. The Northern Women's Resource centre and Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre are both in Flin Flon. They are right around the corner from each other although their services were not co-ordinated in any fashion, and now the opportunity exists for them to co-ordinate those services in a greater fashion.

I am just getting the information on the resource centres. If I could just read into the record the locations of the women's shelters, the 10 shelters: Eastman Crisis Centre in Steinbach; Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin in Winnipeg; Parkland Crisis Centre in Dauphin; Portage Women's Shelter in Portage; Selkirk Co-operative on Abuse Against Women; South Central Committee on Family Violence in Winkler; The Pas Committee for Women in Crisis; the Thompson Crisis Centre; YM-YW, that is Osborne House in Winnipeg and Westman Women's Shelter in Brandon.

The crisis lines are both in Winnipeg, but there is a provincial toll-free line. One is at Osborne House and one is at Ikwe.

The three crises offices are: Evergreen Women's Resource Centre in Gimli, Lakeshore Women's Resource Centre in Ashern, and Swan Valley Crisis Centre in Swan Valley.

Second stage programs are: Samaritan House in Brandon, WISSH in Winnipeg, Swan Valley Crisis Centre in Swan Valley, and L'Entre Temps in St. Boniface.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if I could ask the minister if she has the information available at this time on resource centres as well.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The three resource centres in Winnipeg are: Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre,

North End Women's Centre, Pluri-Elles and the Northern Women's Resource Service in Flin Flon.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Osborne, with a very short question.

Ms. McGifford: Very short. These four resource centres are the four resource centres funded through Family Dispute?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 9.4.(e) Family Dispute Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$296,900.

The time being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

LABOUR

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please.

This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Labour. We are on Resolution 11.1 Labour Executive (a) Minister's Salary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I had a couple of questions and possibly a few statements to be made on this particular department. I appreciate the effort that is fairly apparent that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has put forward in terms of questioning the minister on a wide variety of areas within the Department of Labour.

As opposed to posing specific questions, I had decided that I would just get some general comments regarding the Department of Labour during the ministerial comments, and then from our perspective allow the department to pass, primarily because of the concentration of efforts that I have had to put into Health and Finance and so forth.

Mr. Chairperson, we have always believed that the Department of Labour is an area to which the government does not give the type of attention which we believe is warranted. We often hear about labour stats, and whenever you hear of labour stats, depending if you are

in opposition, I guess, to a certain degree, or you are in government, you interpret it in many different ways.

Whenever I get the opportunity to sit down with people to talk about labour stats, one of the biggest discussions, hotly debated discussions, is with respect to older people, individuals who have been in the workforce and for whatever reasons have ultimately been put into some sort of a training or retraining mode as a result of downsizing or just a permanent layoff, whatever it might be, and the response from the government is very important. We have other chronic unemployment in terms of high unemployment stats with our youth, and that is again another area in which we have a great deal of concern.

* (1450)

Obviously, Mr. Chairperson, you will then have everything in between. When we look at labour and the requirements of labour, we reflect back on the past few decades, and you will see 30 years ago when an individual was able to walk into a position and anticipate that they would be able to make a career out of that job. Today, more and more, we are seeing individuals having to acquire skills that are transferrable from one job to another job, and that is absolutely important in today's educational system.

What we have tried to do is bridge some of the strengths of the Department of Labour, in particular areas such as apprenticeship, tried to bridge some of those with the Department of Education, where there needs to be more of an emphasis on apprenticeship-type joint co-operatives, work-related training, being provided. That, in essence, is more of a long-term and ultimately even a short-term strategy that has to be adopted.

I am curious how the Minister of Labour sees the Department of Labour and the Department of Education working together to address the labour needs of the future, keeping in mind those two categories that I made reference to at the very beginning; that, of course, being the 55-year-old individual who has found himself or herself out of work and the student from Grade 12 who is looking at somewhat bleak prospects in many areas. I am interested in hearing from the minister with respect to how he feels the Department of Education and the Department of Labour should be working together.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): As the member opposite is aware, the responsibility for apprenticeship and training has been transferred over to the Department of Education. It was done for a very important reason, and that is, most of the funding from the federal government came to the Department of Education. It was felt that with the funding structure from the federal government, it would be more appropriate to have apprenticeship and training in the Department of Education. Unfortunately, the best-laid plans sometimes go awry, given that the funding that we relied on with the federal government to the Department of Education dried up, to a great extent, and we have had to work very hard to maintain the level of apprenticeship and training programs in our provincial Department of Education. So that has been a very difficult time for the department.

I appreciate the member's question related more to the relationship between Labour and Education. I think, even though one has that very close relationship with Education and the apprenticeship and training, the Department of Labour still has a role to play in developing apprenticeship and training.

For example, one of things that has concerned me very, very much over the last number of years is The Construction Industry Wages Act, which deals with many apprenticeship-type of programs and regulates the wage scale of people working in various trades.

Now, I have been approached by small business people who say that the wage rates under The Construction Industry Wages Act make it prohibitive for them to retain apprentices beyond that apprenticeship stage, that is, once they become journeymen, The Construction Industry Wages Act kicks in, and they can no longer afford to retain them. So they are saying, should there not be some more flexibility in the act in order for us to be able to retain those workers and continue their very practical education?

That is not happening now. For example, if one looks at the residential housing industry, there are essentially no employees in that residential housing construction industry. What has happened very, very unfortunately is, in an attempt to get around the act and the prohibitive wage rates, the contractors have essentially subcontracted the work, so the work that used to be done by employees who would then be under the supervision of the

contractor, who was often a skilled trades person himself, is now done by subtrades, with the unfortunate effect that they do not receive that constant kind of mentoring and supervision that a true apprenticeship program requires. So legislation such as that has got to be examined to ensure that we are not at crosspurposes in our training and the legal schemes that are in place. That is one very concrete example that I bring the member's attention.

As the member may well know, there has been a review of The Construction Industry Wages Act since 1991, and I know one of his colleagues, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), would be very familiar with The Construction Industry Wages Act and the ramifications of that act on small business people and mid-sized business people. Very frankly, it is an area where we as government have to sit down with employers, with contractors and with the trade unions to ensure that we develop channels where employees can come into the workforce as young people, perhaps right out of high school, and there is a set program for them in co-operation with the employer to ensure that that training continues right to the journeyman stage and that that employment continue on and is not artificially terminated because of prohibitive wage rates.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I know within the Department of Labour there are certain legal requirements of companies once they lay off, as an example, a specific number of people, that they are required by law to inform the Department of Labour. I was under the impression that there are still some support services that the Department of Labour provides. I am wondering if the minister would maybe just comment in terms of to what then degree does the department—not really the specifics per se, but generally speaking, what does the Department of Labour feel its responsibilities are, more of a direct type of retraining as opposed to the indirect through legislation on the wages act? That is something else which I will get into in a few minutes.

Mr. Toews: Clearly the direction that the department is going, and given the removal of its primary responsibility for apprenticeship and training, is more in a facilitating role. For example, where there is the layoff notice that is given under The Employment Standards Act, the department has a workforce adjustment unit then that assists in setting up a committee to ensure that, if there are jobs that these people can go to, that process take

place. The department no longer gets involved in the granting of money to facilitate that, but clearly in terms of facilitating work with new employers the department's responsibility continues, and we in fact have a very active branch. In respect of any detail, unfortunately I was not anticipating this line of questioning at this time, but I would be more than happy to provide the member with that kind of detail, the extent of the unit's involvement when it receives notification of downsizing.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, specifically what I am looking for is more so the department's role to date, because it has changed quite significantly over the last few years, as the minister himself alludes to the fact that a lot of the responsibilities are now being administered through the Department of Education. What I am specifically looking for is the communication that is between the Department of Education and the Department of Labour regarding labour issues and particularly anything to do with training, retraining.

The Apprenticeship Program is fairly straightforward, but as I said from the onset, the special consideration that I believe has to be given is to those just entering the workforce for the first time and those who have been in the workforce but for whatever reasons are looking at having to change after a number of years. I am looking again around that 50-plus age. That specifically in terms of what it is that I am looking for, to see if in fact—because I would imagine that the Department of Labour is more in tune in some areas than the Department of Education would be with respect to the economy and where things are happening in the economy, and it would have some sort of a role of planning along with the Department of Education in order to meet potential demands in the future or to be able to anticipate some of the changes that are going to occur.

The minister made reference to an issue which I was going to bring up, but in a different way, and that was with respect to wage scales. One of the things that we have done within the Department of Health is talked about the possibility of having wage scales for home care service providers. Can the minister indicate, are there other groups outside of home construction industry where there is other wage scales other than the minimum wage?

Mr. Toews: Yes, The Construction Industry Wages Act does not just deal with residential housing construction.

It deals with all forms of construction, and it is a very extensive regulation of the construction industry wages in this province. There are essentially three wage scales, each of which have numerous classifications outlining exactly the minimum wage applicable to each of the trades, and depending on what level you are at what level you are going to be paid. So, for example, the journeyman carpenter would make—and I am just guessing here because I do not have the facts—in the city of Winnipeg \$25 an hour, let us say in around that rate. An apprentice would have a substantial less amount of money that he or she would be paid. So the three wage scales deal with heavy construction, rural and city of Winnipeg, essentially. In each of those schedules there are numerous classifications, but it all relates to the construction industry. The construction industry in Manitoba, in terms of its wage rates, is perhaps the most highly regulated of any province in Canada. I am not aware of any province that would have the extensive regulation of construction industry wages.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I am interested in the minister's thoughts on the home care service providers and how—or if that is something that could be incorporated into an act of similar nature, or—first just a general response to that particular question.

* (1500)

Mr. Toews: I have to indicate to the member that I think the best way of resolving wages is through a collective bargaining process. As the member knows, the minimum wage in Manitoba is approximately \$5.40 under the general employment standards regulation. The home care workers at present will earn anywhere between \$8 and \$11 an hour, and that has been achieved essentially through collective bargaining.

I think a collective bargaining situation is very responsive to market conditions, and, therefore, it is, I think, the best mechanism of determining what is a fair wage in any particular situation. What concerns me about the regulation of wages beyond minimum wages by government is that regulation often results in people being dispossessed of work. For example, in Saskatchewan, there was a proposal that all part-time employees receive benefits in the same way that full-time workers would receive benefits. This was touted as a great step towards equity for part-time workers. On the

face of it, the argument is very attractive, but, in effect, what happened, because of the cost necessary to maintain those benefits, employers, rather than providing part-time benefits, simply laid those people off or reduced hours so that part-time workers, instead of having two jobs, were forced to have three jobs.

