

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, January 8, 1990.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): I am pleased to table the Annual Report 1988-89 of the Manitoba Labour Board.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement to make to the House.

I am very pleased to inform this House that the backlog of cases in Provincial Court in Winnipeg has been eliminated.

To underline the degree of achievement for Honourable Members, I can say that the majority of cases making first appearance in court this week will come up for trial any time between March 1 and May 30.

This means that we are now scheduling trials for earlier this year than we were able to do last May, when the first steps to eliminate the backlog were taken.

This is a vast improvement from last year when the time between the laying of charges and the trial date could be anywhere from 12 to 14 months.

In order to eliminate the backlog, two factors were required, and I am proud to inform Honourable Members that both were present. First, we needed a structure and procedures to manage and track cases from the moment of generation to trial. This was accomplished first through the reorganization of the Public Prosecutions Division and shortly thereafter by development and introduction of the necessary procedures. They will go a long way toward ensuring that the backlog does not recur.

Second but no less important was the willingness of Crown attorneys, Crown assistants, their support staff and staff of Provincial Court to put in enormous extra effort to attack the backlog.

Among the main administrative tasks were examining and setting trial priorities for cases, scheduling trials and ensuring maximum use of courtrooms and most efficient use of courtrooms and most efficient use of staff.

I am also proud to report that over the past several months our Crown attorneys have gone far beyond the call of duty in reviewing thousands of cases, discussing with defence lawyers and eliminating cases that were resolvable without trials. The case reviews with defence lawyers helped speed up trials by increasing the degree

of agreement on trial issues and thereby reducing the number of procedural disputes in court. Provincial Court staff and provincial judges ensured that courtrooms and court staff were used to maximum efficiency.

* (1335)

I want to express personal appreciation for the work of all those who contributed to the success of this challenging work and this challenging task. I am confident the factors that helped eliminate the backlog will help us to refine our case management system further and also enhance the high level of service of our courts to all Manitobans.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I respond to the statement by the Minister today with respect to the court backlog. After 12 months of suggestions from this side and three false starts, a plan was finally put into place and that plan appears to have yielded results.

I am sad to say that unfortunately the court backlog in St. Boniface still persists notably. We are looking forward to the Minister, after years of problems in St. Boniface and indeed a continued problem, coming to grips with the reality of French language services in our courts and the absolute right of people to be tried in French in the St. Boniface Courts, indeed the courts all across this province.

In addition, I might add in specific reference to the Minister's statement that the trial dates are being set now within reasonable periods of time. It is essential, and I simply bring to the Minister's attention that the trials be ready to go forward at the trial date. One of the problems which unfortunately has occurred is that particulars have not been forwarded in sufficient time to in fact use that trial date. If Crown attorneys do not have sufficient support staff or indeed sufficient numbers amongst themselves to provide particulars to defence counsel, those trial dates cannot be used and the whole thing becomes indeed a facade. That I do not believe is the case as yet. It is a problem which has arisen. I look forward to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) addressing that problem in concert with the achievements which have already been gained.

In conclusion, I might say that it is certainly in the interests of all Manitobans to have speedy trials, both the public at large and obviously the accused. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): It is an honour to rise on the statement of the Honourable Minister today. Often this Chamber is typified by negative comments and I want to say to the Attorney General that we appreciate the statement of his department today and the co-operation from the chief of the Provincial Court judges, which I think was an excellent appointment and I said so at the time, and the work of Crown attorneys and defence lawyers to work on the backlog within our system.

I also want to say that the appointment made by the Government over the Christmas week of Graeme Garson I thought was an excellent appointment and I want to say that for the record as well.

Mr. Speaker, the key to expediting court procedures in time for trials is less crime. We are pleased that the numbers are dropping, but we would note even as we speak today about reducing crime in our streets that there are groups such as Block Parents that are in a very critical situation. We hope the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) is looking at those needed volunteers that have been established and are working in our communities across the province to prevent crime and to work with community-based groups in our social and economic fibre in this province.

I also want to note, Mr. Speaker, that the Government did promise to have an expedited procedure for prosecutions for persons alleged to be committing crimes of violence. I have not yet seen in 19 or 20 months any announcement for what I believe to be one of the top priorities in our criminal justice system. There are those persons alleged to have committed violent crimes against persons, and I would ask the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) to take action in that regard rather than just coming out with these announcements which I would agree are positive for all Manitobans.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Village at Portage Place Public Auction

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): My question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). For the last number of months, the Liberal Party has been ringing alarm bells about the lack of accountability and direction of the two major downtown revitalization corporations. In the past week, Manitobans have seen ample evidence from both the North Portage Development Corporation's attempt to preserve one monument and The Forks Renewal Corporation's decision to create another.

My question is to the Premier. Will he tell us if there have been any discussions by himself or any of his Ministers about stopping the public auction to sell the village at Portage Place?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I can first thank the Member for his question and tell him that I have been absent from the city for a week, and I am not aware of any discussions that have taken place. I know that the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) has also been absent for this past week, so I cannot tell him of any discussions that may have taken place in that regard.

Village at Portage Place Public Auction

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, the Acting Minister though has been here and has made certain comments so that I would direct my supplementary question to him.

The president of the North Portage Development Corporation has indicated that he will step in to prevent

the public auction, while the Acting Minister of Urban Affairs said only two or three days ago that the North Portage Development Corporation does not have the authority or the funds to do so, a sentiment that was echoed just the other day by the federal Minister responsible.

* (1340)

My question is very simple to the Minister: how does he explain these contradictory statements?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): I can tell my honourable friend from Fort Rouge that I did not say they did not have the authority. I said I was not aware of the ins and outs of the agreement between the North Portage Development Corporation and the three levels of Government, the intimate details. I did say, however, I thought it was somewhat unique if that corporation were to go and buy out the first mortgage held by MHRC.

Mr. Speaker, I also indicated that the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) would return to the city tonight and that he would be available to discuss that matter with the North Portage Development Corporation.

Mr. Carr: My question is to the Acting Minister: who will make the decision? Will the decision about whether to throw new public dollars after this failed project be made by the board of directors appointed by three levels of Government or made by the politicians themselves who ultimately must be accountable for the expenditure of public funds? Who will make the decision, this Government or the appointed bureaucrats?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister.

Mortgage Documentation Request

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, just to remind the Minister, the clock is ticking because the public auction is scheduled for January 24. The president of the North Portage Development Corporation has said publicly that the deal between the corporation and the developer includes land rent only as long as the corporation holds the mortgage. If it goes to public auction, they may lose the mortgage, therefore, 75 years of land rent. Will the Minister or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) agree to make that document public today so that all Members of this House and the people of Manitoba will know just how high the poker stakes are in this game?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister and he will respond in due course.

The Forks Renewal Corporation Hotel Conversion

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I have a related but new question to the Premier. Accountability

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is not only a problem at the North Portage Development Corporation, but obviously this kind of attitude has slipped across the street to the Forks as well.

The chairman of the Forks Corporation says that they are private and independent, and whenever anyone asks a question you get the runaround and finger pointing between different levels of Government and between the bureaucrats and the politicians. Does the Premier support the decision to convert an old warehouse building on the site to a hotel at a time when the hotel industry in Manitoba is suffering?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I remind the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) that his good friend and mentor, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, was one of the people who set up the mechanisms that prevail for instance in North Portage and in the core area and so on and set up that kind of trilevel corporation with some semi arm's-length responsibility. If he is unhappy with the way in which those corporations have been set up, perhaps he should have had those discussions with Mr. Axworthy at the time when he had some influence on the process.

Mr. Speaker, the corporation is looking at the various alternatives for investment and development there. The corporation has decided in its wisdom that this is the best use of the land and the most appropriate type of land use for development there. Those are things that are within their jurisdiction and within their purview. Those are matters that he ought to perhaps address more directly in terms of the corporation itself. If he is unhappy with the proposals that are being put forth, he can contact the corporation and let them know.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has just proved my point. I asked a question about the use of public funds and his answer was go talk to the corporation who made that decision in its wisdom. We are interested in the wisdom of the Premier of this province who is responsible for the expenditure of public money and he is passing the buck and not giving it to us.

Future Development Moratorium

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): There is growing concern that the Forks had strayed away from its mandate to give special significance to the confluence of the Red and the Assiniboine River. Will the Premier today give his Government's commitment to a moratorium on all future development projects at the Forks until there is another round of public consultation and a chance for some sober second thought to prevail?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) has decided that there is growing public concern and that the answer is to stop all development at The Forks Renewal Corporation. I am not aware that the public is supportive of the statement that he makes and alleges as fact.

* (1345)

Certainly if there are growing public concerns about the mandate and the decisions that are being made

by the Renewal Corporation, I think that is a matter that can be reviewed by the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme), who is the representative partner from the provincial Government on the Corporation. I am sure that he will keep close contact with the public and those interested parties who have those concerns, and respond adequately to them.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): I remember a great deal of difficulty in us getting the public land from the CNR through former Governments. I hope quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that people like Alan Artibise, who we had on the board of directors before, are the type of people that the provincial Government has on the board of directors so we do not have this forced march development at The Forks development area.

The Premier should note that his own Clerk of Cabinet is on the board of directors and clearly has three members of the board who can veto everything, including the Minister, under the terms of the agreement.

Human Rights Code Racist Pins

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) dealing with the pins, the alleged racist pins, that are now being placed in Manitoba and sold in the Province of Manitoba.—(interjection)—The Government has made—this is a very serious issue. I wish I would not have heckling from the Liberal benches on this issue.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The argument being—the fact is your postamble has absolutely nothing to do with the question that you are posing. That is out of order. This is not a time for debate.

Mr. Doer: It is a very serious subject, Mr. Speaker. The Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) has made public statements on the possible sale and the actual sale of the pins in the Province of Manitoba. I think every new immigration period has suffered with a backlash towards new immigrants, whether it was after the First World War or after the Second World War.

I would ask the Minister of Justice whether he plans on prosecuting or developing an investigation under Section 18 of the Manitoba Human Rights Code dealing with the sale and distribution of the pins in Manitoba.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I agree with you, Mr. Speaker, that the question may not have been totally properly put, but I do agree with the Honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) that the matter he raises should be viewed with a measure of seriousness on the part of all Honourable Members.

The issue is before my department. My department is interested in the issue and there is an investigation going on to resolve the matter. I have not personally to this point seen the pin myself, but I have asked my department to review the matter and deal with it appropriately.

Mr. Doer: Certainly we pledge our Party's support for that investigation and the possible utilization of Section 18 of the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Rafferty-Alameda Dam Project Environmental Impact Study

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question is a new question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), or a supplementary question to the Premier dealing with the Rafferty-Alameda Dam. We have had obviously in 19 months conflicting messages of whether we are going to have an environmental impact study, whether we are going to have intervention in the courts, whether we are not going to have intervention in the courts, whether the technical study is adequate, whether the technical study is inadequate, Mr. Speaker.

* (1350)

I have asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to give us the definitive and the latest word on his Government's dealing with the Rafferty-Alameda Dam. Has he forwarded any correspondence to the federal Minister of Environment to not allow the federal Government to appeal the court decision so that Manitobans can get what they have been entitled to? That has been a full environmental review of the Rafferty-Alameda project.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Manitoba has put together correspondence to Saskatchewan and to the federal Department of Environment, to the federal Minister, Mr. Bouchard. We have reiterated the concerns that we had that we expressed last summer in Souris, that a full environmental impact study be done on this project and that we encourage them to proceed and get that job done, because that will guarantee what was offered to us when the licence was first reissued to this structure, and that is that the completion of the environmental impact studies on the Souris, including the impacts on Manitoba, would be completed.

Mr. Doer: Our problem has never been with the Government's comments in Souris. It was the Government's comments the day the federal Minister denied the full environmental impact study and issued the licence in Saskatchewan simultaneous to the bulldozers going ahead and the Minister refusing to join the Wildlife Federation and other organizations when that licence was issued, in terms of defending Manitobans.