The experience in Saskatchewan as a result of that regulation, and I appreciate it deals with benefits and not wages specifically, is that it has been an unmitigated disaster, that is, approximately 7 percent of the part-time workers now receive benefits under this Saskatchewan plan which was intended to cover benefits for almost 100 percent of part-time workers. So regulation has created tremendous hardship for the part-time workers by destroying their jobs or in fact requiring them to find an additional part-time job as opposed to the two part-time jobs that they have.

So, when we look at regulation, let us make sure that we are not harming the people that we set out to help. I think many of the same comments can be made about The Construction Industry Wages Act, that is, jobs in residential construction, in my opinion, are being destroyed because of the wage regulations. Now, there are clearly good social policy arguments to be made that the construction industry requires higher minimum wages than the general minimum wage, but I think what has happened under The Construction Industry Wages Act is that wages set under that act now become the going rate rather than the minimum wage. I appreciate the member is looking at minimum wages rather than going rates or establishing essentially wage and price controls. I do not think that is what he is getting into. At the moment, I do not see a better alternative than a vigorous collective bargaining relationship to ensure fair wages are being paid to workers.

So, at this time, I have no intention of expanding The Construction Industry Wages Act beyond the situation it is in because I feel that act has done sufficient damage to one sector of the economy, and we really should be looking at how we can use that act to reform that economy and revitalize it again.

Mr. Lamoureux: I wonder if the minister could give some sort of indication, and he will have to excuse me if he has already introduced it, of when we could anticipate because, in listening to the minister, I am under the

impression that this is an area in which he has some intentions on moving forward on, on reforming the act. Has the minister any time frame that he is operating under?

Mr. Toews: The member for Transcona raised that issue with me as well. I appreciate the member could not be here for all of the questioning because he was very busy with some of the other committees, but there have been studies conducted in respect to The Construction Industry Wages Act since 1991 by the Labour Management Review Committee and then the subcommittee in respect of construction, and I believe that there were two separate reports that came out, one containing over a hundred recommendations and the other containing about 54 recommendations.

Unfortunately, it is an act where there is no consensus as to what to be done with the problem that we have. Unionized employers often side with unions on certain issues, nonunionized employers will be at odds with unionized employers or unions, depending on what the issue is. So the amendments that I intend to bring forward, and I cannot really get into the details of those now, simply scratch the surface. I have announced my intention for the last perhaps six months—and I can speak about this—that the act should not really be in the residential construction industry where it effectively, the act, has destroyed all employer-employee relationships. So it is really not even being followed in that industry, because there are no more employment relationships there, and that is really unfortunate.

Getting back to the member's earlier question about apprenticeship, you know, we can have a great apprenticeship program, a great journeyman program—or do they call them journey persons now?—we can have these great programs, but if the legislation itself is counterproductive and destroys the practical applications of the training, then we have really got to take a look at the legislation. But the amendments that I will be looking at are nowhere near the extent that has been recommended by unions, employers or individual workers. There is simply no consensus in this province as to what direction to move in.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the minister's offer, which is to allow for our office to become better acquainted with the legislation that is

before us. I am anticipating that in the fall time the minister will be tested, and tested well I would assume, in terms of the legislation that is being brought forward. No doubt there will be a certain amount of resistance to it, and we will wait until that time, and possibly even a little bit earlier, during the summer. Labour law is something in which I know as a caucus we are going to be putting some special effort into, given the legislation that the minister has currently on the Order Paper. We might still see more, and we will get better acquainted with the content of that legislation.

At this time, Mr. Chairperson, what I would ask is that in previous Labour Estimates the minister would—I believe even had called in other staff to deal with Workers Compensation. I do have a couple of questions regarding Workers Compensation and would just look to the Chair to get some information or some guidance on when would be the appropriate time to be asking Workers Compensation questions.

Mr. Toews: There are separate Estimates dealing with the Workers Compensation Board.

An Honourable Member: Committee.

* (1510)

Mr. Toews: Committee, that is correct. It is a separate committee that will deal with those Estimates, and so now is not the appropriate time to deal with Workers Compensation. [interjection] No, a separate committee.

Mr. Chairperson: After this we will deal with Civil Service, and I believe the Workers Compensation is in the other—it is a separate committee outside of this House. There are no Estimates for Workers Comp.

Mr. Lamoureux: Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, I do know the former, former minister, Mr. Connery, and I had Workers Compensation discussions, and he did have some staff here. That followed right after we debated the Labour Estimates. But I will abide by what has been suggested.

Suffice to say, Mr. Chairperson, I would be interested in getting some information from the Minister of Labour. Instead of maybe taking notes specifically of what I am suggesting or going to ask, he can just make a note of it

after getting Hansard because it is some fairly specific stuff that I would like from Workers Compensation.

In particular, over the years, I can recall when I was first elected and the mess that Workers Compensation was in, and it was an absolute disaster. I think at that time I was receiving a phone call every week of individuals that were being given the runaround. It seems, at least on the surface, that things have changed quite dramatically since then.

One of the bones of contention that I have always had with Workers Compensation is the way in which appeals are conducted and handled, and the type of information that I am looking for is very specific relating to the number of appeals that go from the initial adjudication to the supervisor or the first level of appeal, and that go from the first level of appeal to the appeal board. That is my understanding, and I believe nothing has changed on that.

In addition to those numbers and percentages being beneficial, I am very much interested in the number of cases that are heard at the final appeal level that are actually ruled in favour of the client. In addition to that, I am looking for the percentage of cases that are being made in front of the appeal board of individuals by themselves—they are making self-presentation—and individuals that are being represented, in particular, by lawyers.

I am hoping—and hopefully the minister will be able to get me those numbers in the not-too-distant future—that we will not see an increase in the reliance of lawyers. One of the things that we would like to be able to do is to see that the appeal system is working in such a fashion that it does not necessarily require a lawyer, I have ultimately argued, and then I would look for the other percentage of doctors that are participating in the appeal decision, primarily because I do feel that the doctor is in an excellent position to be able to add to any questions that the appeal board might hear. So I am interested in knowing how many more people are relying on doctors, let us say, over lawyers. Hopefully, we see the number of individuals has not increased.

An interesting stat that I have had, and I have had this discussion a few years back with the Workers Compensation members, is the number of successful cases where

a lawyer is used and no representation is given. Again, if you could tag in doctors, that would be an additional bonus. Again, you are talking about percentages compared to a previous year because what I am looking for is some sort of indication of, are we moving forward or are we moving backward?

Hopefully, I will have the information in which, at some point in time in the not-too-distant future, I will be able to pose more specific questions of the minister in terms of the general direction of Workers Compensation, but, suffice to say, it appears that, at least on the surface, only because of the number of phone calls that I receive, there has been some progress at the Workers Compensation. So this is one of the ways in which we feel that we can measure it.

If the minister could make some sort of a commitment, I would appreciate his getting me those types of figures.

Mr. Toews: I have taken note of the member's request. I think it is a reasonable one. I will take it right out of Hansard and send that over to the Workers Compensation Board and see what kind of statistics they can provide me with.

The whole issue of the involvement of lawyers before quasi-judicial tribunals, not just the Workers Compensation Board or others, even small claims court, for example, is a particularly thorny one. There is always the suggestion that when lawyers get involved, sometimes the justice of the situation gets off the rails. I know that has been suggested to me, and I am speaking as a lawyer. I am very concerned that we protect these tribunals, the informality, the summary nature of these tribunals so that the ordinary citizen can access these tribunals without the requirement of expensive legal help and in fact not be at a disadvantage. I think that is what the member is getting at.

The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) raised the whole issue of worker advisors. Of course, that comes under the Department of Labour, and they have had a very, very active role in ensuring that workers are given a fair hearing and that their case is fully understood by the Workers Compensation Board. There has been tremendous success of these advisors who act as advisors rather than as legal counsel. If the member examines Hansard, there would be quite an extensive discussion of

that involvement, both my introductory remarks and some of the questioning by the member for Transcona.

I will attempt to get those statistics for him, and I thank him for bringing that issue to my attention.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I just have a few questions here that were remaining from the Main Estimates process for the Department of Labour.

I want to ask the minister, can he tell me, because this is an issue that has been raised in this Chamber here during Question Period, has Mr. Hugh Goldie been hired by the Department of Labour in any capacity, for tendered or untendered contracts, to perform any work on behalf of the Department of Labour or for the Minister of Labour or for any other government functions for which the Department of Labour may be paying the bill?

Mr. Toews: I am not aware of any contract which Mr. Hugh Goldie has been awarded by the Department of Labour. I do not have any briefing notes specifically in that respect regarding the Department of Labour, but I will specifically ask the deputy minister and staff to examine whether in fact any such contract has been awarded and the process.

Mr. Reid: If the minister could also indicate too in his response whether or not Mr. Goldie has been hired in any capacity by the Department of Labour, and if the minister could include in his response whether he has that information available here today or perhaps when his deputy minister or the minister may respond at some time, hopefully, in the very near future.

Mr. Toews: I did not want to get technical about that. If Mr. Goldie has been hired by the Department of Labour in some capacity, I will advise the member opposite.

* (1520)

Mr. Reid: If the minister would also indicate, should Mr. Goldie have been hired in any capacity by the Minister of Labour or the Department of Labour, what the dollar value of that contract, whether the contract was tendered or untendered, and what type of work Mr. Goldie, if he is indeed hired by the department, is

performing on behalf of the department. I would appreciate that information from the minister as well.

Mr. Toews: Yes, all available information that will come to my attention, I will provide to the member relating to those issues.

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the minister, because we were somewhat disappointed that prior to the minister's first reading of the legislation, Bill 26, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, in the Chamber here prior to Question Period today, we note that on Saturday there was an article in the Winnipeg Free Press indicating what the minister's plans were with respect to this legislation. We were disappointed that the minister did not see in some way that the House was apprised of what the contents of that legislation were prior to its being released to the general public so that we might have had the opportunity to see it first-hand. We still, to this point, Mr. Chairperson, have not received a copy of that legislation, even though the minister has taken first reading of it.

Because there were a couple of criteria changes that were indicated in the media and I want to determine whether or not they are accurate and what the minister's policy is, I want to ask the minister: Are the criteria—this is relating to policy. I am not sure whether it is within the rules or the bounds of the rules here to ask specific questions of the legislation since we do not have a copy of it in front of us, and I am relating to the news article—whether or not and what criteria the minister will use to determine when the minister will invoke the mandatory vote process, because it is quoted in the news article as saying when it is in the public interest. I want to know what criteria the minister will use to determine “in the public interest.”

Mr. Chairperson: I know where the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is coming from on the policy side, but in stating the policy side he is also discussing a newspaper article about legislation that has already been on the Order Paper and notice has been given, as well as today it received first reading. I would have to rule that we cannot have any discussion about the bill.

Mr. Toews: I am prepared to release that briefing paper to the member for Transcona. I have not gone beyond that briefing paper in my discussions. As the member

knows, I have been discussing possible amendments to The Labour Relations Act over the past year. That was an issue that has not been previously discussed in as public a fashion, but, given that the briefing note is already in the public domain, provided that it does not offend some privilege, I would release a copy of that to the member for his information.

Mr. Chairperson: Just to inform the minister, the briefing notes are not a concern of this committee. They are his property.

Mr. Reid: I appreciate the minister releasing a copy of the briefing note to us, but it is in the public realm already. So, if the minister wishes to send across, by all means we would look forward to receiving that.

Also, I want to ask the minister because he did not answer the more specific question with respect to policy: What is the policy of the minister and his government with respect to determining what public interest will dictate the minister invoking the vote to be taken by the employees of a specific bargaining unit, which may or may not be contrary to the wishes of the democratically elected members of the union body?

Mr. Chairperson: Now we are going into the rule of anticipation because what we are doing now is looking at what or anticipating what this act would do that is on the Notice Paper at this time. It is a very grey area that we are dealing with this matter at this time.

The honourable member for Transcona, to rephrase his question.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, I do not have another opportunity outside of general debate, which is not two-way debate, in this Chamber. When the legislation is tabled, each member of the House has the opportunity to stand up in their place in this Chamber and to put on record their comments with respect to various pieces of legislation that come before us. This is the only opportunity that we have to have a two-way debate or dialogue seeking policy and giving opinions or reasons why certain actions are being taken on the part of government. That is why I am hoping to have some clarification from the minister with respect to the policy of the government and the criteria that the government may use to determine when they would like to have

specific votes take place, and this is the only opportunity that is afforded to me and other members of the House to ask those specific questions.

That is why I am asking the opportunity to ask those questions that, since the minister has already taken the opportunity here prior to Question Period today to undertake first reading of Bill 26, and this is the only opportunity that we will have to ask specific policy questions, that is why I am asking what the criteria are with respect to that.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Just for the information of the committee, the honourable member for Transcona's rule is Rule 36, where it says, "No Member shall . . . anticipate a matter appointed for consideration of which notice has been given." The honourable member has stated that he has no other time in which to enter into debate with the minister. There is second reading of the bill as well as committee stage of the bill. [interjection] Committee stage can be the two-way affair that the honourable member is asking for if that is what he so wishes, but we do not anticipate or we do not debate bills at this committee level, and that is what the rules state. I can also find it in Beauchesne if the honourable member wants.

We are going into a grey area. I have ruled a number of times that I would not allow us to move into the area of debating legislation at this committee level, so I would ask for the co-operation of the honourable members here.

Mr. Toews: Perhaps, if I can just very generally state—and I respect the committee's ruling—that this type of legislation or the concept is not new. It is already in place in numerous other provinces where various criteria or protocol have been developed in that respect. So if one looks at that other legislation in other provinces and the way in which it has been applied in those other provinces, perhaps the member would get an understanding of how this has been done in other provinces. I do not know if I can go any further than saying that.

Mr. Reid: Well, then, Mr. Chairperson, if this will facilitate the debate so that we do not have to wait till the month of October in this year, when it is more likely that we will have the committee opportunity to debate or to have the two-way dialogue on any pieces of legislation

before us, perhaps I can leave with the minister then—or if the minister chooses to comment here— questions that are on my mind with respect to his legislation as it was outlined in the news report that was allegedly based on the minister's briefing note which the minister seems to indicate here that it was, the criteria that are to be used in determining when the minister would invoke the employee right to vote on a particular offer, and since it would be invoked in the sense of the minister's discretion based on public interest, the criteria the minister would use to determine public interest and also that the minister, because it also indicates that the briefing note spells out that the minister would have the ability to invoke the vote on any particular offer, a vote by the employees, that would be called for by the employers that those employees would be working for.

When will the minister listen to the call of the employers that are calling for the vote, and why is the minister only listening to the employers, because it was my understanding that the minister's government, prior to him being elected to this Chamber, ruled out final offer selection. One of the arguments that they used at the time, and I know the member for Riel (Mr. Newman) also remembers this quite clearly, was that FOS in their minds was not fair and reasonable because it only empowered the employees to have the vote to determine whether or not they would call for some resolution of the matter. Now the minister is saying that he wants to put that power into the hands of the employer.

* (1530)

How is it fair that we put—[interjection] Pardon me? Or the minister wants to put the power into the hands of the employer. How is it fair that his government ruled out final offer selection because it was unfair because it did not empower employers and employees equally at the same time, and now he is saying that he wants to put that power into the hands of the employers?

So I will leave those two specific questions with the minister, and when he does his second reading on this piece of legislation which may occur in the next couple of days, perhaps he can answer those questions for us.

I want to ask the minister also, who will be affected? What is covered under the umbrella, and I will leave this with the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Now, I have been listening very carefully, and I understand where the member is getting his information from, and I have no qualms with that, but my concern is we are discussing now the exact legislation that has been tabled before the House.

The minister has already recognized or stated that the briefing notes that the member is reading from are exactly what the legislation is that is before the House on notice at this time.

So we are debating the actual legislation, and that is not appropriate at this time, according to our rules, so I would ask the honourable member to change his line of questioning at this time.

Mr. Reid: Well, I appreciate the latitude that you have given, Mr. Chairperson.

I just had one point I wanted to leave with the minister because I know we are not allowed to debate a legislation that is not before us, so when the minister comments, perhaps he can comment on who will be covered under the umbrella of the legislation so that we have some clear understanding of the extent or the magnitude which the legislation is intended to affect.

I will leave that with the minister, as well, and I have at this point, Mr. Chairperson, no other questions to ask.

Mr. Chairperson: This completes the Estimates of the Department of Labour. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? No? Okay, we are prepared.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of the Civil Service Commission. Does the honourable minister responsible have an opening statement?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): Mr. Chairperson, in introducing the budget Estimates for the Civil Service Commission for 1996-97, I would point out a slight change in the provision for the French Language Services Secretariat. It has now been transferred to the Department of Energy and Mines whose minister is also Minister responsible for French Language Services (Mr. Praznik).

The remaining Estimates for the Civil Service Commission show a decrease of approximately \$215,000 over 1995-96. Close to one-half of this amount, that is, \$91,000, is associated with renegotiation of the government's contract with ISM for the provision of mainframe computer services. This new agreement has resulted in lower costs across all government departments using these services. The balance of the reduction has been achieved through internal reorganization, economies and efficiencies impacting the salary and operating budgets within the commission.

Collective bargaining has been a major focus of attention within the civil service over the past several months. As minister responsible for the civil service, I was very pleased that the majority of civil service employees voted against strike action and that subsequently a tentative collective agreement has been achieved with the major civil service bargaining unit. That agreement is currently in the process of being referred to the membership for ratification. The tentative agreement has been reached within a framework that will meet the government's fiscal objectives. The essential components of the agreement include, firstly, that the existing rates of pay will be maintained from March 30, 1996, to March 28, 1997. In respect of a reduced workweek, agreement has been reached to continue this program in 1996-97, consistent with the 1995-96 program, including seven Fridays between July 5 and August 16 and three days over the Christmas-New Year's break. Corrections component employees are exempt, although they may request unpaid leaves of absence.

In respect of the benefit plans, improvements have been negotiated to both the dental and maternity leave plans. As Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act, I am very pleased that both the civil service agreement and the negotiations pursuant to the riot at Headingley jail have

been achieved through the collective bargaining process and without significant disruption to the public.

Mr. Chairperson, I am also pleased to highlight the fact that our workforce adjustment process continues to operate with significant success in reducing the impact of potential layoff within the civil service. Members may recall that, in January of 1996, notice of termination was sent to the MGEU identifying a potential of 193 layoffs. At that time, we indicated fewer than 100 employees would be laid off without an alternative employment opportunity. In fact, as a result of the success of the voluntary severance incentive program and the continued effort across the service at redeployment, only 40 employees were actually required to be given layoff letters on March 28, 1996. Re-employment efforts continued for these employees, with a final result that fewer than 17 employees who were available for work will have been laid off without an alternative employment offer.

Mr. Chairperson, I would also like to inform members that over the past year the Civil Service Commission has been working toward the development of a new employment information service. This new service will completely modernize and update the way we advertise and bulletin available employment opportunities both internally and to the general public. Utilizing a combination of current technology, which includes interactive voice response, Internet, fax and a 1-800 line, service and convenience to the public will be greatly enhanced, while at the same time maintaining the existing level of central cost and offering potential advertising cost savings to departments of government. Through utilization of existing technology, government employment information will now be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by telephone or Internet, through 1-800 for rural Manitobans, from the convenience of home or office, with fax on-demand service, in both official languages and through single-window access in partnership with the City of Winnipeg and federal government. These new and enhanced services are targeted to be brought on line in June of this year.

With these very view and brief opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, I would now welcome the questions from members opposite on the Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Does the critic for the official opposition, the honourable member for Wellington, have any opening comments?

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): No, Mr. Chair, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic for those short remarks. I would remind members of the committee that the debate on the Minister's Salary, item 1.(a) is deferred until all other items in the Estimates of the department are passed.

At this time, we would invite the minister's staff to take their place in the Chamber.

Is the minister prepared to introduce his staff present at the committee at this time?

Mr. Toews: I have with me today, Mr. Paul Hart, the Civil Service Commissioner; Mr. Gerry Irving, the Assistant Deputy Minister Labour Relations; and, Mr. Bob Pollock, who is the Director of the Human Resources Programs Branch.

Mr. Chairperson: The item before the committee is item 1. Civil Service Commission (b) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

* (1540)

Ms. Barrett: Before I begin questioning in this particular area, I am wondering if the minister can tell me when it would be appropriate to ask questions about the SOA organization and staff development.

Mr. Toews: Given that they are included in these Estimates, at any time convenient to the member.

Ms. Barrett: Boy, oh, boy, thank you; so I think I will wait. On the Salaries and Employee Benefits, I notice—this is on page 21 of the Estimates—that the professional/technical SY is being held vacant for the current fiscal year. I am wondering if the minister can tell me what that position entailed and why that position is being held vacant for this fiscal year?

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

Mr. Toews: The reduction in that staff year came about as a result of, primarily, a decline in the number of appeals heard by the Civil Service Commission Board. For example, in 1990-91, there were 18 appeals. That has now been reduced to about a third of that number; it is at approximately six. So the position as secretary to the Civil Service Compensation Board has been held vacant. Formerly, the person who occupied that position was Mr. Pollock who is now the director whom I have introduced you to, and the support services that are required are provided. They continue to be provided through the director and the staff of the Human Resource Programs Branch.