Legal Intervention

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question then to the Minister is, if the federal Government does not appeal this decision or proceeds with this decision and it goes back to court, will the Government now intervene on behalf of Manitobans against the federal Government in court and join the Wildlife Federation and other environmental groups?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a hypothetical issue that the Member raises. We are faced today with the opportunity to have the guarantee of the assessments done on the Souris River, which has been our main concern, so that

we know what impacts there may be so that they can be mitigated or corrected. That is the way that we have chosen to protect the interests of Manitoba. We have taken every possible means to make sure that those interests are protected.

When the licence was issued, we had to make sure that we could do the very best in getting the assessments done. That is the reason that we chose to work on the guarantees from the federal Government to have the assessments completed. We have chosen not to go to court with our neighbouring provinces on this issue, and that is still the position of this Government.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the only thing that is not hypothetical is when the Government, the federal Government, the Tory Government, makes a decision and it is in the best interests of Saskatchewan, this Government sits on the sidelines and allows Manitobans to be shafted in terms of the environmental impact studies in this province.

My question then to the Minister of Environment is this: why has he ruled out going to court when he has asked the federal Minister not to appeal the decision of the courts? Why has he ruled out the decision to go to the courts if his Premier has stated correctly that a full environmental impact study is necessary? Why is he not fighting with every means possible to protect Manitobans as the Wildlife Federation is and other interested environmental groups?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the responsibility to make sure that the Souris River is protected is our responsibility. That is the direction that we are taking. He is putting forward a hypothetical situation in talking about whether or not we have asked the federal Government to appeal. We have asked the federal Government and the Province of Saskatchewan to suspend construction until the assessments are completed. That will look after the interests of the Souris River.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Manitoba Jobless Statistics

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Next Monday will be a sad day for Manitobans and indeed all Canadians, because a week from today the VIA cuts will take effect in our province. Although our entire Manitoba economy will suffer because of those cuts, the hardest hit will be the employees who will lose their jobs and their families.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond). Can the Minister of Labour tell the House how many Manitoba employees will lose their jobs in this province next Monday and how many will be transferred out of rural communities as a result of these cuts?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mrs. Carstairs: We have been told that upwards of 1,000 people will lose their jobs because of these cuts, and the Minister does not have any idea what the answer is?

Labour Adjustment

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Can the Minister tell us, if she does not know any numbers, what kind of training programs and retraining programs she has established in order to enable these individuals losing their jobs to be re-employed in the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Minister of Labour.

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, our Worker Adjustment Committee has been in touch with the federal department for a worker adjustment unit. I do not believe that has been set up with the province as of yet, but I will answer that question as of tomorrow.

* (1355)

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, as usual you know we try to address problems after the horses are already out of the barn in this province. That is the tragedy of Tory administration in the Province of Manitoba.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Cost to Manitoba

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, with my final supplementary question to the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), who has said in letters to Manitobans that these cuts could cost us \$50 million, can the Minister of Highways tell us today and provide to us today a detailed accounting of the cost to this province of VIA cutbacks in Manitoba?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate to the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) that the detailed information in terms of the full impact is something that I will try and get to her by tomorrow.

In the meantime, I have to indicate that over a period of time, when the first comments were made in terms of the proposed cuts at that time, I have a whole list of all the things that we have done as Government in terms of raising the concerns of Manitobans, the impact on Manitobans and Canadians. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the concerns that we have expressed have fallen on deaf ears. We are still waiting for some decisions from the federal Minister when we went down to raise the concerns with them about the impact on Manitobans. We hope that there are still going to be some positive things coming out of it.

Public Utilities Board Gas Rate Review

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Someday the Tories will learn that nobody listens to Tories when they speak, not even Tories.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board. The role of the Public Utilities Board is clearly one that provides protection to Manitoba consumers. The PUB provides an open forum for the general public as it serves to monitor and regulate utility price increases. We all support the role that they provide and want to maintain the highest level of confidence.

My question to the Minister responsible is, how does the Minister expect to maintain the integrity of the PUB when they have to approve—they have in fact approved—the third gas rate increase in four months while admitting they did not have the time to analyze the figures presented properly?

Hon. Edward Connerly (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Member once again I guess is reading the newspaper article which says that they did not have time. They gave it the full review that an interim report would get. As the Member knows, when they had the previous rate hearing they were told that if the rates were not sufficient that they would be allowed an interim hearing, which they were granted. The people of Manitoba have had an opportunity to present themselves to the hearing, which they did. The Consumers' Association and the Manitoba Society of Seniors made representation to the hearing.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, the report from the PUB says: "Due to the limited time available, the board was unable to review this issue to its complete satisfaction." Why did this Minister not, given that The Public Utilities Accountability Act allows Cabinet to appoint experts to assist the PUB, provide the assistance required instead of putting the Public Utilities Board in a compromising position?

Mr. Connerly: Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board was not in a compromising position. The Public Utilities Board at all times has the power and the wherewithal to hire whatever expertise is required. They do not come to the Minister looking to get expertise. They have that expertise available to them and they make use of it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Connerly: Mr. Speaker, in June there will be another rate hearing following audited statements from the utility. There will be another hearing which will verify

those rates. It is an interim rate. If the rates were in excess of what should have been, they can be refunded and the Public Utilities Board has stated that.

* (1400)

Resources

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert, with his final supplemental question.

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): This leads to the question as to when did it last happen, Mr. Speaker. The real question is, will the Minister, given that these Cabinet colleagues have committed to the reviewing of the Conawapa project, as an example, assure Manitobans that he will personally see to it that the PUB is afforded the time and the resources to completely analyze this type of a deal on behalf of the consumers of Manitoba who deserve the protection?

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The Public Utilities Board is an arm's-length board that is appointed and will not be interfered with by Government. Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board has available to them all of the expertise that is required. On an ongoing basis, they hire the experts to do the analyses for them and they take the time that is required. The Public Utilities Board has the ability to make a proper decision and have done so and will continue to do so.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Inspector Reinstatement

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond). Last year her predecessor, the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), stated that he was in favour of cutting the minimum wage for youth in this province, and he also cut the funding for the Labour Education Centre, and also he wanted all the warning labels to dangerous goods gutted, and he also eliminated the gas inspectors. In view of the recent death in the apartment building in Winnipeg as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning, will the Minister reverse the position of the previous Minister and reinstate the gas inspectors in this province?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): In light of the death at the apartment building on College Avenue, my department is reviewing the inspection of boilers and of the chimneys.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Speaker, I hoped that the inspectors will be, due to the important role they play, reinstated.

Labour Education Centre Funding Reinstatement

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Due to the importance of the role played by the Labour Education Centre, I am wondering if the Minister would now reinstate the funding for the Labour Education Centre and also

restore the previous warning labels that affected the dangerous goods in this province?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, we are meeting regularly with the Manitoba Federation of Labour and other labour affiliates. We certainly are working with them when programs come up that they would like some help with. One was the anti-racism campaign that they had asked the Government for some help in funding. Through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Labour, we have supplied a person plus office space, and so we are working co-operatively with labour in this province.

Solvit Resources Inc. Fire Commissioner Report

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak), with his final supplementary question.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond). Will the Minister today release the report from the commissioner's office dealing with the Solvit fire in St. Boniface?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, we will be releasing that report tomorrow.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Chimney Inspection Policy

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question also concerns the tragic incident that occurred Christmas eve at 285 College Avenue in this city involving some 21 people, one of whom died, two of which remain in critical condition, with respect to the carbon monoxide poisoning.

Mr. Speaker, this Minister says she is reviewing the policies. She reviewed the carcinogen policy now for four months. She has been reviewing the Solvit incident in St. Boniface for seven months. Is this the type of action that we can expect of this Minister on this incident? Why is she not prepared today to put a plan before this House as to how we can make sure that incident, the carbon monoxide poisoning of Manitobans, never happens again?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Member across the floor, I would not like to bring in a policy that is going to make matters worse. We want to bring in something that will make things better. We will bring in recommendations so that type of thing hopefully does not happen again. Unlike the Members across the floor, we can never say never, but we will do our best to make sure that we protect people's lives in Manitoba.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the real tragedy is that this incident could have been prevented by a \$119 machine,

which has recently been developed and is available now, has been for over half a year, and was developed in consultation with the Atomic Energy Commission of Canada.

Why is this Minister not willing to indicate to Manitobans what her plan is to prevent these occurrences, given that the technology is available, it is cost effective, and Manitobans are put at risk by inspectors who do not check chimneys in this province?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, we will be bringing in a policy and a recommendation on the very things that this Member is mentioning. As far as the technology is concerned, we really have to look into that type of thing and certainly will.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. James, with his final supplementary question.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, 145 people died in this country between 1973 and 1982, specifically due to this type of incident. My question to the Minister is: will she today commit to within the next week coming forward to this House with a plan as to what can be done to ensure that chimneys that are not accessible are indeed checked for venting purposes, so that we know when an apartment building does not have carbon monoxide venting?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, we will be bringing in a policy to that very effect.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Labour Adjustment

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I was shocked to hear the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) just admit a few moments ago that she has taken no action to meet with the VIA employees, the representatives, VIA Rail or the federal departments to determine what kind of assistance her department could provide to the employees who are affected at VIA Rail as a result of the massive layoffs that are taking place. We have seen massive layoffs at CN as well as in other areas and this Minister, despite the fact that we asked for her to intervene, has not taken action.

I ask her at this time to tell this House why she did not see fit to contact these people who are affected and their families to determine how she could assist. Her department could assist those workers in transition as a result of the losses of those jobs by decisions made by their Conservative Government in Ottawa.

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): The Honourable Member has made an assumption that is not correct. We did contact VIA Rail immediately that the employees and the employers, as is required, to give any assistance that we could. They were not ready to take that assistance. If the Member, and I am sure he does, knows anything about unions and regulations at all with the railroads, he would know that there is a bumping effect that comes into effect and, until you get down the road, you do not know which of the employees will be laid off. With that in mind, we certainly are prepared and will be working with any of the employees from VIA Rail who need it.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Labour Adjustment

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Dauphin, with a supplementary question.

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, this Minister is the Minister of Labour, not the Minister responsible for corporations. She should be meeting with the workers who are affected. We are dealing with layoffs in five days. I ask the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger). He indicates that he has provided all kinds of correspondence to the federal Minister protesting the decisions there. I ask him whether he has talked with his colleague who has some jurisdiction in this area and asked her to intervene to assist those workers that will be affected.

* (1410)

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I have all the confidence in the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) to look after the concerns of the people of Manitoba and the workers that are affected.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Fare Increases

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I ask this Minister, since he says he has made so much representation, what representation has he made to the federal Government and with his western colleagues to protest these massive and discriminatory increases in VIA Rail fares that have taken place, that were announced by the federal Conservative Government? What representation has he made to stop these discriminatory increases to western Canada?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation for that question. I will list the items as he has asked them. On September 27 when the VIA Rail service cuts were announced, we made representation at that time, and we had contact on September 8, August 4, July 28, July 11, June 23, June 16, May 23, May 4, April 26 and April 7. Mr. Speaker, if the Member wants, I could read the kind of correspondence that has taken place if I was allowed the time. If not, I have forwarded most of the information on the representation that I made, and the Member is well aware of that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Sturgeon Road Speed Reduction

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): The carnage on Sturgeon Road must be addressed by this Government.

On Christmas Eve, four members of one family were killed, along with a young mother in the other car. A young mother of two involved in another accident in June is now a quadriplegic, 38 accidents on one portion of the road, termed death mile by the police force, an increase of 93 percent in the number of vehicles per day travelling Sturgeon Road. My question to the Minister of Highways is this: will the Minister urge the reduction of the speed limit from 90 kph before further tragedies occur?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I think everybody is saddened when these kinds of accidents happen on any highways, whether it is the city's jurisdiction or provincial jurisdiction, and most certainly if anything can be done to avoid these kinds of things, certainly from our point of view we will do that and I know that the people from the City of Winnipeg do as well.

Addressing the specific question on that stretch of highway, there is a process in place through the Highway Traffic Board in terms of asking for a reduction in terms of the speed limit, and the portion where some of these accidents happen is within the jurisdiction of the City of Winnipeg.

Most certainly I have made my staff aware of our portion of the concern that we have there. We will be addressing it jointly with the city, but the request has to be made by the City of Winnipeg in terms of asking for a reduction in the speed limit.

Responsibility

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek, with a supplementary question.

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) review the statistics of the past few years and consider the long-standing request of the Rossmere Municipality since 1974 for the province to take over responsibility of that particular stretch of the highway north of Selkirk Avenue?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): The Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) and myself are in constant communication with the City of Winnipeg in negotiations in terms of various roads that we are looking at taking over.

We are working on some of these programs trying to develop an agreement between the city and the province in terms of jurisdiction on certain roads, because some of the provincial roads are within the city limits. We are trying to work out some kind of an arrangement whereby we have a clear definite—how shall I say? We are trying to arrive at an agreement.

For example, Highway 75 where it comes into the city portion of it is a two-lane highway. We are trying to negotiate that along with some other highways within the city jurisdiction to see whether we can come to some agreement. Certainly we will escalate that based on the request made by the Member.

Sturgeon Road Widening

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek, with her final supplementary question.

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): I will ask the Acting Minister of Urban Affairs, given the fact that he was a city councillor for that particular area, if he would also review the statistics and consult with city engineers regarding early plans to widen Sturgeon Road north of Ness Avenue, a corner that produced 54 accidents in 1984, a number declared way out of proportion by Members of the traffic division?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I will take the question as notice and pass the information along to the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme).

Minister of Health Campaign Promises

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, as we enter into 1990, it has been increasingly clear that this Government has not lived up to its campaign commitments in terms of health care. They made eight major promises in the 1988 election, and they have kept only one of them. Most fundamentally, they failed to bring in the health action plan that they promised commencing in 1990.

My question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is: is the Premier in agreement with the actions of his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in ignoring those campaign promises, or will the Premier at least call the Minister of Health to order and start demanding that he live up to campaign promises that were made to the people of Manitoba, important campaign promises in the area of health for Manitobans?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, a health action plan commencing in 1990—and we are just in the first week of 1990. We have another 51 weeks for it to commence.

We will keep all of our campaign commitments within the time frame of a normal four-year Government. We will accomplish all of the things that we have set forth. All we need is the support of Opposition Parties to ensure that we have the time to accomplish all of those commitments that we set forth in the last campaign - (interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member for Thompson, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I hope the Premier is not counting on either a full four years or even 51 weeks at the way this Government is going.

I would like to ask the Premier—I look forward to see whether the Liberals have the guts to vote against the Government on final offer selection. They are a great one for making comments from their seats.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Manitoba Medical Association Negotiations

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) once again, in terms of the actions of this Government on health care, a few weeks ago the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) of the province called doctors "liars." He has taken a confrontational attitude with health care professionals throughout his term as Health Minister. Has the Premier finally called the Minister of Health in and asked him to apologize to the doctors of this province and stop this confrontational attitude of this Government towards the health care providers of this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I guess the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) with his cavalier attitude that his administration, the NDP administration of which he was a part, was in constant conflict with health care professionals. His Minister of Health told doctors if they did not like it in Manitoba they could leave. I suppose he thought that was a good relationship that they were building with the doctors.

They were in conflict every time they had any discussions or negotiations. Over and over and over again, his administration was in conflict with doctors, nurses, health care professionals right across this province, chiropractors, every single one of them. The fact of the matter is that they eventually, when they settled with the doctors, settled 11 and a half months after their agreement had expired. They went on and on and on, in the middle of an election campaign with great pressure. Mr. Speaker, we need take no advice from that Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) as to how to resolve issues in negotiation.

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

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): May I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for The Pas have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable Member for The Pas.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Ukrainian community are in the midst of their Christmas celebration, and I would like to congratulate members of the Ukrainian community who are now celebrating their traditional Christmas.

I was present at The Forks yesterday when there was a great display of the traditional music, dance and songs, and I would like to add that my son, who is studying dance in the Ukraine, was present to participate as a member of the Rusalka Dancers yesterday.

The Ukrainian-Christian celebrations begin with traditional 12 meatless dishes, and their celebrations are based on the universal theme of Christ's birth and peace and goodwill towards all people. Ukrainian New Years falls on the 13th of January, and I would like to close by the true traditional greeting, Krestos Resdietcha, Slovit yaho and Scheslevi Novay Reek. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable Member for Seven Oaks.

* (1420)

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Members of the Chamber for granting leave. Indeed yesterday, Ukrainians around the world and many others of the orthodox faith, because it is indeed an orthodox Christmas, participated and celebrated Christmas two weeks later following the old calendar.

Mr. Speaker, central to the orthodox celebration of Christmas is the importance of the birth of Christ on that day, and that is central to the theme. It was indeed perhaps unfortunate when many of us were going through many of the malls and so on in the pre-Christmas, the 25th of December Christmas period, that too infrequently did we see Christ as a central focus of Christmas.

I would like to also add that in the Ukrainian tradition the giving of presents is usually held around December 19, which is the day of Saint Nicholas, the holy day of Saint Nicholas, who was created a saint as he provided assistance and gifts to children who lived in his area many hundreds of years ago. In that way, Ukrainians and many other orthodox around the world allow the true focus of Christmas to be that of Jesus Christ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable Minister of Education.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education): I too would like to join my honourable colleagues in wishing all the Ukrainian people in Manitoba and indeed throughout the world a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This is a time of the year when Ukrainians all over the world celebrate Christmas, as is it their tradition that they brought with them when they came to Canada, when they came to Manitoba. Indeed, many of us who perhaps do not celebrate Christmas at this time rejoice at hearing the traditional Christmas carols that are sung not only on radio but are sung throughout the city and

throughout this province. In my own language, Ukrainian, I would like to wish all of them a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Bazhayem vsheem Veseleh Svyat, Schastyia, Zdorovlyia i Veseloho Novoho Roku. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY COMMITTEE CHANGE

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I have a committee substitution. I move, seconded by the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs be amended as follows: the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) for the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, today the Estimates process will include only the Department of Family Services in the Chamber. As you know, the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs is meeting today at 3 p.m.

I would move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): This is on a point of order before you leave. Before you leave the Chair, Mr. Speaker, I understand Municipal Affairs is meeting in Room 255.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Government House Leader for that clarification.

MOTION presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the Honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) in the Chair for the Department of Family Services.

* (1430)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Chairman (Harold Gilleshammer): Order. The committee will be dealing in this section with the Estimates of the Department of Family Services. We will begin with an opening statement from the Minister responsible. The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to present for review the 1989-90 Estimates for the Department of Family Services, the first budget Estimates for this new

department. As you know, Premier Filmon announced on April 21, 1989, as part of the reorganization of a number of Government departments, the creation of the new Department of Family Services, which combines responsibilities for social services, income security and related employment measures.

The new department reflects our Government's focus on the importance of families in society and our commitment to support Manitoba families to the greatest extent possible. This support takes the form of a broad range of services to keep family life strong in our province. The new department also clearly establishes a renewed commitment by our Government to work with the many external agencies and community groups who have dedicated themselves to delivering service in partnership with Government.

This commitment began when we took office, resulting in a series of consultations and reviews with the community during the past year. Through this process, we have established a future course for social service delivery. The task before us, which is reflected in our 1989-90 Estimates, is to begin to align service delivery in accordance with what Manitobans have said that they want and they need.

Before I begin the review of our Estimates, I would like to note that the 1989-90 expenditures shown in the printed Estimates for the Department of Family Services reflect areas of responsibility which had formerly comprised the Department of Community Services and much of the Department of Employment Services and Economic Security. The reconciliation statement at the beginning of the detailed main Estimates for the Department of Family Services summarizes the adjustments made to the 1988-89 Estimates in order to provide a proper comparison of last year's expenditures with the '89-90 budget for this new department.

In addition to these changes, I recently announced a new organization structure for the Department of Family Services, a reorganization which is intended to strengthen management of the department's responsibilities and bring a fresh perspective to some program areas. The Members should be aware that this means the department is no longer organized exactly according to the structure shown in the budget Estimates which I expect the committee will follow to conduct this review. The organization changes are not extensive however and should not cause undue confusion. I will note the changes where appropriate to clarify altered titles or responsibilities.

For '89-90 we are proposing expenditures of \$491,480,900 in my department. This represents an increase of about \$41 million or 9.1 percent over last year. The additional money in this year's budget will enable my department to maintain and in some cases increase support for existing programs and also will allow the Government to launch a number of new initiatives.

Major funding increases have been approved for program areas that are a priority for our Government. These include child day care, wife abuse, child abuse and services for handicapped people. The new initiatives

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we are proposing will strengthen areas of service delivery which in our consultation with Manitobans we have found to be inadequate. Since these initiatives respond to the express needs of the community, we anticipate they will become a regular part of our future Estimates. We are committed to funding a level of quality services that all Manitobans can access.

Community Social Services: the programs and services within the Community Social Services Division of my department, now called the Rehabilitation and Community Living Division under the new department structure, are targeted to physically disabled and mentally handicapped adults and children and are delivered through regional Government offices and through a number of external agencies and community groups.

Payment is made from the department to external organizations by way of grant funding to cover administrative and operating costs and through per diem rates to cover the actual cost of service delivery to clients. For this fiscal year, funding for this division will total \$69.3 million. This represents an increase of \$4.5 million or 7 percent. Much of this additional money will go toward general rate increases to pay for existing services for clients living in the community.

An increase of just over 10 percent has been committed this year for services to mentally handicapped and physically disabled adults, bringing the 1989-90 budget for this area to \$35.4 million. Our Government has targeted most of this increase to improve the care and safety of mentally handicapped individuals in residential care homes. Need for this improvement was identified as a priority by the Wiens Report on residential care which was received by the department in February of 1989.

A major undertaking in this regard last year is the establishment of a comprehensive training program to upgrade the skills of approximately 1,800 individuals who work at various levels and in various disciplines with mentally handicapped Manitobans. This initiative is in response to the Wiens Report, which pointed to the need for training of direct service providers. The department has budgeted an additional \$260,000 this year to implement such training. The training program will consist of four parts: basic health care and safety, basic training and development, more advanced programming and upgrading, and skill enhancement for Government staff.

With respect to the Manitoba Developmental Centre, we will continue to make improvements as set out in last year's Ombudsman's report. In August, I appointed an eight-member advisory committee to the centre. The committee will provide for greater community involvement in the delivery of services to the centre's clients and residents.

As well, I would like to note that the Department of Government Services is also committed to a seven-year capital plan for the centre and will spend \$8 million over this period for renovations, which will improve the safety and comfort of centre residents.

Last May, my department was pleased to support a Speaker's Forum, which gave disabled people the

opportunity to express to all elected officials their concerns about access to services. The Speaker's Forum was modelled on a similar event in Ottawa sponsored by the Speaker of the House of Commons, which our Speaker attended.

My department contributed financial support for this event, which also included a gala celebration highlighting the creative talents of disabled artists and performers. Immediately following the Speaker's Forum, I also announced our Government's intention to support the principles set out in the United Nations' declaration of the Decade of Disabled Persons. This support involves our Government's endorsing and facilitating improved access to services by disabled people.

The Child and Family Services Division spending Estimates for 1989-90 have been set at about \$140.5 million. This marks an increase of nearly \$15.6 million or 11 percent over last year. Approximately half of that amount will go toward supporting and maintaining existing programs in the areas of child and family support, child day care, family dispute services, and children's special services. Meanwhile, an additional \$7.8 million will be spent in support of a number of new program initiatives.

I should note at this time, with the departmental reorganization, the responsibility for child day care has been transferred from the Child and Family Services Division to another division now called Day Care, Youth and Employment Support.

For budget review purposes, we will consider day care with Child and Family Services as that is where its budget is shown in the Estimates, but the Members should be aware that this transfer has taken place.

The Child and Family Support Branch will receive about \$77 million of the division's budget, an increase of \$7.9 million, or 11.4 percent over the previous year. Almost \$4.5 million of that increase reflects increased support for regular and special rate foster care, including the increased support negotiated for foster parents last year.