Ms. Barrett: So the appeals that are sent before the Civil Service Commission are held, are dealt with, and the person who was secretary and is now director of Human Resource Programs Branch takes on and deals with those appeals. Is that correct?

Mr. Toews: The person who is supporting the director in those types of duties, in fact, reports to the chair of the board. That person is a lawyer and has been reassigned to do that work along with the regular duties. The director is still available to provide practical assistance when required and when appropriate.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to ask the minister if he can give a reason, or reasons, for the decline in the number of appeals heard by the Civil Service Commission Compensation Board.

Mr. Toews: Again, this indicates, I think, some improvements in the way in which appeals have been heard over the past. In government, we are constantly trying to improve services, ensuring that people are getting the information that they need. The Civil Service Commission is no different in that respect.

Although the actual number of appeals heard have decreased from approximately 18 in '90-91 to the number of six in '95-96, in fact, the number of actual appeals filed were the same. So it is the hearings that have declined, and one can ask why in fact that has taken place. I think one of the reasons is that when one takes a less adversarial approach to these types of proceedings and is direct in terms of providing information, or additional information, than used to be provided, then all of the parties have the information in front of them before

it ever gets to an appeal, and they can make an informed decision beforehand.

Just getting back to some of the discussions that I had with the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) in respect of the worker's advisors, one will see the same thing happening in that area, where the Workers Compensation Board, in that case, hands more information to the worker advisor and then the worker advisor can advise the specific client as to what the full nature of the case is.

Similarly, the Civil Service Commission, I think, has been taking a less adversarial approach, putting the facts on the record, that is, opening up the books, letting the other side see what, in fact, the case is and, thereby, dissuading many people from proceeding because the case is either not warranted, or, in fact, there may be a resolution in favour of the claimant without the necessity of an expensive, formal hearing.

So I think one sees this happening in many areas where tribunals adjudicate rights. It is certainly something that is going on in the legal area generally, and I am pleased to see that this trend is being introduced in the Civil Service Commission with these beneficial results.

Ms. Barrett: Is it possible to get a report of the number of appeals that have been filed and the general type of appeal they have been, sort of like the—[interjection] It is in the annual—[interjection] page 14. Okay, thanks. I have no further questions in this area.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Pitura): Item 1. Civil Service Commission (a) Executive Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$165,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$57,600—pass.

Item 1. (b) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$606,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$281,700—pass.

Item 1. (c) Human Resource Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits—\$1,012,100.

* (1550)

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, I have a couple of questions under the Human Resource Programs Branch. Can the minister refresh my memory as to the difference between delegated and nondelegated staffing?

Mr. Toews: Very generally, where we have a delegated situation, the Civil Service Commission enters into a formal agreement with a particular department, and what that agreement does is set out the criteria in respect of how staff, for example, are hired. All the particulars are set out in that agreement, and the staffing then is done by the delegated department in accordance with that agreement.

The audit is then conducted by the Civil Service Commission to see whether that delegated authority should continue. That audit may well take place depending on the nature of the department or the types of—the size of the department and various things like that. but the Civil Service Commission continues with that audit.

I understand that there are 17 departments with that delegated authority. Essentially, the current delegation. the staff looks at what the status is and audits it. and I have some records involving that. I am prepared to release that to the member. It is entitled Delegation of Recruitment and Staffing Authority (Staffing Audit Reports as of May 1996). The document bears a date at the left-top corner, 96/05/05.

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate receiving that information.

I think I will go to the Expected Results on page 29 of the Estimates book. I would like to ask the minister if he could table the current statistics regarding the four target groups under the last Expected Results at the end of that page 29, which says, “. . . a strategic approach to Affirmative Action resulting in greater representation of, and more opportunities for members of the four designated target groups.”

I would like to know what the current stats are regarding those four target groups by the major representations of managerial, professional/technical, admin support, if that is available. If it is not available, if the minister could see that I get a copy of those current stats when they can be put together.

Mr. Toews: Perhaps I could let the member know what I do have available. The affirmative action continues to be a very important aspect of the government of Manitoba's program. The Civil Service Commission has

been very, very diligent in ensuring that the appropriate balance has been struck.

One can recognize that in many situations the union itself would have concerns about the possible effects of an affirmative action program onto existing members that they represent. So even the union may not be that receptive to this idea. I think this has to be done in a way that balances all needs: the needs of existing employees and also those groups in our society that have been traditionally underrepresented in the civil service.

What the statistics in fact do indicate is that there has been continued progress achieved in all designated groups. There has been a comprehensive handbook that has been put out for managers, and it is called Putting Equity to Work. I would commend that to the member for her reading. Of course, not wishing to snow her under with paper, but I think it is a good document for her to read to let her see what managers in government are being told in respect of affirmative action. This document, I might add, was developed in consultation with the departments and has been recently distributed, and so her input and her comments in that respect would probably be very, very helpful.

Just very briefly before I get into some of the statistics, the more detailed statistics, the government commitment to affirmative action has been demonstrated with the appointment of two new female deputy ministers, Alex Morton of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Tannis Mindell in Family Services. I am mindful of the concern sometimes that members say that, yes, we hire people, but we do not necessarily promote people from within the branches into these senior departments and senior positions. I think it is very important that government promote suitably qualified people into those positions. I think that the government track record in that respect has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that groups of people who have been traditionally underrepresented in the civil service, in fact, are achieving a certain equity.

One of the things that one can say is that despite the fact that the size of the civil service has generally been declining—for example, on March 27, 1995, we had 15,879 people, public servants, that number is now at 15,674—despite the fact that the overall numbers have been declining, the proportions to the whole of those four designated areas, in fact, has been increasing. So, again,

I have to commend the Civil Service Commission and the policies that have been implemented by the government to ensure that people are mindful of those kind of criteria.

For example, in the '95 figure that I mentioned, 49.01 percent of people were male; in the present statistics, it is relatively stable at 49.64. In respect of female, the '95 figure was 50.99 percent; the present number is 50.36 percent. In respect of aboriginal people, in March of '95 the number was 963 for 6.06 percent; the present number is 1,009 for a figure of 6.44 percent. In respect of persons with disabilities, that number was 436 in '95, and it is now at 470 representing an increase from 2.75 percent to 3 percent. The visible minorities category is 422 people in '95 to 454 in '96 going from 2.66 percent to 2.90 percent.

* (1600)

One can appreciate—and I know the member opposite does appreciate—the sensitivity in which these types of opportunities and efforts have to be made. As I indicated, there are certain vested rights that people view in terms of seniority, and that is an issue that has to be dealt with always by the collective bargaining agent. I think the civil service in a very low key but very positive way has moved in co-operation with the bargaining agent to ensure that these types of considerations are borne in mind, and that people who fall into one of these four categories, that is, excluding the male category, are taken into account in making any downsizing decisions.

Ms. Barrett: I thank the minister for those statistics. I would like, if he has them, not necessarily to put on the record, but to table the statistics for the various categories, the managerial, professional/technical, and admin support by the four target groups.

Mr. Toews: Yes, unfortunately, I do not have those documents, but I will instruct staff to obtain that. If it is available, I will table that here in the House.

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate the minister's looking for those statistics. I would assume they would be available because that would appear to me to be another indication of how equity is working. It is not just numbers, but it is where those numbers occur. I please would like to ask the minister to see that I get a copy of Putting Equity to

Work, and he should not worry about snowing me with documents.

I have many more questions in this area, but in the interest of time I will be prepared to pass this section.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Pitura): Item 1. Civil Service Commission (c) Human Resource Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,012,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$627,800—pass.

1.(d) Labour Relations Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,134,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$278,400—pass.

1.(e) Organization and Staff Development Agency.

Ms. Barrett: I assume that this is the appropriate spot to ask some questions about the special operating agency, of which I have a couple. I would like to ask the minister, and I do not see this in Part 4 of the Supplementary Estimates book, and I certainly did not see it in the Annual Report of OSD, if he can get me a list of the revenue sources. I am particularly referring to page four of the annual report which states under Progress Towards Goals and Objectives that 1994-95 public-sector revenue was 111 percent higher than projected. I am wondering if the minister can give me a listing of those revenue sources.

Mr. Toews: Just very generally in respect of the special operating agency organization and staff development, I could bring the member's attention to page 51 and on of the Estimates, which essentially sets out the objectives and the initiatives in terms of the marketing of its services and the reasons why we have been or the agency has in fact been as successful as it has.

One of the keys of the agency's success is that it has been marketing its services not just to the general Manitoba civil service but, in fact, has been marketing its services to the broader public sector, including the federal government and other Crown corporations such as that. When the federal government has gotten out of areas, we have gotten into those areas in order to market very similar services that had been provided prior to this time.

We market the services to the broader public service without getting into the issue of competition with the

private sector, and so the types of clients and initiatives would be public sector rather than private individuals.

Ms. Barrett: That is very clear, not only from the statement in the annual report, but also in the material provided in the Estimates book. What I would like specifically, if the minister can provide it, is the types of services that were provided to which public sectors? I guess I am looking for a definition, if you will, on page 51, in the statement in the Estimates book that says, the opportunity to enhance its self-sufficiency for the OSD is to stick to and assertively market what it is good at and to avoid, minimize or contract out that which is better provided elsewhere.

I guess I would like to know just what it is that OSD thinks it is particularly good at and what does it feel that it should avoid, minimize or contract out?

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

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The honourable Minister of Health.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Chairperson, it seems I—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Sorry, the honourable Minister of Labour. Excuse me.

An Honourable Member: Oh, Oh.

Mr. Toews: You heard it here first, I guess. Let me tell you, this is where I first heard of it. Gave me a heart attack. [interjection] Why not, everybody else has been leaking stuff.

* (1610)

An Honourable Member: Oh, yeah. Present company excepted.

Mr. Toews: I certainly was not making any references to the members opposite.

In respect of what the Civil Service or this particular SOA does best, one of the things, for example, that I could give as a specific example, is the workforce adjustment services that it offers to the federal government. Now that the federal government has begun

to wake up to the reality of the 1990s—and present Liberals excluded, of course, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) has been well awake for many years before the 1990s. He should be commended for his efforts in trying to get the federal government onto the right track.

But, similarly, the provincial government special operating agency has been contracting for services to the federal government in the area of workforce adjustment, basically, because of its own experience here in Manitoba. This is something I think that should not go unnoticed, of how well the civil service, for example, has been able to deal with downsizing in what I would consider a very humane and sensitive way.

One always hears about the number of positions eliminated or the number of layoffs announced. One talks about numbers of 350 in the newspaper and when in fact the numbers of 350 do not actually include all occupied positions. That would include unoccupied and occupied positions. Earlier this year, I had occasion to announce the fact that the government was looking at laying off 193, or eliminating 193 positions. At that time we anticipated that the actual number of people that would be laid off would be less than 100. Through the very good work of the Civil Service Commission, they were able to minimize that from 40 and perhaps now down to as low as 17. So, clearly, this is an organization that has expertise that it can market in terms of doing a very necessary task in a very humane and sensitive way. Again that arises out of their own experience.