New initiatives for the branch will primarily be in support of child abuse services. For this fiscal year, we plan to spend an additional \$560,000 to support three child abuse initiatives, which are consistent with the recommendations in the Winnipeg Child Abuse Review.

We have allocated \$120,000 of this amount for a new child abuse treatment services training program, which will be offered through the University of Manitoba's Psychology Department. The goal is to train 20 to 25 students annually from the post-graduate social work and clinical psychology programs to begin to develop an adequate supply of trained therapists in Manitoba to work with abused children and their families. An immediate benefit of the program is that services will be provided to as many as 150 families in Winnipeg's core area through the clinical aspect of the training process.

A further \$250,000 has been designated this year to fund community-based, multidisciplinary treatment programs for abused children and their families. These programs will be phased in over a three-year period

and will provide treatment to children and families who have been referred by Child and Family Service agencies and by the department's regional offices. The money will be made available to external agencies by way of grants.

* (1440)

A hundred and ninety thousand dollars has been allocated to fund a program of support to victims of third-party sexual assault. This is an existing program operated by Children's Home of Winnipeg for which core area funding had run out and which we have agreed to continue funding. The value of this program, we believe, is that it treats not only the victim but works with the families as well to achieve successful treatment. Through the program, parent advocacy and support groups also have been developed to enable parents to work together to resolve common problems.

We are also assuming financial responsibility for another small program that the United Church Native ministry first initiated. Known as Project Opikihiwewin, it assists and supports non-Native families who have adopted Native children. We are providing \$70,000 to maintain this program because of its importance in providing specialized post-adoption services that deal with transracial issues.

Another area in which our budget shows a substantial increase in funding is Family Dispute Services. We plan to spend over \$4 million in this area in this current fiscal year, including over \$1 million of new money targeted to support the enrichment of wife abuse shelters, crisis line expansion and enhancements to women's resource centres. This represents a 32.7 percent increase in spending for this area over last year. This enhancement of women's support services comes as a direct result of our Government's Women's Initiative, which travelled throughout the province to garner public input on ways to improve women's programs and services.

One measure recommended by the Women's Initiative, which I announced last spring, is the decentralization and expansion of crisis lines in our province. My department's 1989-90 budget reflects an increase of \$389,000 to achieve this improved service. The operation of the two new crisis lines, which have been installed this fall, will ensure that women who are abused can receive immediate attention and are referred to services that they require.

Another major funding increase of \$798,400 has been approved to support the operation of wife abuse shelters in the province. This represents a 47 percent increase over last year's support for this area. This infusion of new dollars will stabilize funding for existing shelters.

A three-tier funding structure has been established to take into account the funding requirements of small, medium and large shelters. Per diem rates have risen to \$45 per individual in shelter, and almost all shelters will receive increased grants under the new structure to pay for such non-residential services as counselling. The latter is in recognition of the fact that women need support and help, even though they may not seek shelter care.

The province's three women's resource centres will also receive additional funding, and a fourth resource centre will now be supported. Pluri-elles Incorporated will receive \$111,200 to offer counselling and program support that is targeted to the French-speaking community. This is another recommendation of the Women's Initiative, which our Government is supporting this year.

Over and above our spending Estimates for the Family Dispute Services, we have set aside an additional \$200,000 for a mass media campaign, the focus of which will be, and I quote, "Abuse is a crime." The objective of this campaign is to heighten Manitobans' awareness of the criminality of domestic violence and encourage those in need of assistance to seek appropriate help.

Now turning our attention to our youngest clients and our greatest hope for the future, I would like to outline my department's fiscal plans for child day care. Our total budget for day care this year will be just over \$41.8 million. This represents an increase of \$5.7 million over last year, approximately 16 percent. Over \$3 million of the increase will be used to provide a 4.7 percent general fee increase for existing day care services and to pay for any day care expansions or additions that were begun last year. In addition, about \$2.4 million has been dedicated to new initiatives.

All of the new initiatives we have identified for day care stem from recommendations of the Manitoba Child Care Task Force Report, which I released last May. That report contained 204 recommendations for improvement of Manitoba's child day care system. Over 80 of these recommendations are now being addressed, some with existing resources and others through new expansions and enhancements which our Government is making to child day care services this year.

In order to provide balanced support across the day care system, funding increases have been made to a number of key areas, including: the creation of 345 new spaces in family day care homes and non-profit day care centres; increased start-up grants for family day care homes; start-up grants for workplace child care centres; increased per diems averaging 60 cents per child; increases to salary enhancement grants for trained workers in Government-funded centres, initiation of a salary enhancement grant for qualified workers in other non-profit centres; elimination of the 25 percent ceiling on the number of spaces eligible for subsidies in child day care home and private day care homes; doubling of the grant to the Family Day Care Association to support assessment of worker qualifications; addition of two resource co-ordinators to the department's child day care staff to encourage growth in the day care community, and offer training and support to existing day cares; and expansion of the competency-based assessment system that allows child care workers to have their skills assessed through on-the-job evaluation.

In addition, I would like to note that this summer I appointed a new Child Care Advisory Committee to provide me with ongoing advice on day care policy and emerging issues in the day care community. These initiatives represent our Government's initial step in a

multi-year strategy to expand Manitoba's child care system, and make it more flexible and responsive to the needs of families in the 1990's.

Recently a working group on day care has been struck to address the difficult task of achieving fair and balanced Government support for future needs across the day care system. The day care associations in our province have been invited to participate in this group. I believe, by addressing future growth and support of day care in partnership with the community, we will achieve our goals for day care in Manitoba.

The Income Security Division of my department administers the province's major income maintenance initiative, the Social Allowance Program, providing provincial cost-sharing to municipal assistance systems and operates income supplement programs to assist families raising children and Manitobans aged 55 and over who have limited financial resources. The division also works to promote the economic independence of social assistance recipients by developing connections with employment and training programs and other support services.

Again, I would note that under our reorganization this division has been combined with the administration and management functions of the department in the new Income Security and Management Services Division. The two areas will be treated separately for the purposes of this review, so I will refer to Income Security as a separate division in my remarks.

We have budgeted over \$252 million for Income Security this year, an increase of nearly \$20 million over 1988-89 in income maintenance for Manitobans in need of financial assistance.

During the past fiscal year, the Income Security Division provided social allowance benefits to a monthly average of about 24,000 cases, representing approximately 45,000 individual Manitobans, primarily disabled persons, single parents and their children. In addition, my department cost-shared municipal assistance to a monthly average of almost 10,000 cases involving approximately 16,000 individuals in need.

January 1, 1989, basic social allowance benefits were increased by 3.9 percent. This past January 1 these benefits have increased by a further 4.9 percent. Both of these increases are in keeping with the rise of the overall consumer price index during the respective previous years. Effective January 1, 1989, Social Allowances Program regulations were amended to enable children and families receiving assistance who attended school full time to retain earnings from employment without affecting their family's monthly benefits. This measure is intended to provide these children with extra income for their personal needs and further education, and to encourage them to develop the employment habits and skills they will need to build future economic independence.

This past year, the Manitoba Government contracted for an external audit of the Social Allowances Program to ensure that it was being delivered appropriately. I am pleased to report that the consultants found staff to be diligently applying the established procedures and regulations of the program.

* (1450)

The final report of the Women's Initiative Consulting Committee released this past March contained a number of recommendations related to the provision of social assistance. In response to a recommendation put forward by the Women's Initiative and also by the external audit review, the Government is proceeding with arrangements for legal aid to help sole-support parents receiving provincial allowances to secure maintenance orders from their spouses. Regular maintenance support can be a critical factor in enabling these individuals to make a successful transition from welfare to employment. Moreover, I believe it is important in principle that fathers contribute to the support of their children.

The Women's Initiative Report also requested that the province immediately undertake to ensure that all single-parent families, the majority of which are female led, have access upon application for social assistance to the provincial system. Our Government agreed that this was a priority with a result that the legislation required to extend provincial benefits to these families was passed by this House in late December.

My department has begun implementing this new policy, which will remove the requirement that single parents be separated or deserted for more than 90 days before qualifying for provincial social allowance benefits. Under the former policy, single parents who were not eligible for provincial benefits had to apply to their local municipality for assistance. The new policy provides a more streamlined approach for these families, eliminating the need to transfer them from one program to another after their first 90 days of separation. An additional \$2 million has been provided to the Department of Family Services to implement this change during this fiscal year.

An estimated 1,000 families are expected to enroll for social allowance benefits under the new provision, and additional resources have been put in place by my department to provide the required services.

On the broader aspects of social assistance in Manitoba, I would like to reaffirm that our Government is committed to a more equitable system of assistance in our province, a system that provides adequate levels of assistance for Manitobans in need while encouraging and supporting recipients' efforts to become financially self-sufficient. In keeping with this commitment, I established a consultation process with municipalities to consider options for developing uniform rates and rules governing municipal social assistance programs.

Based on advice from the Municipal Advisory Committee, a social assistance review committee consisting of representatives from all major municipal organizations, and the provincial Government has been meeting for several months and has submitted to me their recommendations some time in December—I do not exactly recall the date, but it was about the middle of December they presented me with that report. Our object is to develop a fair, more consistent approach to the provision of social assistance. I am confident that an effective system can be put in place through co-operative planning involving the provincial and municipal Governments.

In the area of income supplement, the 55 Plus Income Supplement Program provided quarterly benefits last year to about 26,000 older Manitobans with limited incomes. Eligible income levels and maximum benefits have been increased for 1989-90 in accordance with the cost-of-living increases as measured by the consumer price index. Monthly income supplements provided under the Child Related Income Support Program will assist about 8,900 families this year with the cost of raising their children. Eligible income levels for this program were increased July 1, 1989, to reflect cost-of-living increases as measured by the consumer price index.

The Youth and Employment Services Division of the Department of Family Services provides the focal point for the provincial Government's initiatives to improve the employment potential of Manitobans, particularly young people, social assistance recipients and immigrants. Just over \$21.4 million is budgeted for this division for 1989-90, an increase of about \$758,000 over last year. As I noted earlier, this division has now been expanded to include responsibility for day care, and thus has been renamed Day Care, Youth and Employment Support.

In the Youth and Regional Services Branch of the division, my department operates a range of programming to assist students and youth with summer employment, work experience and career development. These programs, Careerstart, the Student Temporary Employment Program, the Job Opportunity Service, the Manitoba Youth Job Centres and Northern Youth Corps, have all been maintained in '89-90 at the levels of funding equal to the previous year.

This summer, over 1,500 students and youths were placed in provincial Government positions by the Job Opportunity Service, including 465 in career-related positions created by the STEP program. Almost 11,000 young people were placed in full-time and part-time jobs by the Manitoba Youth Job Centres throughout the province, and Careerstart helped over 3,100 Manitoba employers create new jobs for 4,600 students and youth. Through the new career credit component of Careerstart, 80 post-secondary students obtained career-related summer employment for which they received academic credit. The Northern Youth Corps Program provided grants to northern communities to create over 500 positions employing young people and supervisors in community improvement projects.

The six Southern Employment Resources and five Northern Employment Support Services offices assisted in the development, delivery and administration of these programs, as well as employment programming for social assistance recipients. They also provide regional labour market information services for employers, employees and those seeking employment.

Our Government believes that the ultimate goal of most Manitobans receiving social assistance is to obtain productive employment and provide for their own needs. We place a high priority on measures that help social assistance recipients and other Manitobans who have problems with chronic unemployment to achieve this goal.

My department will maintain funding in '89-90 for the Human Resources Opportunity Program and its

associated centres which provide counselling, referral, work experience and job training measures for people experiencing difficulty in obtaining and retaining employment.

We will increase our funding support this year for programs supported jointly by the Governments of Canada and Manitoba under an agreement on employability enhancement for social assistance recipients. Last year, these measures assisted about 1,800 social assistance recipients, single parents, youth, disabled persons and municipal assistance clients to obtain training and job preparation leading to long-term employment.

This year, my department has committed 1 million to continue and expand one of these measures, the Gateway Program, which our Government introduced as a pilot initiative a year ago last fall. This program offers a 30-week combination of in-school training and on-the-job work experience for social assistance recipients in Winnipeg, Brandon and The Pas. This particular measure under the federal-provincial agreement is developed and funded solely by the province, so in keeping with the intent of equal partnership in the agreement, the federal Government has committed an equal amount to additional programming of its own to help social assistance recipients in Manitoba.

Manitoba has a well-established and effective array of initiatives designed to carry out this province's support for the successful settlement of immigrants and refugees arriving in Manitoba from other nations. In 1989-90, Estimates of the Department of Family Services reflect our Government's doubling of the budgets of two of these initiatives this year. The Recognition Program provides wage assistance to businesses that create new permanent positions of a professional or technical nature for landed immigrants or recently naturalized Canadians whose foreign credentials or work experience are not formally recognized in Manitoba.

Funding for recognition this year has been increased by \$150,000 to \$300,000, enabling the program to assist the establishment of positions for about 35 newcomers who have brought professional or technical skills to our province and who are seeking Canadian work experience in their areas of expertise.

The Newcomer Services Support Program provides special project funding and consultative support to community organizations involved with orientation and settlement efforts. The program's budget has been doubled to \$50,000 for '89-90, and the maximum level of support for any one project has been raised from \$5,000 to \$7,500.00. Our Government recognizes the importance of settlement services support in enabling newcomers to live, work and thrive in Manitoba. This funding increase will improve and expand existing services.

In the Administration and Finance appropriation, it contains a number of central services available to support the programs and activities delivered by the department. I would like to note in speaking to this area that when our Government's responsibility for

social services were consolidated in the new Department of Family Services, a strong Administration and Finance function was recognized as being essential to our goal of strengthening the department's ability to manage this wide range of services.

* (1500)

To define an effective organizational structure for these central services, a review committee of senior Government managers from our department, the Civil Service Commission, the Department of Finance, Treasury Board and the Provincial Auditor's office was struck last June. The results of this committee's undertaking are evident in the management services area of the restructured Department of Family Services announced in October.

The new administrative structure consists of four central support branches: program budgeting and reporting, financial and administrative services, human resource services and information systems. In addition, a new department-wide internal audit function is now in place, and a new agency relations bureau intended to strengthen the management and financial accountability of external agencies providing services on behalf of the Government is being established.

We believe this organizational model will enable Family Services to establish a strong new comptrollership function in the department, which will serve to improve internal management and strengthen accountability. The strength of this function will be the key to the department's achievement of its goals in providing services to Manitobans.

The 1989 budget Estimate for this area is about \$6.3 million, approximately the same level of funding approved for these services in 1988-89. This appropriation also includes the Minister's and Deputy Ministers' offices, the Communications and the Research and Planning Branches, Vital Statistics office, Residential Care Licensing and the budget for the Social Services Advisory Committee, an independent appeal body.

Reducing administrative costs and thereby increasing spending for services to people has always been an objective of this Government. It has been the rationale behind this year's restructuring of Government departments. With amalgamation of responsibilities in the new Department of Family Services as part of this restructuring we have been able to achieve improved administrative efficiency in the delivery of our programs and our services.

In closing these introductory remarks, let me emphasize that my department's proposed expenditures for '89-90 speak to the needs of Manitoba families and individuals in their quest to lead secure, productive and fulfilling lives in our society. This is a budget package weighted toward service and program delivery. We will continue to work towards greater administrative savings so that we may make more money available for the direct service of the people of this province. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: We will now have the customary reply from the critic for the Liberal Party, the Member for Ellice.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. We thank the Minister for her remarks. We would hope, as is customary in the spending Estimates, that the Opposition Members may have a copy of the speech which the Minister has just delivered. We would appreciate that.

I wish to keep my opening statements very brief this afternoon. Our time allocation for the discussion of the Family Services spending Estimates is limited, and it will become crucial that the questions we ask are very clear, that they are well placed and the answers from the Minister will also clarify as much as possible.

I took the opportunity of rereading the 1988-89 discussions of the department's spending Estimates. It was quite interesting from those discussions that there were a number of reviews which were under way in the department, and we hope we will have the opportunity to discuss the results of some of those reviews as we go through the spending Estimates in the next few days.

As the Chamber is aware, my Party and myself have made it very well known that we have continued to have considerable concerns about the management of the department, the then Community Services and now with the new department name, the Department of Family Services, and we have had concerns and continue to have concerns about the ability of the Minister to manage this very complex, diverse portfolio.

In the beginning months of this Government's mandate, we did see what appeared to be a confrontational style and a closed communication style that appeared to be somewhat overwhelming, shall I say, or we were very concerned about a new Minister and a new Government deciding to deliver such a confrontational style in their mandate. We saw a confrontation with the foster parents, with the Child and Family Services agencies and with the child care community. We had hoped that developing style of management would be quickly thwarted and that the Minister would certainly very quickly learn that openness, establishing a trust with community groups and agencies, providing feedback, working with the staff of the department, as opposed to working against them, that in fact those would be the only effective ways to begin leading a department.

What we saw over the months, Mr. Chairperson, is that we moved into further confrontation styles with the child care communities. We saw unprecedented rallies at the Legislature where thousands of parents, children, supporters of child care workers and boards of directors sat and spoke on the steps of the Legislature about their concern over this Government's ability to manage the child care portfolio within the department.

We saw parents of the mentally handicapped hold press conferences, hold rallies again on the steps of the Legislature to express their great concern and to plead with the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) for some assistance in regard to day programs and residential services for mentally handicapped.

Then we saw a Premier and a Minister who attempted to blame civil servants for decisions that were within

the purview of the Minister herself. Decisions were made to cut back on funds to employment preparation centres and to sheltered workshops, forcing clients out of work. No one seemed to have taken responsibility for such a decision. Yet the blame was placed on the shoulders of the civil servants.

We saw as well, Mr. Chairperson, a Premier (Mr. Filmon) who spoke out and talked about the importance of a partnership with the Civil Service, while his Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) was allowing wholesale staff changes and attempting to get rid of individuals in senior management positions.

What we have seen over the past year, since the last Estimates process, is continual concerns about the management of the department, concerns about the Minister's ability. As we spend time over the next number of days on these particular spending Estimates within the newly amalgamated department, we certainly will be looking very closely for any redeeming factors that would give us some hope that this department is embarking on a path toward stability. We will look for any hope that perhaps a renewed sense of faith can be established with the many community groups and organizations whose lifeline is tied to the Department of Family Services.

As discussions in this committee emerge over the next number of days, we will want answers from the Minister which reflect a thorough knowledge of her department, a grasp on the issues within the department, and answers which will provide some insight into the direction that the department is going. Those are their goals and their objectives, which we certainly saw were lacking in the last spending Estimates. We will also be looking for a management plan of action over the next year for this particular department.

With those few remarks, Mr. Chairperson, I look very forward to the next few days and having an opportunity to discuss in full the spending Estimates of this particular department.

Mr. Chairman: With the opening comments from the Critic of the New Democratic Party, the Member for St. Johns.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I will endeavour to keep my opening remarks very short. I do not promise to be as brief as the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), but then I can guarantee Members that I will not be as long as the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson). I did appreciate her lengthy statement and the information that was provided to us and look forward to receiving a copy of her text as soon as possible.

* (1510)

I would like to in my opening remarks raise a few general concerns and policy areas that we will be pursuing in greater detail throughout the Estimates of the Department of Family Services.

Let me begin my remarks by referencing the first point that was made by the Minister herself. That was

the fact that she is in charge of in a sense a new department, the Department of Family Services, which after restructuring was formed in, I believe, April of last year. Certainly we applaud any attempts by the Government of the Day to recognize the needs and concerns of families, the changing reality of the family in our society.

We are very concerned about the meat behind this announcement and the substance behind this actual structural change, which of course is costly on its own merits, in its own way, costly in terms of restructuring an entire department, costly in terms of changing letterhead, costly in terms of communicating this to the public. I am afraid what we have seen so far amounts to a change that is no more than a change in letterhead and a change of name on the Minister's door. Everything since the Departments of Community Services and Employment Services and Economic Security were revamped and the result was the Department of Family Services has been very little when it comes to families, in fact nothing in terms of dealing with the crisis facing families.

The way I would like to approach that broad topic is from several points of view. One is the message that the Government leaves the public when it comes to its approach to the family and its responsiveness to family needs and concerns. The next is with respect to current policies and practices in responding to issues and providing programs.

Finally, I think one has to assess a department, particularly a new department, the particular one that is dealing with family issues when it comes to new policies that respond to changes in our society and new directions. In all fronts, I believe that this Government has failed. This Minister has not followed up a change in department with meaningful, substantive, helpful messages, policies and future directions.

When it comes to the message that is left behind to the public, I think one only has to look at the numbers of controversial issues that this Minister and this Government have found themselves embroiled in over the last year or two to realize the kind of negative message that has been left with families and with communities and with non-profit volunteer organizations involving in this field. The hurtful, painful battles that have occurred between this Minister and her department and organizations like the Manitoba Child Care Association have left a very harmful message to families in our society about the justification and the rightful request that they put before the Government when it comes to requesting quality child care of the Government of the Day, when it comes to getting an understanding from the Government of the Day of the help that is required to juggle work and family responsibilities and to meet the many pressures of the day.

We have also when it comes to messages and negative messages left by this Minister and this Government only to look as far as the series of articles that was run by the Free Press on food banks and poverty in this province and particularly the City of Winnipeg. It does not send a positive message to families and communities and individuals in this

province when they are told by the Minister in charge that if there was increased money going their way, if social assistance rates were increased, it would not necessarily result in a reduction in use of food banks because those individuals would more than likely spend it on other things, presumably frivolous things, rather than on food and would still use the food banks. I would ask the Minister when sending that kind of message to first check the facts, check the research and check the reality of the situation.

I refer her specifically to the good research and work done by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg who clearly documented very recently, this past spring in fact, that as incomes increase there is less reliance on food banks. It points out clearly, and I quote from a Free Press article on April 26, 1989, "The important conclusion of the survey findings was that it's primarily a problem of inadequate incomes, it's not a problem of lifestyle," Mr. Stevens from the Social Planning Council said. Further, "He rejected suggestions that some low-income earners turn to food banks after squandering money on other things, pointing to the report's findings that the rate of food bank use drops as household incomes marginally increase."

Mr. Chairperson, the message is a very important part of Government, and I would hope that in the course of these Estimates we will get a clarification from the Minister and the Government of the Day about their approach to social assistance to dealing with a growing crisis in our families in our society today and dealing with increasing poverty among children and among families everywhere. I would hope that we will look seriously at some of the more recent statistics showing the incredible high level of poverty in this province, the increasing disparities in our society since this Government took office and since the Progressive Conservative Government in Ottawa has been in power, and look at some statistics like those produced by Statistics Canada showing Manitoba with one of the highest rates of child poverty in this country with a number as high as 58,600 children living in poverty or a rate of 24.3 percent.

Those kinds of statistics must be addressed and policies must be implemented in response to that kind of economic disparity in this province if we are to believe that this Government is serious about families and about a Family Services Department. Everything we have seen to date from this department has not at all been to address the crisis in our family today in Manitoba and the growing economic concerns facing all members of our society.

It is also important when dealing with a department that we have today, the Department of Family Services, which has been revamped to apparently deal with the need to respond to families' concerns and to keep, as the Minister herself said today, family life strong, to look at some of the current practices and policies of this Government. Regrettably, since the time that this new department was formed back last spring in '89, there has been nothing but a regressive move in terms of practices and policies pertaining to families in this province.

One again has only to look as far as the crisis in our child care system and the response by this Government

to appreciate just how regressive this province is becoming when dealing with families. The fact that at a time when there is a growing demand on the part of families everywhere for quality, accessible, affordable child care, this Government has chosen to move in the opposite direction by refusing to address the concerns of child care professionals in this province dealing with their very serious concerns about salaries and about recognition for the work they perform in our society, and as well a Government that is not prepared to consider the need to provide as much as possible a universally accessible, affordable system. Instead it has left clear signals and messages that it is intent on dismantling that system of affordable, accessible, quality child care for every family in our society regardless of income, regardless of position.