The federal government in terms of federal-provincial co-operation, not wishing to duplicate services, rather than having the federal government set up its entire unit, we then provide that service as a very dramatic and important example of co-operative federalism. This would include not just the downsizing but refocusing the employees who are left, and dealing with them, because that in fact can be very traumatic, not just for the employees who no longer find themselves with a position in the same place or even with the same employer, but in fact it is very difficult on those individuals who remain, and they have to become refocused and get to the task of providing very important government services.

I think for the member's information, I have another guide here which outlines—again, I do not want to be accused of giving too much information. This is a guide

to seminars and services prepared by the Organization and Staff Development. This deals with consulting and training and, again, dealing with the expertise that this branch has developed. Indeed, the Civil Service Commissioner, Mr. Paul Hart, who is here today, has a welcoming address in this document, which is a very substantive document.

An Honourable Member: Put it on record.

Mr. Toews: I will. I am going to put this on record, because I think it is very important to not only have his comments on record—

An Honourable Member: Ten minutes.

Mr. Toews: No, it would be less than 10 minutes. [interjection] I know the member is concerned, but it is two paragraphs. I think it is directly relevant to the question that she is asking. Not only will I read it onto the record but ensure that she gets a copy of this document, because I do not want to withhold information from her that is relevant to her task.

So, Mr. Paul Hart states: The 1995-96 OSD guide to seminars and services continues the tradition of offering timely and effective training and consulting to help public sector managers and employees deal with the important issues in their workplace. In addition, the guide's programs are delivered by the best available personnel from both agency staff and the private sector.

I think that is a point that I have to deal with because it is raised by the member.

He says: I draw your attention to the many new and revised seminars and services that are offered. Their inclusion is the result of listening to you and your views on what you need to succeed in these demanding times. As always, the Civil Service Commission remains committed to working with you to improve both organization and individual effectiveness.

What the Organization and Staff Development SOA does is in fact broker on many occasions. Where it does not have the personnel directly to provide the services, it in fact goes to the private industry and gets people in the private industry to in fact deliver the course. I do not know if in here is a list of the types of people who are in

a position to deliver these, but the Civil Service Commission or the SOA in fact contracts with these private sector people to provide the actual hands-on training. So it acts as a broker to facilitate this development of skills through its courses. So I would commend this to the member for reading.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you. I will certainly take this guide and peruse it carefully.

I would like to ask the minister—I am reverting to the annual report, if I may, to the OSD. I am looking particularly at the Statement of Earnings and Retained Earnings. There is no numbered page, but it is about page 10, I suppose. I have a couple of questions on some of the expenditures. It is the OSD's annual report—sorry, I was not clear. I will try and give the numbers that I am concerned about and maybe that will help.

* (1620)

Under Professional Fees, it was budgeted for 102, I guess, thousand dollars, and the actual was \$162.7. The other one that I think might correlate with that is the employees' salaries, which were budgeted at \$364.6 and were actually \$273.2. Now, is this reduction in these salaries of OSD people, who, I assume, are civil servants, and the increase in the professional fees, which, I assume, are to external individuals and organizations, as a result of the paragraph on page five of the annual report which states: As expected, the success of OSD as an SOA has directly benefited private consultants. This accounts for both the reported reduction in salary and benefit costs and the increase in professional fees.

So I would assume that that means the OSD as an SOA has made a commitment to paying external professional fees rather than internal civil service salaries. So I would like to ask the minister that, and if he could table for me at a later date the list of private consultants that make up this \$162,700 of professional fees.

Mr. Toews: This is consistent with the department's or the SOA's philosophy that it stick to what it does best. Rather than hiring staff to move into areas where it may not be qualified to provide the services, what it has been able to do very effectively is to broker agreements, and it finds out what the demand is at any particular time. As the marketplace adjusts, it can then broker with these

individual people. If one, for example, hires civil servants or staff full time, it is a very touchy thing that if you hire them for certain services and then those services are no longer relevant or required by the user out there, you are stuck with a problem in terms of how then you retrain or redeploy this individual. So, by focusing on what it does best, that is, by many cases brokering for the services, it in fact has been able to provide a very effective service to people out there who need it while maintaining costs low for the government by minimizing its administrative costs.

For example, I am familiar with other SOAs in government where the opposite thing has occurred, and it comes a bit out of my background in the Attorney General's department where they now have a Civil Legal Services SOA, and again the legal services that that department delivers have been brought in-house rather than having those brokered out, because the people in that specific SOA know how to do government legal work better than many private individuals. I know, Mr. Chair, that might be hard to believe for someone who is a practising lawyer in the private sector, but in fact the Civil Legal Services branch has been very effective in maintaining costs at a low level.

Similarly here, what the philosophy has been is to do what they do best, and if market conditions change they can broker agreements with new individuals to provide those services, and that flexibility has enabled this department to provide services that are needed by very qualified individuals. If the Civil Service Commission or the special operating agency can deliver those services directly, if it is convenient in a cost and administrative way, then it will do so, but in many cases we found that it is better to approach it with this type of flexibility.

So, in short to the member's question, yes, we have been able to reduce administrative costs very dramatically and provide a better service to the clients. That, of course, has necessitated an increase in some professional fees, but that increase has been well justified by the return, as indicated in the figures.

Ms. Barrett: I understand what the minister is saying. The figures, not only for the annual report but also back to the Estimates book for the projected financial statements through 1998-99 show the same thing happening, that Salaries will decrease

substantially—substantially—and Professional Fees will increase.

So what the minister is saying in effect, if I am not wrong, is that the Salaries line is for civil servants. The Professional Fees line is for contract, outside civil service individuals or organizations, and if that is accurate, then that says a great deal to me about the fact that the OSD is going to have retained earnings at the end of the year of almost \$87,000.

It seems to me that an argument could be made that much of that comes on the backs of reduction in civil servants and an increase in payment to private, professional, outside contract individuals.

What I am asking is, I know the minister and I will disagree on the philosophy of this, but I want actually just a clarification that that is actually what is happening, and again, a request for the minister to give me a list of those external contractors or individuals that make up the Professional Fees category of this, so we can see who is being paid outside of the civil service to do what civil servants used to do.

Mr. Toews: Firstly, in respect of the issue of the decrease in terms of the civil servants positions and the increase, a corresponding increase, in the professional fees, what we have to look at, I think, as a special operating agency, is what service is required and how that service can be delivered in a cost-efficient way and in an effective way. In fact, that is what we are looking at. Let us not look at who is delivering the particular service. Let us make sure that the service delivered is the best service possible. So that has been, in fact, the concentration, looking at the best service possible. I believe that the statistics indicate, in fact, that that service delivery has been very efficient and very effective. The fact that one might be able to hire civil servants to do a particular job and then the market changes and those skills are no longer present in fact is not doing anyone a favour.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The way we are doing it is doing it on a very cost-efficient basis by in fact brokering for the services as the need arises. One cannot anticipate in the future what type of services will suddenly become in demand. For

example, if a particular public sector employer suddenly needs a large increase in employees, well, yes, the Civil Service could well hire all types of civil servants to deliver that program. On the other hand, especially if it is a temporary kind of situation, it would be foolhardy to hire permanent civil servants for a program that would be of short duration where that program could be delivered without the government incurring the administrative cost. The important thing is that the government is there through this SOA to deliver those services.

In respect of the contractors who the SOA deals with in brokering those services, I believe that that information is available, and I will bring that forward for the member.

* (1630)

Ms. Barrett: Just one question, the last question on this area is, what happens to the retained earnings at the end of the year, which are 86.7? Do they go back into the SOA or general operating account, or what happens to them?

Mr. Toews: Yes, the member is correct. A portion of that goes to the special operating agency so that it can invest in technology and that type of thing to enable it to market its services much the way that any enterprise does. The portion that does not go back to the SOA goes to general revenue, I assume, to retire the debt or for other government purposes.

Ms. Barrett: Is there a particular formula that determines what percentage of the retained earnings stay with the SOA and what are rebated to the government?

Mr. Toews: My recollection is that that is in the legislation itself that authorizes the setting up of SOAs. I direct the member, Mr. Chair, to that legislation. If there are any questions that she may have after reading that legislation, I would be prepared to at least give her the information that I have. I do not have that information here available, but I think the request is a reasonable one as to how that amount is apportioned.

Mr. Chairperson: Will the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,164,100 for Civil

Service Commission for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1997.

This concludes the department of Civil Service. We will now move on to the Department of Natural Resources.

Is it the will of the committee to take a recess until we get the minister here?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No, okay, we will wait for the minister.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. 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 Natural Resources. Does the honourable Minister of Natural Resources have an opening statement?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): I am pleased to present my opening statement to mark the beginning of the Estimates debate in regard to the Department of Natural Resources. The Department of Natural Resources is a broad-based and challenging department, one of the most interesting and exciting departments of government. I have enjoyed my responsibilities as the minister of this department for the past two and a half years, and I believe there have been some notable accomplishments.

Natural Resources touches the lives of virtually every Manitoban, and many are interested in what this department does. My department has a mandate to protect, conserve, manage and sustain the development of the provincial forests, fisheries, wildlife, water, Crown land and parkland resource.

It is also a major contributor to the economic development of the province. Our province is blessed with fresh water and numerous lakes, rivers and wetland areas, with fisheries, wildlife and forests that provide

many opportunities. My department ensures that these valuable resources are promoted and used in a manner that will keep them healthy and vigorous, not only for today but for future generations, our children and grandchildren. Incidentally, Mr. Chairman, I have nine grandchildren.

As you are aware, the major challenge facing Manitobans and my department in the past number of weeks is the flood of 1996. I have been in the flooded areas, and I have seen the satellite photos of the flooded region. It is amazing the area of Manitoba and North Dakota that has been covered by water in the past number of weeks. I am very pleased with the work of my department in preparing Manitobans for the various flood situations throughout the province and particularly in the Red River Valley.

While the situation has certainly been very difficult for many Manitobans, my department, in co-operation with other departments, municipalities—and, Mr. Chairman, I want to stress again that municipalities have played a vital part in this thing. They are well organized; they know their EMO organizations, their responsibilities; and they have done a tremendous job. I want to make reference to other organizations, many individuals who have been able to assist many people and prevent many millions of dollars in damage. I want to thank and congratulate all of the employees within the department and everyone involved for an excellent job. Many people went beyond the call of duty and spent many additional hours and extra effort to assist Manitobans in this difficult situation. The Red River Floodway, the vision of former Manitoba Premier Duff Roblin in the 1960s, once again proved its value.

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of hosting seven European journalists to discuss our fur industry and the fur trade with the European Union. I had the opportunity to discuss with them the significance of our wildlife. I also had two members of the opposition there, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), who participated in the discussions.

I explained to them how wildlife is an essential part of our heritage and that so much of our culture, traditions and identity is bound up in our relationship to the land and wildlife. I told them that we are committed to

preserving that heritage and to the principles of biodiversity and sustainable development.

I also had the opportunity to communicate to them that there are not many alternatives for people who live in our remote communities unless they can access and develop their resources, including hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry, and all of them interconnected. I also explained to them the importance of the fur trade with Europe and the economic importance to our people.

This government is continuing to work with Ottawa, to intensify her efforts in promoting Manitoba's fur market interests with the European Union. There is an increasing strength in the international fur market, which is of significant importance to our economy.

* (1640)

We enjoy a wide range of wildlife-based activities from observing wildlife to hunting and trapping. In this regard, the department has developed a tiered, computerized draw system, which will ensure that all Manitoba hunters will have an opportunity to hunt.

At the same time, I am pleased to report that illegal hunting activities in Manitoba have decreased substantially since new regulations and stiffer penalties were introduced by this government in the fall of 1994. Our special initiative to reduce illegal and unsafe hunting practices has been successful due to the co-operation of Manitobans.

We have received a great deal of support for these initiatives from hunters, hunting associations and organizations from across the province and North America. A number of vehicles have been seized for contravention of the new laws which provides for seizure and forfeiture upon conviction in illegal and dangerous hunting situations. The laws target those who disregard hunting laws and benefits those who are participating in safe, ethical hunting practices.

With the support of all Manitobans, the department will continue its commitment to enforce the new hunting regulations and fight against unsafe practices. We will continue to aggressively pursue economic opportunities, especially in the forestry sector where there is significant potential for growth. We continue to work closely with

the forest industry in order to provide significant economic benefits and jobs to the province.

You will recall that in November of last year, this government and Repap Enterprises Ltd. announced a new development agreement that will provide up to 325 more forestry jobs than originally expected. Repap will invest more than \$250 million in the next five years to build a new pulp mill and upgrade existing operations at The Pas. For our province this deal brings hundreds of additional jobs and millions of dollars of additional revenue. By working with Repap over the past six years, we have developed a forest industry that is much more diversified and stable. Northern Manitobans can look forward to stronger employment prospects in the future because this sector is now better positioned to face the demands of global competition and sustainable development.

By the year 2000, the Repap and Louisiana-Pacific operations will employ up to 1,575 Manitobans, 325 more jobs than were expected from the original Repap agreement. This government with its commitment to the principles of sustainable development has developed a new forest management plan which provides a framework into the next century. The plan is based on environmental and economic stability and provides many opportunities to change and modify the way we manage our forests. This strengthening of partnerships, including all members of the forest sector, is a major factor in the new forest plan.

On the subject of economic benefits, Manitobans now have the opportunity to elk ranch. While this has been a controversial development, elk could prove to be a very profitable venture for farmers wanting to expand beyond traditional crops and livestock. I can ensure all Manitobans that precautions will be taken to protect the integrity of the wild elk. A self-sustaining elk management fund will be created to fund research, blood and DNA testing, identification tags and a computer tracking system. These safeguards will prevent poaching, as well as the exchange of disease and genes between domestic and wild elk herds.

One of my main projects is a Rat River Swamp restoration project in southeastern Manitoba. It was a project that took many years to come to fruition. It is a project that symbolizes what my department is all about,

sustainable development in action which will provide important benefits to agriculture, wildlife and the local economy.

Like so many projects in my department, this wonderful project has been a success because of the partnerships that have been developed with Ducks Unlimited Canada. Many local individuals, organizations and governments working together with communities throughout the province is a key to success in many initiatives and projects that we have undertaken. As minister responsible, I will be very pleased to officially open the Rat River Swamp restoration facility in the very near future.

In Manitoba we are very fortunate to have an excellent supply of the best fresh water anywhere. The protection and wise utilization of our ground water resources is one of the fundamental issues addressed in the application of the province's water policies.

I have had the pleasure to announce in the past year that the government has established four new protected areas in northern Manitoba as provincial parks. The four parks cover a total of more than 2.1 million hectares, and with the addition of these provincial parks the province has increased the total area designated for this purpose to 5.5 percent. This was a substantial step forward in the province's desire of protecting and representing 12 percent of its natural regions. As well, I was very pleased to participate in the official announcement of the establishment of a national park at Churchill, Wapusk National Park, with His Royal Highness Prince Charles, our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and representatives from Ottawa at the official signing ceremony. I also had the privilege and pleasure of taking along the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) to participate in the activities at that time.

As well, this government, in co-operation with the federal government, is continuing its consultation process with all communities involved to establish a new national park in the Manitoba lowlands region. The development of this park would be a significant boost to the Interlake region and the province.

We continue to build and develop our sport fishing industry which contributes \$90 million to \$150 million

annually to our economy. Part of this is the urban sport fishing plan which will see the development of the Red and Assiniboine rivers sport fishing potential.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would just like to say that the past weekend was not necessarily a banner weekend for fishing or for camping, but then the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) is the one who controls the environment, not myself. I am there to try and provide opportunities for the people who love to enjoy the outdoors.

As well, my department will continue its efforts to stock fish throughout the province. In the past year my staff and commercial fishing organizations have stocked lakes with more than 85 million fish. These efforts demonstrate the commitment of this province to sustaining fish populations. The Fisheries Enhancement Initiative program has been very popular and successful. The program has successfully promoted the conservation and enhancement of fisheries through various groups and organizations across the province. We will continue to work in partnership with these groups. We will also continue to communicate and work with commercial fishermen throughout the province, including the Lake Winnipeg commercial fishery, to look at all options and help resolve some of the many concerns that are out there.

I am pleased to report that there have been no layoffs within the department in the past year. By this summer most of our Winnipeg staff will be in modern office facilities in one building, which we believe will make the department more efficient and effective. I believe we will provide an enhanced service to our customers which includes all Manitobans and our visitors. An additional benefit is that the move into new facilities will save the taxpayers of Manitoba more than \$200,000 a year. I am very proud of the accomplishments of my department and the services it provides and delivers. We are in exciting times and are looking forward to the future. Our goals and objectives include the enhancement of our services and to serve the people of Manitoba to the best of our ability.

I have touched on a number of issues within my department. Of course, there are many more issues, some of which I am sure will be discussed and debated during the Estimates process.

Mr. Chairman, when you ask me to, I will ask my staff to—

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Does the critic of the official opposition, the honourable member for Dauphin, have an opening statement?

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Mr. Chairperson, I am pleased to be able to partake in the Estimates process again this year. It is my second one. I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the minister for continuing to walk me through the Estimates of the Department of Natural Resources. I have found him a great fountain of knowledge and information for a rookie critic in Natural Resources, and I look forward to continuing that in this process as well.

I have to agree with a few of the things that the minister has said in his opening statements. I agree that this is an exciting and probably the most interesting department of all that the government is involved in, bar none. I see it as a department that offers a lot of opportunities for Manitobans, not just economic opportunities, but on the side of recreation as well as the economics involved in the wealth of resources that our province has available to it.

Last year at this time we took a lot of time talking about floods and fires. It is good to know that this year we will only have half of that equation to deal with so far. That will probably offer some more opportunities to get a little deeper into other parts of this department.

Sport fishing, commercial fishing, those are two of the opportunities, I think, that we have in Manitoba to really get people involved in what it is that originally brought our ancestors to this part of the world. My hope is that groups like the Intermountain Sport Fishing Enhancement group, the Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement group and other enhancement groups around the province will not be pushed to the side in the development of government policy, that their advice is good and that it will be acted upon by this minister and his department. I would hope that the minister would continue to get some advice when it comes to hunting and guiding and the guidelines and regulations involved in those two areas as well, because I think that also represents very much an opportunity for Manitobans and

an opportunity for us to showcase some of the resources that we have in this province.

* (1650)

I am hoping that the discussions will, over the next little while, as we go through Estimates, focus on parks and tourism as well. I put forth parks as something that is very much an opportunity for growth in our province, and I have some very real concerns, not just my concerns, but as an opposition member, concerns that have been expressed to me by constituents and people in Manitoba.

Also, the availability of fresh ground water in Manitoba is something that I think has been underestimated, undervalued and not given the type of prominence that it should in the development of our province economically, and I would like to encourage the minister to proceed in the area of development of ground water with a little bit of caution. It is too good a resource for us to be wasting.

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

Some of my concerns are to do with privatization. We have seen privatization in a number of departments, and Natural Resources is no exception. Over the course of the last year since we last spoke in Estimates, we have seen in Natural Resources everything from parks to elk being privatized, and I have some very definite concerns in the area of taking Manitoba's resources out of the public sector and setting it up for the use of the very few and predominantly the very wealthy, who can become involved in seizing property that belongs to all Manitobans.

In that regard I just throw out the example of the increases of park fees that have occurred recently, the abnormally high increases in park fees, the whole plan towards elk ranching that the minister referenced in his comments, and I am also very concerned about where we are headed in the area of forestry. There is a natural resource out there that is being exploited for the use of the very few at the benefit of not a lot of people, so I have some concerns in those areas. I am sure we will go into that a little bit later.

In a general sense, I just want to wrap up by expressing a concern over the lack of objectivity that I see within the

Department of Natural Resources. The public processes are there for a reason. They are there for a very specific reason. They are there to make sure that the public has a say in all of the resources that belong to all of us. So far in the year or so that I have been the critic for Natural Resources, I have had several cases, several instances, where the public process has been circumvented by this government, and this department has seen fit to not address in a very public manner the concerns that different groups and people in Manitoba have when it comes to the use of land that contains resources that are there for everybody and not just a few.

Mr. Chair, with those comments, I would like to begin the Estimates process. I would ask that we take the line of the Minister's Salary and bump it to the end as is—[interjection] Not delete it yet. We will see how well he does over the course of the next little while in Estimates.

I would like to bump that to the end of the Estimates process and begin at Executive Support, and at that line, I would like to deal with all the issues that I have that I can bring forward and allow some of my colleagues a chance to ask some questions and then deal with the rest of the lines in a very quick manner, if that is fine by everybody.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Pitura): We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

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.

Mr. Driedger: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a few of my staff people here. First, on my left, is my Deputy Minister Dave Tomasson—I think everybody knows Dave pretty well—and my director of administration Bill Podolsky.

Mr. Chairman, I have no difficulty how yourself as Chairman and the critic decide how we are going to deal with my Estimates. I comply whichever way you want.