In that respect, Mr. Chairperson, let me register a concern that I raised in the Estimates previously for this Minister. At that time, I raised a very real concern based on some rumour, obviously now well-founded, that this Government was intent on merging the Departments of Economic Security and Community Services into one.

* (1520)

I raised that concern because it clearly signals to me—I think all of the evidence is now pointing in that direction—an intention on the part of the Government to move away from any notion of social programs that need to be in place, that must be supported by Government because all citizens in our province have the right to access social programs like child care, like services for battered women, like community living arrangements for the disabled members of our society, like a proper child and family services network and so on.

What we have seen clearly from this Government is a philosophical intention and a bent to merge the two concepts out of a failure to recognize the importance of universally accessible social programs for all citizens of our society regardless of income and regardless of position, and a view that is quite a separate issue and quite a separate policy from economic security and income supplement and social assistance, which is seen as a necessary support system for those who must depend on the Government of the Day for that floor, that safety net. Instead we have a Government today that has merged the concepts and has sent us on a very dangerous course, a very dangerous course of action and a very regressive approach in this province.

Mr. Chairperson, there are a great number of issues one could point to to give evidence of the fact that this Government and this department and this Minister have not put their money where their mouths are, their resources and their supports behind restructuring of a department such as the Child and Family Services crisis, the refusal by this Government to get involved in parent-child centres, the lack of policy direction when it comes to the disabled, the fact that all statistics point to a commitment on the part of this Government to in fact institutionalize rather than look at community living options, the failure of this Government to put in place the necessary supports and counselling resources for

those who are either victims of violence or who are the abusers themselves, the failure of this Government to address seriously the question of social assistance levels and the growing presence of food banks in our society, the fact that it has been able to ignore increasing research and evidence of a breakdown in our family and our community such as the most recent Social Planning Council Report on Runaways showing the highest level of runaways anywhere in this country, the failure of this Government to deal with supports for victims of plant closures, to deal with the incredibly destructive impact on families and communities when single-resource towns come to an end and turn into ghost towns, the failure of this Government to seriously address federal issues that are destructive on families such as the Family Allowance clawback, the goods and services tax, and the list goes on and on.

I think what we need to see in this set of Estimates and in the debate that will follow over the next few days is a clear sense from this Government about exactly how it intends to turn this new department into a useful, supportive resource network for the family in our society, to indicate to this House how it intends to turn around a situation where its policies and its practices and its messages have been very destructive for the family and for communities in Manitoba.

I think what we also would expect to hear throughout these Estimates is a clear sense from this Government about how it will deal with some changing circumstances in our society and new needs that are emerging. At the top of that list of course is the incredible growth in demands facing our Child and Family Services support system. We have yet, after many, many months and despite numerous studies and audits and comments and working groups and committees, heard from this Government how it intends to deal with the fact that over the last few years there has been more than an 84 percent increase in case counts facing Winnipeg agencies and that the funding of the Government has not at all addressed that growth in demand and that increase in caseload.

We are waiting anxiously, as are all the agencies, a clear indication from this Government how it intends to deal with that incredible growth in caseloads and how it intends to put these agencies on a firm financial footing rather than simply always injecting deficit funds or funds to deal with deficits and then calculating those funds in terms of the base and never, never dealing with the fact that the base is inadequate and that there must be an overhaul of funding to those agencies and a recognition of the changing face of the social and economic fabric in this province.

So, Mr. Chairperson, on that note we will be anxious to receive from the Minister an understanding of the kind of message she and her department and this Government intend to leave with families and communities, how she accounts for some of the cutbacks and backsliding when one looks at current policies and practices, and how she will deal with the current void in terms of new thinking and policy ideas and creative approaches to growing problems in our society. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairman: Prior to proceeding to item 1 we will have the Minister's staff come in and join her at the

table. At this time, we will give the Minister an opportunity to introduce the staff.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, before I introduce the staff who are present, I would like to ask your indulgence. Because we are in the Chamber and the other staff have to spend their time in the gallery observing and listening, I would ask your indulgence and ask the indulgence of the Members of the Opposition if we could go through the Estimates Book, more or less, line by line instead of bouncing all over like we did last year.

Last year, it was easier when we were in the committee room, because the staff were all more or less in the room at the same time, but this would be awkward. Since there have been some changes and so forth, if we could follow through pretty well as printed in the Estimates Book, it would certainly facilitate the matters considerably and probably faster, so if I could just ask that to be done.

* (1530)

Before we start with the line-by-line questioning, I would like to introduce my Deputy, Roxy Freedman, who probably many of you know; the Associate Deputy, Winston Hodgins; Martin Billinkoff of Research and Planning; and Wes Henderson of Financial Services.

Mr. Chairman: Item 1, Administration and Finance: Provides executive management, policy and program development, financial, personnel and other administrative and systems support services to divisions within the department including the Social Services Advisory Committee which is responsible for appeal procedures respecting the application and receipt of Provincial and Municipal Assistance Programs. Item 1.(a) will be deferred until other items have been passed.

Item 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries \$437,000—the Member for Ellice.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairman, just to begin with, I would ask the Minister—she spoke of some changes in the organization. Could I ask, when we were handed out these Estimates, why we were not given a more recent organizational chart and if we could have that today?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, we have copies of the most recent organizational chart which we could pass out. I might add, Mr. Chairman, the Opposition had asked for copies of my speech as well, and I want copies of that to go to at least the Opposition Critics. Others in the Chamber may have them as well, of course, if they are interested.

Ms. Gray: In regard to the organizational chart and the amalgamation of the department, the interim one is indicated in the supplementary Estimates and the recent one from October, which I did obtain a copy from an outside agency, initially there seemed to be Assistant Deputy Ministers within Income Security and Management Services, and then that position changed to an Associate Deputy Minister in October. Can the Minister tell the House what the difference is between an Assistant Deputy Minister and an Associate? Why was that change made?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, before the reorganization, the Assistant Deputy had the social assistance part of the Department of Employment Services and Economic Security formerly, and that was his responsibility. He also now has the responsibility for administration of the entire department. So there is added responsibilities in with that. It is not just Assistant Deputy of the Income Security Branch.

Ms. Gray: The Minister has indicated that the Associate Deputy Minister has administrative responsibility for the entire department. Is she then saying that the other Assistant Deputy Ministers report directly to the Associate Deputy Minister and not to the Deputy Minister?

Mrs. Oleson: I probably said that wrong. He has the financial management of the entire department not the management of each section, but he has the overall financial management of the entire department. You will notice, if you have had an opportunity to look at the chart, it said Management Services and that means Management Services throughout.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister tell us, is that customary that where in a department the financial services are under one particular division in fact that senior position is an Associate Deputy Minister as opposed to an Assistant Deputy Minister?

Mrs. Oleson: We worked with the Provincial Auditor. We wanted a different and better, I guess you could say, approach to the management of the department. If the Member has read previous Auditor's Reports there were remarks in them usually about the overall management of the Department of Community Services. We felt that we could strengthen the management by using this system. This is not an approach that is used in all departments, and there is nothing carved in stone of how the departments will be managed.

I mentioned in my opening remarks about the committee that worked on the management structure for this department, and that was the feeling of that committee that this would answer the particular problems of a large—I am sure the Member appreciates the size and the diversity of the department and the many, many agencies that we deal with, outside agencies, as well as direct service given by the department.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister then is saying that an Associate Deputy Minister can be held more accountable than an Assistant Deputy Minister? Is that what she is saying?

Mrs. Oleson: They are all held accountable, but he has more duties and more responsibilities than perhaps many Assistant Deputy Ministers.

Ms. Gray: Going back to the amalgamation of the department, perhaps the Minister could begin by telling us, what was the rationale for deciding to combine the Department of Economic Security with the Department of Community Services? Once she has given us that

rationale, perhaps she could indicate who made that decision for the amalgamation.

Mrs. Oleson: Decisions to do with the formation of departments, amalgamation of departments and appointments of deputies are done by the Premier's Office, the Member may know, and that was how that came about. The rationale behind that is to better manage some complex programs within the Government. There are many programs in the Employment Services and Economic Security Department that impacted on the Community Services Department and vice versa. There are some things that would be better delivered.

For instance, just as an example, in the Family Dispute section, the Economic Security was in charge of the per diems, but the Community Services Department, the Family Dispute section, was in charge of the shelters, so it made it rather complex. Those sorts of things can more easily be managed by having them all under one roof, shall we say. Obviously, they are not all under one roof physically but all under one management team. That is the approach that I am taking with this department, that we have a management team who are put in place to better manage our resources so we can provide services to families of Manitoba who need our help. My feeling is, and the feeling of the Premier and my Cabinet colleagues, that if you manage your resources better you provide better service, in the long run more service to people who need it.

Ms. Gray: The Minister has indicated that it was the Premier's Office who made the decision to amalgamate the department. Could she tell me what expertise they have that her department does not have to make that decision?

Mrs. Oleson: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, I did not hear the first part of the question.

Ms. Gray: The Minister had indicated that it was the Premier's Office that made the decision to amalgamate those two departments. I was wondering if the Minister could tell us what expertise the Premier's Office staff have to make that decision versus people within her own department?

Mrs. Oleson: I am told that it is always the prerogative of the Premier's Office to make that choice. The Premier, you must recall too, is the chairman of the Treasury Board. He does know a little bit about what goes on.

Ms. Gray: Did the Minister herself have any participation in the decision making or any recommendations about the potential amalgamation of these two departments?

Mrs. Oleson: It is ultimately, and has been historically, a decision of the Premier's Office as to what departments are formed. Of course, discussion takes place but it is the Premier's prerogative.

Ms. Gray: Did the Minister support that decision of the Premier's Office to amalgamate the departments?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes.

Ms. Gray: The Minister had indicated that one reason to amalgamate the two departments was that some services in economic security impact on services in community services. Was that the only rationale that was used to amalgamate the departments, or were there other reasons or factors taken into consideration?

Mrs. Oleson: There were a lot of things taken into consideration. Amalgamating into one department and calling it Family Services puts the focus on the service that we provide to Manitoba families. Manitoba is not the only province that has their services organized in this way. I think many provinces combine their social services into a department such as this, not all exactly the same of course.

It puts a focus on delivery of service to families. That is what this department is all about, no matter what name you call it. We deal primarily with help for disadvantaged people through social assistance. We deal with help for people who have various needs and are members of families, in doing so hopefully strengthening the family unit, which is of course our goal not only in this department but in Government. I think everyone would agree the family unit is the most important thing in our society. The more we can do to help people to function as a family, should they want to continue to do so, is something we are very committed to. We deal with individuals in various aspects of the family, not all together as a family unit, but by bringing the department all together it makes it more of a focused approach.

* (1540)

Ms. Gray: I can think of at least one other department where there would be services provided to families that would have a close correlation or that would impact on the Department of Community Services. One example would be the Department of Health. Was there any thought at all given to combining at least a portion of the Department of Health with Community Services as opposed to Economic Security?

Mrs. Oleson: There are endless possibilities, Mr. Chairman, of how you could organize Government departments. At one time, the Member will recall, I think it was called Health and Welfare that was—

An Honourable Member: Health and Social Development.

Mrs. Oleson: —or various names it was over the years, and these programs all came under the purview of the Health Department as such. I think the Member will agree with me that to, for instance, take this department and amalgamate it with the Department of Health would be cumbersome, will we put it politely? It would be very awkward. Many of the things that this department deals with are not directly related to Health. Mind you, there are some things that are so, no matter where you draw the line and place something, you probably could place it somewhere else with equal results, but

this was the decision to make to structure the department in this way. I am looking forward and thinking that it is an excellent way of providing the services that we provide.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, under the organizational chart for October of '89, the Agency Relations Bureau has again been separated out. It is under a different division than what is now called Rehabilitation and Community Living. Can the Minister indicate to us what mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that the work being done by agency relations is very closely tied to the work that would be done in what I used to refer to as Programs Branch, given that both of those particular branches would work with the very same agencies on very similar issues?

Mrs. Oleson: The Agency Relations Bureau that we are setting up would work with each individual section. So if we put it for instance in Community Living, then that would give the reference that it was only working there. It is not. They will work with all agencies that are connected with this department, of which there are many.