* (1700)

Mr. Struthers: One further question, sort of on the process, I would ask the minister—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Pitura): Order. I probably should identify the line first before we proceed, so I will identify it. It is Item 1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$389,400.

Mr. Struthers: To deal a little further on the process, I would ask the minister if there will be other officials made available to us as we go through questioning, not doubting the talents and abilities of the two gentlemen he has introduced, but from time to time in Estimates. I was wondering if there would be other people that could be made available

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Driedger: Not necessarily, but I will give the undertaking that if there are any questions that between the three of us we cannot satisfactorily respond to, I will give an undertaking that the proper response is going to come back to members of the opposition.

Mr. Struthers: I have some questions. Just to start off with, the minister referenced the Brundtland Commission and the 12 percent of the province that is going to be the goal towards which we work in protecting lands.

Upon going through the Estimates book as presented by the minister, it was not clear to me just exactly how much money has been put towards the endangered spaces commitment that his government has made. I am interested in knowing the full range of resources from dollars and staff years and which branch will be mainly involved in reaching that goal of 12 percent.

Mr. Driedger: The member raises the question as to how much financial resources will be put into the designation of Endangered Spaces. I have to tell you that I do not think it has much bearing as to the amount of money that basically we put into there. It is a matter of how much land we have available to put aside and the process that we do that with.

The Parks department is the one that is working with that whole Endangered Spaces Program. I just might add that in spite of the fact that the member is well aware of the grading that we got from the World Wildlife Fund—and I take exception to that, of course; naturally, I would—because of the fact that we put aside over two million hectares worth of provincial parks and then got a downgrade when some other provinces had no increases and got a better grade, I feel there is a bit of a political arena taking place here with that. But having put that aside, I know what our responsibilities are and the challenges that are faced in terms of the designated 12 percent of the space within the province as Endangered Spaces.

I just want to tell the member—and, Mr. Chairman, with a little bit of tolerance from both you and the critic—I would like to maybe just explain where we are at right now. The fact that we are at 5.5 percent, we are looking at going through the process. The Parks Act was passed three years ago, and we still have not proclaimed the act basically because of the process of consultation in terms of establishing categories and classes of all the provincial parks in the province—and we have well over 100 of them.

So we are in that final process. We have gone out once. We have come back. We have compiled the information, and we are now going at the second round. We are looking at proclaiming The Parks Act, hopefully, in June or July—and I would have liked to have done it sooner. But once we do that, once we do the proclamation, it will give us an opportunity to identify certain provincial parks which would also qualify under the Endangered Spaces Program.

Further to that, my deputy and the federal deputy of parks have been working very diligently with groups, and we are looking at establishing a lowlands national park. The member is well aware—as I mentioned in my comments before—of the Wapusk National Park which is a tremendous undertaking out there in Churchill, but we are looking at establishing one in the lowlands area. A lot of progress, a lot of time has been taken on it, and it is actually a three-phased lowlands proposal that we are looking at—with Hecla not being part of it—but Black Island and certain islands in there which sort of would be the gateway to it, and then we would be looking at parts of Long Point and Limestone Point. So there are three

different elements involved in that lowlands park which we hope the federal government is very receptive.

In talking to the past Minister of Parks, Sheila Copps, she was really on a fast schedule with it, and I certainly had no objection to it. I do not know whether that will change after we have the by-election at the federal level; but, certainly, she was very receptive to moving forward. I think we are still looking at the possibility of maybe having some announcement by the time of June or July when we can at least get into a Memorandum of Understanding for the lowlands park. So when you take the provincial parks and the potential national lowlands park, we think that our percentage is going to get up much higher again.

The challenge that we face, and I have to tell the member that, is that in the developed southern area it is very hard to establish because they want the same percentage preferably in each area, and in the developed agricultural area in the south we are limited in terms of how much land is available for the designation of this. We are working on programs under the wildlife management areas. We are looking at a series of options where we can maybe get some designations taking place. But the undertaking that I and my staff have basically given to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is that we will try and see whether we can reach that. We have a commitment to reach the 12 percent by the year 2000.

Mr. Struthers: In order to meet that commitment by the year 2000 I would hope that staff within the Department of Natural Resources have been assigned to that task. What I would be interested in knowing for the upcoming budget year is, how many staff years would be designated to move towards that goal?

Mr. Driedger: We do not have designated specific people to take and just work with that. We basically have challenged the Parks department and the director, Gord Prouse, to take and make this a priority issue. Basically what is being done right now is, we develop the—looking forward to the proclamation of the parks act. Further to that, the activity that is taking place—I want to explain to the member, you cannot say, well, Joe Blow and one, two, three, four people are designated strictly to doing that. It is a broader picture in terms of many people have to play a role in this, because we have to have people from the Wildlife department, from the

Fisheries department, from the Forestry department, components of everybody that plays with this, so it is hard to say, well, we have six people set aside who are dealing with endangered spaces. It is basically a generality where all the departments play a role with the Parks department basically co-ordinating it. So I charge not only my deputy but my director of Parks to take the responsibility of coming forward with options from me and the government to consider to reach that objective.

Mr. Struthers: My concern is that if we are going to meet the goal of 12 percent at the year 2000 and we are only at 5.5 percent today, we have had more years gone by to get not even halfway yet. We have got fewer years to go before we get to 2000. We still have to make up somewhere in there 6.5 percent if we are going to meet that goal. The minister has outlined that the southern part of the province is going to be tough for agricultural reasons. My suspicion is that maybe the first 5.5 percent would be the easiest 5.5 percent, that the last 6.5 percent is going to be tough, and we do not have an idea of who exactly it is in the department that is going to be moving us towards that goal.

I understand the minister's answer. I understand the problem that he may have, but I am concerned that we are not giving ourselves the chance to meet the goal of 12 percent by the year 2000. Maybe the minister would like to respond to that?

Mr. Driedger: The member is wrong when he says there is nobody in charge. There is definitely the director of Parks, who has been challenged with coming up with options for myself and for government to consider to make sure that we reach the 12 percent designation by that time. The member says, well, we have only reached 5.5 percent in this period of time, but I can tell you that a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes that is not obvious. I made reference to some of the more obvious ones, which are the National Lowlands Park and the designation of the classes and categories of provincial parks of which we have well over 100 of them. Those are just some of the things. But there is a lot of work that has been going on that has to take place.

From the time that the commitment was made—I have to tell you that we are well in the middle of the pack in terms of provinces across Canada, including the federal government, related to meeting our objective. I make no

bones about it. I look to my deputy and my executive and my director to make sure that they come up with these options, and a lot of work is taking place right now. I alluded to, you know, the wildlife management areas, I alluded to other things which part of the lake system can be part of that system. So there is a lot of work going on. I have a comfort level that the 5.5 percent is—we are in a reasonable position at this point in time where we will be able to meet the 12 percent.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member—the member would have to have leave to ask questions from there for this bout of Estimates. We only received leave for the other Estimates.

Is there leave for the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) to ask his questions from the front row? Leave? Leave has been granted.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I want to pursue the Linnet Graphics issue, and I would refer the minister to the Nordicity report which I tabled in the House today.

Every jurisdiction in Canada other than Manitoba has seen that base mapping is a public utility exercise, that there is no money to be made in the base map itself. Every other jurisdiction has recognized that. The reason that jurisdictions are willing to invest in base mapping activities at a high quality is that they are confident that development based on that public utility will far repay any investment in it. So every other province has now got high-quality base mapping in all of their developed areas and some limited base mapping of a high quality in some of the less developed areas of all of the provinces.

So I want to first ask the minister whether he accepts the proposition that Manitoba's existing base map is at a significantly lower quality and is significantly less complete than the base mapping utility in virtually any other jurisdiction in Canada. I would just caution him in answering that I am not making these statements on some presumed expertise personally, I am making these statements on the basis of industry people who have come to us from a wide variety of Manitoba industries, from smaller- to medium-sized companies. These companies have experience in all provinces in Canada, but particularly in western Canada, and they assert quite unequivocally that we have gone from average, middle of

the pack or even a little bit above that in 1988 to bottom of the pack now and that our base map is significantly behind every other jurisdiction.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, without trying to be argumentative, I take exception to the comments made by the member. He presented a report today, and I looked at the report and staff is analyzing it right now, but I want to challenge him and say that my information—and I am going to check that out. I will not just discard it, the comments that we are lagging behind the pack.

My information that has been given to me has been that we are the leaders in it. There are ongoing changes, depending on which way the member wants to look at it. For example, GPS has been playing a major role in terms of how information is being used and utilized. He made reference in his comments today in his press release that the identification of the surveying and establishing of the markers in the province was a very big issue. There is still a place for it, certainly, but not as dramatic anymore since GPS has come into the picture, depending on the kind of information that is basically wanted.

* (1710)

I say that I will check into that and have staff clarify and have some of my key people, who are very qualified people who have been telling me that we are the leaders in terms of our Linnet organization and the kind of information that we are basically providing to other provinces that have desperately tried to set up this kind of a system on different lines over the years and have never accomplished it. We have finally hit that point where we are the leaders in this thing.

I will take his criticisms and his questions as to whether I agree or not very seriously and ask my people to basically respond and give me clarification as to where we are, because my information tells me—and right now I have a tendency to believe my staff. But I will have that confirmed by tomorrow morning. I will not leave this lay. An accusation of that nature, I take very seriously.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, if I could, through you, suggest to the minister that he talk directly with members of the Association of Manitoba Land Surveyors, with instructors in geomatics at Red River Community

College, with the firms who do geomatics work in Manitoba, sometimes under contract to Linnet and sometimes under contract to municipalities and other organizations, and not rely on what I consider to be perhaps somewhat skewed information, which he might be getting from those who have a vested interest in defending decisions made in the past rather than looking at the real world of the future.

Let me also say that I think it is appalling that this minister does not apparently know about this study when his colleague, who is sitting right up behind him, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), commissioned this report through his department, and it was delivered to his department in July of last year. It was referred to at a meeting of geomatics purveyors of service at the University of Manitoba in the fall of last year, which is the first time that the industry association realized that this report existed, and it was provided to one member of that association on request in January of this year, of 1996.

So I think it is appalling that the minister does not apparently know about this study, or did not know about it, was not prepared to respond in some kind of detail to the very serious findings of the study. Let me go on to deal with some of those findings.

First of all, I would ask the minister if he could confirm the technical information that I have been given that essentially when you use the Linnet approach—which is to digitize what are called orthophotographs, which are essentially photographs that give depth as well as the picture of what is on the surface. They can be processed to provide elevation data. So that is what an orthophotograph is, apparently. Again, I am speaking from the information I have been given, not from personal knowledge.

When this information is digitized, Mr. Chairperson, the accuracy, the best accuracy you can get in the real world, not in the theoretical world of a laboratory, but in the real world is plus or minus 10 metres and sometimes it is as high as plus or minus 15 metres. Now the minister, I am sure, will appreciate that, for purposes of locating a gas pipeline or a utility corridor or even a street, plus or minus 10 to 15 metres is hardly an acceptable standard of accuracy. Can the minister confirm that that is his understanding of the accuracy

level of digital orthophotography as the method for developing a base map?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, the member says that he is appalled that he thinks that I was not aware of the report that he basically put forward today. He can be appalled all he likes, but I will tell you something, I was not aware of that report. I got that report today, and I turned it over to my staff and I am waiting for responses as to why it did not come to my attention and the impact of it.

The member has picked on a certain element of the Linnet organization, which basically I have tried to be relatively open in terms of bringing the information forward. That is why I had the briefing at the time and extended the invitation for the member to go down to Linnet and get all the information that you want. I do not even pretend—he is talking technical questions here as to whether 10 metres this way or that way, whether I think that is accurate. I do not know. If the member wants to ask me specific questions whether I think that is adequate or not, I will take those questions as notice and get the information. I do not know the technical operations of Linnet.

My concern as minister responsible is that my deputy, who is a member of the board there, make sure that our interests as a government are represented in the 24 percent in a capable way and that the functions are proper and that the interests of Manitobans are being represented in a proper way and that the operations of Linnet move forward and accomplish basically what the guidelines or terms of reference have been set out for.

So the member can debate with me whether 10 metres this way or that way is accurate and whether I think it is proper. I do not know; I do not even pretend to know. If he wants to get into technical questions, please give me the questions, but I do not have that information. I will get the information; I definitely will.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I have asked the minister to ask his deputy and ask him right now, was the deputy aware of this study? If he was not aware of the study, what was he doing on the board? If he was aware of the study, why did he not tell his minister about it?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, when I came—because I was given a copy today here in the House, my deputy did

not give me a copy of that—I raised the questions with my deputy, as well as other people on the Land Information services, my director, basically, Jack Schreuder. We raised the issue with him less than an hour ago, right after Question Period. I said, what happened and give me a detailed report as to what this report basically says. The member thinks he has me at a disadvantage. That is his prerogative. I will take some minutes to get the answers of the information that he wants as soon as I have time to do that.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister did not answer the question. Was Mr. Tomasson aware of the study? If Mr. Tomasson was not aware of the study, what is he doing on the board? If he was aware of the study, why did he not tell his minister? Would the minister please answer that question.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, whether Mr. Tomasson, my deputy, was aware or not as being a member of the board, it was not Linnet that commissioned the report.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, so that the record is very clear, Nordicity Group Ltd. had a policy discussion paper prepared for Linnet Geomatics International Inc. and Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Driedger: Yes, Mr. Chairman, whether it is a point of order or not, I do not really care. I checked with my deputy. I do when I have to check with him, and I did. My deputy informs me that he was aware of the report, but he had not informed me of it because it was still being reviewed and no report had come forward to me.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, let me then again say that I find this an appalling situation. This report was tabled in July of 1995. This is now May of 1996. Any government that has had a study in its hands for that long on this critical an issue, that is as critical as this study is of a company in which the government has 24 percent

ownership and has not brought that study to the attention of the minister responsible for the company, it seems to me we have got a serious problem here.

The minister ought to be seriously discussing with his colleague in Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) why this paper was not given to him through that route and with his deputy minister why that paper was not given to him through that route, so that he is not embarrassed and unable to answer and unable to respond to very important questions within his ministry.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, the view of the member when he says this is a critical situation, I cannot see anything critical about it. In fact, I am very comfortable that the operations of Linnet are very well on stream, that they are doing a tremendous job. And the member, if he decides to take a different tangent on it, that is his prerogative. I repeat again, if he wants to take and put technical questions on the record, I will get the information, but I am not in a position and I do not make any apologies for it. I do not have all the technical information that is required of every one of my groups and boards that I have. I am there to be the general policy maker, and I work on that principle. I at the present time have a comfort level that with my deputy being a member of that board that we are accomplishing what has been set out to be and that we are looking after the interests of Manitobans.

* (1720)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I have asked but one technical question, and that was the level of accuracy in the photograph transmission into digitized form. I appreciate the minister's commitment to get information about whether that is an acceptable level of accuracy in other provincial base map standards. I have not asked any other technical questions. They have been, obviously, purely policy questions in regard to how he runs his department. I am very concerned that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), did not see fit to share a study that deeply affected a company in which the Minister of Natural Resources has a fiduciary responsibility, if you want to make it that, in terms of ownership of 24 percent of the shares at Linnet. I think we clearly have a textbook case of a conflict here in which the interests of the department in maintaining Linnet's pre-eminent

position here are at odds with the interests of the public in having a quality database that is accessible to all Manitobans.

I bring the minister's attention to page 8 of the study and ask if he would respond to the assertion that is made on the lower part of page 8 that the number of private sectoremployees in Manitoba appears to be significantly lower than the national average, and the table on the next page shows that we run at about one-third of the national average in Manitoba.

I would also point out to the minister that these data are not the most current data in the world, that we have fallen further behind in the interim.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Chairman, since I received the report, I glanced at that element of it, as well. I will take that question as notice and provide proper detail.

You know, the member can play politics if that is all he wants, but it is not an issue that is going to get many people excited. I still feel very strongly responsible for making sure that it is operating right.

However, I want to ask the member, aside from wanting to play politics with this issue, why he did not take the opportunity to avail himself of all the detailed information as to how Linnet was operating when that opportunity was given, and that opportunity is still there. In fact, less than two hours ago, I talked to the CEO. I said, listen, Mr. CEO, Bruce Graham, is that opportunity still there for people to come, and will you take the time to explain exactly what has happened and how we compare? This is after the member raised questions in the House. He says, anytime.

So if you want to play politics with it, that is fine. I can live with that, as well. I still extend the invitation to you to take that opportunity. If it is a matter of seeing whether you can embarrass me with how much you know about the issue, that is your liberty, as well.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for repeating the invitation. The minister very kindly made available to all of us a very detailed briefing in which Linnet was given every opportunity to make its best case for over two hours.

They also kindly provided us and the minister provided us with a copy of its overheads from that presentation which gave us a very clear view of what Linnet was accomplishing, and I would suggest to the minister that, again, if he wants to find out what is going on in this sector, he is a shareholder in a company that has a very great interest in keeping his good will.

If he is serious about his duty to Manitobans, he needs to talk to some of the competition. The competition will tell you that some firms have been driven out of business by predatory pricing on the part of Linnet. We talk about a firm in Brandon, for example, on a project in Brandon, in which Brandon was muscled into using Linnet in a way which they were not particularly interested in doing. We talk about other companies that cannot get work in Manitoba and instead get work elsewhere.

You talk about playing politics. What I am playing here is the interest of companies to have employment and to be able to have career paths for young Manitobans, and when the majority of the industry, which is a small business industry, comes to a party that this government often describes as unfriendly to business, in error of course, but describes that way, when virtually a whole industry sector comes to us and says, we are dying because of this government's monopoly policy with Linnet, then it is not a question of playing politics. It is a question of the interests and needs of many Manitoba companies which are trying to survive in a very important sector in a global market. They are trying to become experts, and they are trying to make Manitoba a proud home of competitive geomatics industry companies.

That is not happening under this policy. It has not happened. In fact, we are going backwards. This is not a question of playing politics. Of course, in this forum we are debating political issues, but in this issue we are debating a failure of a policy that has led to loss of jobs, loss of opportunity, some firms going bankrupt and others teetering on the edge.

So if you want to investigate this I would suggest to the minister that he not just talk to his friends in Linnet and not just talk to those people who gave us a very fine briefing. I have no problem with Linnet becoming a global competitor, but I do have a problem with Linnet putting other companies out of business and creating a framework in which, for example, this report talks about

the need to continue investing in the development of open and shared information resources. They are not open and shared. An observation emerging from interviews was that the complexity and cost associated with securing access to information may be one of the most significant barriers.

It goes on to talk about, assuming Manitoba takes timely and effective steps to remove systemic development barriers, the growth of Geomatics in Manitoba could, for example. It uses the future tense about the possibilities in this market, not the current or the past tense. It says that if we got our act together we might be able to. So I invite the minister to recognize that we did spend some time with Linnet, significant time. We read all the material. We read all the contracts, but we have also talked with the rest of the industry.

I would ask the minister, have you talked with the rest of the industry candidly about the situation of Geomatics in Manitoba, and will you do so before you respond to this very devastating study?

Mr. Driedger: Now I have a better idea of where the member is coming from because he is basically talking about the mom-and-pop operations out there, the smaller operators who feel—I do not agree necessarily—but who feel that they are being hard done by by Linnet. I can also tell the member, and I want to ask him that if he can maybe bring forward to me how many people have raised a concern about that, I know there are individuals that possibly have been but can also tell you that there are more people who are mom-and-pop operations out there that basically have jobs because of Linnet, because of the information base that they are establishing. They are using that to take and create jobs for themselves. This issue has been an issue that has been debated pro and con a long time, and I ask the member, in all fairness and all honesty, to tell me, because there is a meeting taking place at the university right now with some of these people, the member is aware of that as well, and I would like to know how many people have a grave concern and how many are on the positive side of the information basically and the work that they have gotten because of Linnet and the way it operates right now with their database.

It is my impression, because of the information that is available, that many more people have opportunities

based on the contracts that Linnet is landing, that have job opportunities because of Linnet that would not have jobs otherwise.

I ask again, if there are issues out there concerning mom-and-pop operations who feel they are hard done by, I would like to have those.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I find the minister's terminology really derogatory and patronizing. These mom-and-pop operations, as you talk about, maintain businesses that employ significant numbers of people. They are not mom-and-pop operations, they are partnerships in a professional area.

Yes, there are some small businesses, as this study has found. Geomatics in Canada is in an infancy sector and on average it does have less than 12 people per firm, but to suggest that Pollock and Wright, for example, is a mom-and-pop shop, I think Pollock and Wright might not be terribly impressed to hear.

The real issue here is that the underlying approach that has been used, that is, the digitizing of these photographs, cannot pass for an accurate base map. There is real danger involved in using this approach and

selling it as though it accurately represents reality, because there are many places in rural Manitoba where the digital orthophotograph representation is out by a very significant number of feet. We are not talking in this case about 30 or 40 feet, but a matter of several hundred feet in some situations.

You cannot overlay then what is called the cadastral or legal map on that digitized base because essentially you have taken a very accurate and necessarily accurate map that is accurate within a matter of centimetres and overlaid it on a database so it is not accurate within feet. You cannot do it.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

Good night.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 21, 1996

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