The problems that are experienced by many of the agencies with relation to their budget, with relation to many of their operations, it became very clear to me that we needed, and various agencies that I met with asked that this be reinstated, not necessarily the way it had been before, but that we do have an Agency Relations Branch so that they would have someone to work with some particular person or persons focused toward working with agencies, working out their budget preparations and so forth. Agencies asked for this.

The external audit we had suggested that this take place. I believe their words were something to do that it should be the same as before. My view is that you really can never step backwards in time and have something exactly as it was before and there must have been some reason for not having it if it had been perfect at the time. So we are endeavouring to fill that position and have a director in there and have an Agency Relations Bureau that makes things easier for both the department and for the external agencies.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairperson, could the Minister clarify—let us take an example of rehabilitation in community living. There were staff who were within that particular division who would do some work with agencies in the area of external relations and budgets. Can the Minister indicate, are those staff in that particular division and other divisions going to then be moved into what will now be called an Agency Relations Bureau?

Mrs. Oleson: No, that is not the intention to move those people out. They will still be working with the programs of that particular—you are referring to the Rehabilitation and Community Living. The staff there who work with individuals and agencies will still be doing that, but they will also have the backing and the help of an Agency Relations Branch when it comes to budgeting and other matters of course, not just budgeting.

Ms. Gray: Who then do the agencies deal with? Do they deal with the staff in Rehabilitation and Community

Living as the first line of contact in regard to their agency budgets, or do they deal with the Agency Relations Bureau?

Mrs. Oleson: They will deal as they are now with their first line of contact with the people in the—for instance, in your reference to Rehabilitation and Community and Living, they would still have them as their first line of contact. The Agency Relations Bureau will be developing service contracts, for instance, as an example. We are in the process of developing service contracts for agencies that provide service to us which will outline what services we expect them to provide for us and what they will be paid in turn for that service.

There have been problems in the past as you may be well aware, for instance, that an agency with every good intent will set up a program in the middle of a year and come forward and say why are you not funding this? Somehow that may be ringing a familiar bell, but with a service contract to do with the Agency Relations Bureau, we clearly spelled out what in this current year you will be providing this. If you want to provide something else, then you will have to put in a proposal and funding will be considered in the future, so that we do not have some of these things happening.

There is nothing wrong with the programs that are developed in many cases, but all of sudden the department is faced with funding something that they have not budgeted for. All these matters should help to control that so that we know what we are getting for our dollars, and they know what dollars they are getting for the service they are providing.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate—and I may have heard her wrong in her opening statements—she spoke of Rehabilitation and Community Living as providing services to adults and children. Am I correct, or did I hear her wrong?

Mrs. Oleson: Primarily to adults.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate to us the rationale for putting the Children's Special Services under the division of Child and Family Services as opposed to having it in with the Rehabilitation and Community Living?

Mrs. Oleson: It has been in Children's Special Services for some time, and that is where it was thought to fit best. The Member, however, is straying off the Administration and Finance section of the department. Perhaps her questions would be better asked when Rehab and Community Living staff are here or when Child and Family Services staff are here.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister perhaps answer this question? She alluded to the Agency Relations Bureau as developing service contracts. Can the Minister indicate to us—and I am not quite sure whether this would be part of the mandate of agency relations because this particular aspect has apparently not been within this department for a number of years—has there been developed specific criteria that community groups and agencies would be aware of, so that they would

have an understanding of the philosophy, the goals and the objectives of the Department of Family Services, so that when they go and ask for funding they have an idea of "this is the mandate of the department, here is our goal and direction, here is our philosophy and here is the criteria that we would use within which to fund departments." Can the Minister indicate, has that been done within her department in the last two years?

* (1550)

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, in November, senior members of my staff had I think one of the first possibly, certainly first for the Family Services Department but that is not saying much, staff meetings to discuss the many aspects of this complex department. I think many of the members that were there knew what was happening within their own particular area of the department, but it was instructive also for them to find out what was going on in others. Anyway, having said that, that was not what I got up to talk about.

As a result of that meeting, the senior staff then got together again, the senior, senior staff, and out of that came a role and mission statement that was prepared for the department, and that of course will be made public.

Any group coming to the department and wanting to provide a service, in discussions with staff members, would soon learn whether that would fit into what was expected or what was needed. Usually these programs, at least that has been my version of it, is that they spring up from a demonstrated need. Then the department is asked to fund them and the department decides not only whether it fits into their criteria or whether or not we can fit it into the budget. Of course that is often the hardest one.

There are many ways in which they would learn, but, yes, the department has sat down as a group since the restructuring and hammered out a statement on exactly what the goal and the mission of the department is.

Ms. Gray: I think that a number of agencies who would come to this department for funding in fact would not necessarily know whether in fact their services or programs fell into the criteria of the particular department. Oftentimes services or agencies are denied money for a variety of reasons, and some I am sure valid reasons, but oftentimes that community group is left not knowing in fact what the reason was, other than not enough money in the budget. Oftentimes they put in their proposals in anticipation for next year's budget and may or may not receive funding. If they do not, I would suggest that in fact they may not know why. Is it that the objectives of that organization may be in line with the department's objective, but maybe they are not within those particular prioritized objectives of the department?

So I guess what I was asking the Minister is, is there going to be some work done so that in fact specific criteria for funding or outline would fit specifically with the philosophy and the goals and objective of the department?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, in most cases, there may be some that happen this way, the way the Member indicated, but in most cases we certainly attempt in communication with an agency that has put in a proposal which has not been accepted. We certainly try to make it clear to them exactly why or what the reasons were; as I say, quite often they are money.

I get across my desk every so often proposals that do not really quite fit into my department, and in that case I do refer them to another department. Some of them do sort of fall in the cracks, and we have to take a look at exactly where they should be funded. It is usually my impression that they should not be funded by two or three different departments. Having said that, I must admit that there are a lot of agencies and programs that are done that way. For administrative purposes, it is usually easier if they are done through one department.

So there is some interaction of course and discussion between Ministers as to, you know I have this proposal, is this something that would fit into your department and would it answer a need that you have? The other Ministers do that with me as well. Of course, naturally every proposal that is put forward cannot be accepted, and there are many good ones that for lack of funding sometimes have to go by the wayside, which is very unfortunate.

Ms. Gray: Again, looking at the organizational chart, the other new division under an ADM is entitled Day Care, Youth and Employment Support. Now that is a new division. Could the Minister indicate to us if it is called section or the branch of day care, has there been any reorganization, I refer structure, not people, of the day care structure and/or has there been any reorganization of the Youth and Employment Support?

Mrs. Oleson: With regard to the Youth and Employment Support, only in that some of the employment component of that Department of Employment Services and Economic Security was transferred to the Department of Education. As far as the child day care office is concerned, no, there has not been a major restructuring there. It is functioning the same, only just under a different assistant deputy, still in the same place, in the same building, and providing service.

Ms. Gray: Thank you. Go ahead.

Ms. Wasylcia-Leis: I have just a few quick questions. You have heard that before, right? I would just like to go back to the general question of the restructuring of this department, in effect the creation of a new department. The Minister has talked about the need to focus on the family. I would like to know the rationale behind the establishment of this new department. Usually when a restructuring takes place within Government or a new department is established or a new grouping occurs, there is a rationale behind it and a policy framework behind it.

So I guess I would like to know from the Minister, what was the impetus for creating a new department? What is the policy framework behind this department?

What is her definition of family? What is her mission statement for this Department of Family Services? What in her view are the basic functions of family? What in her view are the major principles behind a family policy?

Mrs. Oleson: With regard to the mission statement, I can get a copy for the Member. The rationale behind the amalgamation of the department, for instance with any of the training programs that were within the department, it was felt that it would be better handled by Education and have it Education and Training, because it dealt with for instance community colleges and so forth, which made sense to move them into there.

With regard to other services, the department mainly focuses on services to people, services to families, and having it all under the purview of one department seemed to make a great deal of sense. Instead of having to have, I gave just a small example to the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) about the per diems for shelters for instance. They were done through two departments, and there was considerable back and forth in trying to make sure that all the bases were covered there.

* (1600)

It makes sense if you are delivering social services which this department is primarily in charge of, to deliver them all from the same department. Personally from my point of view, it is certainly easier than having two separate departments, but that was not really the rationale. It was not to make things easier for me. It was to provide better services for families. We feel that this is, now the Member may not be able to see instant results, we never can with things like this, but I think if the Member is patient you will see results. I see results already. The Member will also see them if she cares to look at the services that are provided to families. They are in a more co-ordinated approach.

We really were concerned with the things that the auditor had been saying about the management of Community Services. We feel with the management structure that we have put in place there should be results. We should be able to forecast better our needs for the future. We should be able to plan better, if we know and have better access to information about how things are going. We should be able to plan for next year's budget and the budgets beyond in a more co-ordinated fashion and it just seemed to make eminent good sense to me. That no doubt is not the criteria that the Member was looking for either but to deliver the province's social services under one umbrella seems to be, it is the way many provinces operate.

In talking with other Ministers across Canada on various occasions, they deliver their programs in much the same way. In fact some of them have, I do not know who copied who, but some of them are calling it Family Services as well. Alberta I believe has a name similar to ours. It seems you can operate your programs for single parents for instance with child care and job opportunities better if you also have within your department the administration of the child care branch. There are many, many reasons, some small, some large, why a structure like this should be done.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I look forward to receiving the mission statement of the new department as early as possible in these Estimates so that we will then have some idea of the guiding principles for the new department. If it is anything like the general statements provided for each of the sections of her department where there is in my view almost where it is word for word description based on the old department of Community Services, then we have not really got a sense from this Government of why they actually made these changes and in effect established a new department called Family Services.

I appreciate that one important objective is certainly to better co-ordinate services, to make things run better as the Minister herself has said, but if the objective stops there then in fact we have little more than this Government, like other Governments and politicians and newsmakers using family as a buzzword for political opportunistic reasons and nothing more. I would really like to hear from the Minister and get a sense from her what caused her and her Government to put in place a new department.

What is her understanding and her Government's understanding of the family, family issues, family policies that have resulted in the establishment of a new department? As the Minister knows, this is an area, family policy is an area that is under a great deal of discussion these days. It has become the topic of much soul-searching and creative thinking in all circles, governmental, non-governmental, academically and so on. It has become a question of documentaries for the media. The Minister may have herself taken note of the series by the Journal on the whole question of trying to integrate work and family responsibilities.

All of those endeavours and this whole new approach, albeit late in our history, albeit a bit of a catch-up exercise in terms of the crisis that our family is facing, all of them are premised on some very fundamental reasons such as a recognition that family issues for too long have been dismissed as non-political and as personal issues, or they have emerged out of a recognition that the traditional definition of family no longer holds us in good stead and must be reassessed and must become part of Government thinking and action, or it has emerged out of the recognition that the family has undergone incredible change in our society and in fact probably the most profound of social and demographic changes in our society today.

I would ask the Minister what research, what policy framework, what assessment of the family and family issues and family policies she brings to this. What is the bedrock behind the Department of Family Services, and where will that take us? I see it as a positive sign that we have a Department of Family Services, but if there is nothing more behind it than a restructuring of things to make things run a little better and a little more co-ordinated, then I do not think we are much further ahead, and I would hope that we will see from this Government some clear policy directions when it comes to family issues.

I would once again just ask her, given that background, what philosophical approach she brings to this department. What was the basis behind the

Cabinet and the Premier's decision to have a new department? What is her definition of family? What are the principles behind family policy?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member mentioned early in her discourse the references in the Estimates book and in the Supplementary Estimates book. The Member should recall that it was nearly a year ago that this budget was prepared, so we are late on in the budget to be discussing the Estimates. They may not reflect the changes, they do not reflect all the changes that have taken place.

Bearing that in mind, the wording maybe is not quite what we would like it to be now, but in the context of when it was written, that is what the structure of the department was.

The Member said that there have been incredible changes in the family, and that is true. I attended, in July I believe it was, the symposium on the family that was held in Regina. Premier Devine had organized it as a result of some discussions that took place at a Premiers' Conference, and it is recognized, widely recognized that the changes that have taken place in the family are incredible in a short time. There is need to address many of these issues for longer-term planning for all social service agencies across Canada. So that symposium was a very interesting two days I guess it was. I cannot remember exactly the length of it, maybe I am including the barbecue or something in it and I should not be, but anyway it was all very pleasant.

One thing I found extremely pleasant about it was it included families. It was held in July. Some people criticized them for holding it in July. It was great, because some of the people who attended could take their families because they were out of school. The barbecue I just referred to was shall we say very active. There were lots of kids having a great time. They had a children's program planned while everyone else was doing their deliberation.

So there is a recognition by Governments across Canada that it is crucial that we address issues related to family.

The amalgamation of a department with its focus on the family makes eminent good sense. The strategic planning session that my department held to focus their attentions on what were the immediate priorities, what was this department needing to focus on particularly for next year and the coming years, was a very important step in addressing issues of families.

All these things taken into consideration, to me the decision to amalgamate the department—no matter what it is called—to focus it on service to families to me was a good decision.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Chairperson, I am glad the Minister mentioned the symposium held in Saskatchewan, because that was going to be my next question. In fact, I have here some of the background on that with the general letter that was sent out by the Minister herself indicating her department would be co-ordinating the Manitoba Government's participation

at the symposium, as well as, a follow up to the symposium.

I would ask the Minister what was the position of the Government and her department going into that symposium? Does she have any position paper that she could table with the House? What has been the follow up to the symposium in terms of concrete specifics?

I would like to start hearing from the Minister some actual policy guidelines and principles and so on that she is following. I still have yet to hear from her what her definition of family is and how her Government approaches the changes in the family. I would be most anxious to hear, in some detail, the position of the Government going into that conference, which by the way was touted by the First Ministers' Conference prior to the symposium as being an important interprovincial exercise on the part of all Governments in Canada.

* (1610)

It was touted to be a most historic, most significant, event. Yet we have heard so little going into it and certainly nothing coming out of that conference to lead us to believe that it was actually an important breakthrough. I would be anxious to receive some background on this Government's position on that symposium.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, the Member is misunderstanding the type of conference it was. I do not know what paper she has on it, but it was not a conference at which a group of Ministers went and each presented a report written for them by staff before they went there.

It was a conference in which people from many walks of life could participate. They had keynote speakers. It was more of round table discussions and ideas identifying problems and attempting to identify solutions. I do not know that there were a great many solutions arrived at, but at least the problems were identified.

There was a paper prepared after the conference that was presented to the Premiers, I believe by probably Mr. Devine at the Premiers' Conference. Since it was his initiative, I would imagine he presented it, but each of the provinces that participated had some input to the Saskatchewan Government, and they in turn presented a paper to the Premiers' Conference.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Yes, could the Minister indicate today whether or not she is prepared to get a copy of that and table it in the House?

Mrs. Oleson: There is a two-volume report on the proceedings of the conference, and we may be able to make that available to the Member. We will investigate that. I do not have it with me today anyway.

Premier Devine recently proposed a ministerial meeting as a follow-up to the symposium. I am not sure when that is going to take place. It seems to me something crossed my desk about it just before Christmas, and they were suggesting that we meet in

January. Well, here we are, and I think I will have difficulty getting away this week, anyway. There is to be a ministerial meeting following it up and then a report back to the Premiers next summer.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I think it is clearly important for a new department like Family Services here in Manitoba, in order to be effective here in Manitoba and to provide some useful input at ministerial meetings across this country, to have a sense from the people of Manitoba, families in Manitoba, about their sense of family, about family policy and the issues that need to be tackled and policies that need to be developed.

I would like to know if the Minister is prepared to sponsor a thought provoking, comprehensive conference involving families, individuals, community groups right across this province to actually grapple with this whole policy area in order to give some direction to her and her department and in order to be more effective in dealing with this very difficult and complex social policy area.

Mrs. Oleson: It could be considered, but of course if they are going to have the ministerial conference in January, I will have a little difficulty organizing it, even with our best organizational skills, organizing that and having a report to take to a meeting. Anyway, I am being facetious.

That may be a suggestion, although the Member should be aware that several people from Manitoba went to the conference in Regina, and of course they brought back with them ideas and so forth. They would have a great deal of input to me, not only from the department, but from other outside groups. My memory does not serve me terribly well at the moment of all those groups that were represented, but I know when I attended the conference there were a lot of familiar faces there. I know there was a representative from the Women's Institute, for instance, that was very interested in the conference, and she has been asking me at different times if there is going to be any follow-up to it. It is something that could be considered, but it would take some planning in order to be meaningful as the Member would be aware. It would depend on the time frames that the other provinces are giving us, but it is something that we could consider.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Regardless of any intergovernmental ministerial conference, is the Minister prepared to see that a conference involving community grass-roots organizations and individuals and families themselves, takes place to give the Minister, her department and her Government, some insights and understandings about family policy?

(Mr. Parker Burrell, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mrs. Oleson: I indicated that it is certainly something that we could consider, although the Member should be aware that there are many agencies and groups that I meet with on a regular basis that can give me that kind of input. It may not be necessary to have a formalized approach to it, but I certainly look for input at any time from any group that wants to give me advice

on policies that we could be adopting, and from time to time of course many groups do give me advice and I welcome that.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I would have hoped the Minister would have been a little more pro-active in her response than that. It was after all her and her Government that set up a new Department of Family Services. We have yet to hear any definition or framework in terms of family services, any guiding policies, anything new that governs the operations of this department.

So I would have hoped that she would have been more interested in actively pursuing the latest in thinking and research around family policy than simply waiting on an ad hoc sporadic basis for comments by groups as they come to meet her.

This is a far more serious, complex matter than that it does require a coming together in this province of groups and individuals to grapple with these issues. There are no easy answers. It is not going to happen on people coming one by one to the Minister. It is going to require people coming together, wrestling with the issues and doing some innovative research.

If the Minister is not prepared to do that, I would in the interim recommend to her a paper and the proceedings of a conference that was jointly organized by the New Democratic Party Caucus and the Manitoba Federation of Labour held not too long ago entitled *The Family, an Agenda for Changing Needs*, which was an attempt to begin that dialogue.

We realized it was only a start and much more needs to be done, but it is exactly the kind of work that this Minister and this Government should be doing, particularly given that it was this Government that decided to change the name and come up with a new Department of Family Services because it says it wants to focus more on the family and on family needs. So I think that is an important thing for them to do.

Let me ask another question on the general departmental restructuring, and this follows a bit on the question of the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray). Does the amalgamation of part of the old Department of Economic Security and Employment Services, that being income security, with social programs like child and family services, child care and so on, does that reflect philosophical underpinning from this Government? Is it based on a rationale?

Mrs. Oleson: I am not sure I quite grasp the Member's question. Could she rephrase it, please.

* (1620)

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I was wondering if the amalgamation of these two quite distinct concepts and departmental responsibilities into one department entitled Family Services reflects a philosophical approach on the part of the Government of the Day. Does it indicate that there is an approach on the part of this Government to approach supports for families from an economic needs' point of view, or does the Minister appreciate the difference in terms of economic

security and a social safety net on the one hand versus the responsibility of the Government to provide universal important social programs to ensure the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities in our society?

Mrs. Oleson: It reflects the belief that we have that families from time to time need the support of Government, and they need the support of Government in order that very shortly they will not need the support of Government, to put it very briefly. The philosophy behind my thinking with regard to management is the better you manage it, the more and better service you will be able to provide.

It is not strictly that I am just interested in dollar management dollars. I am interested in dollars to serve people and to provide the services that they do from time to time need. Pretty well all the services that are provided, with the exception of some in this department, are provided because of a crisis in a family, because of income crisis, because of crisis with regard to child abuse, wife abuse, the social ills of society are partially—or we attempt to address them in this department to help people. That has been, even though the Member and her colleagues from time to time get up and go on about the uncaring and attitudes of Conservatives which they try to perpetuate, a myth which they try to perpetuate which is not true. We do care for people, we do know that people from time to time need our assistance and they have a crisis in their lives.

We also believe that people for the most part want to be independent and this department, through the work that we do, will help them to reach that independence if at all possible. It is a safety net for people when they are in short-term need and a longer term if they need longer-term need.

The Member's remarks, after I had made my opening statement—I was rather concerned to hear the Member saying that we had amalgamated the department because we wanted to phase out social services. Well, there could be nothing further from the truth. That is just plain and simply ridiculous. You cannot, and we would have no intention—I would be the last person that would say that we should not have social services.

There are people in our society who from time to time need our services, they need our help. They need a boost so that they can then be independent because that after all I think is the goal of most people. Nobody goes onto social assistance for example wanting to stay there forever. They need some help in the shorter term in many cases because of the change of their circumstances. If we can give them that assistance and then help them through some employment direction to help them to be on their own, then that is the best service we can provide to them.

People by and large want to be independent and it is not a philosophy of my Government to have—for instance the Member talks about universality, she talks about universal day care. Well, I do not think there are very many people in this province who want universal day care for every single child in this province, no matter what that child's parents earn. This province cannot

afford it. This Government is not in favour of that. We feel that there should be some responsibility on the part of parents to provide child care, for instance for their children when they are able to, and I will be the first to say that we need subsidies and so forth for child care for families who cannot afford it.

In all the discussions, and there have been many, and letters that I have from people to do with the child care issue, I have not had one person that says that we should cut off all child care. Everyone universally believes that if there are parents that need help then they should receive that help. Under this department they are receiving that help, not to the tune that the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) would like to see it. The Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) and the Member for St. Johns went on at great length about confrontation from this department.

I guess probably their definition of confrontation and confrontational circumstances is just a little bit different from mine. When I have to tell people, I am sorry but that is the funding that is budgeted for this year. It is my duty to tell you that this is your allocation. It is my duty also as Minister to live within that budget and they then in turn decide to retaliate.

Naturally they have a right to complain. They complain to my office in writing, they complain in various ways, that is certainly their right and prerogative to tell me if it is inadequate. The very fact that they are vocal about their complaints really is not a confrontational attitude on my part, it is a realistic attitude that this is what we have to spend and this is how we will stay within it.

If we went on the philosophy of the NDP Government for the last few years of their tenure in Manitoba, with \$500 million deficits every year and more and rising, I do not know where this province would be. Nobody could afford day care, nor any other service in short order because we would be spending all our money on interest to pay on debts.

So I have a commitment to management, to services and a commitment primarily to help those people in the province who are, in short term and many in longer term, dependent on a Government for their very existence, and that is important that we help them to the best of our ability.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Well, I think that more lengthy answer from the Minister has helped clarify a little bit what the policy of this Government is on families. It basically seems to amount to involvement in this policy area when we are dealing with crises, or economic destitution. From what I can gather from the Minister, and she does not appear to distinguish between programs that provide economic supports and a social safety net, versus programs that had been put in place out of a recognition that they are important services to all people, families and communities in this province, regardless of position in life, because they are important to the health of the family in the community and thereby for the health of our social fabric in the final analysis.

Am I to take from the Minister's remarks that she does not differentiate between those two different types

of programs, in that in fact, to use her own example, child care, she sees that as a program only to be applied in the case of crisis in a family or economic destitution and not as an important social program that is accessible and affordable to all families?

Mrs. Oleson: We have stated, I have stated, and the other Government Members have stated many times that we want accessible affordable child care in this province. We are working on that very issue with a working group talking about funding. It is a very important issue. It is a need in a community to have child care.

The other remarks I passed about paying for it is a different matter. I am not saying that we just provide emergency crisis services and crisis in economics and so forth. There are many other programs through this department that provide other kinds of services that the Member is well aware of. Many of them were in place when she was in Government, and they are still in place and have been enhanced.

This department, of its very nature, is a department that responds to crisis in families, and that is one of the things that we do, but that is not the only thing we do.

* (1630)

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I will just ask one more question on this theme and then pass it back to the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray).

I think that last comment of the Minister is that which concerns us all on this side of the House very, very much, the fact that this Minister has just put on record that this department, by its very nature, is to respond to crisis. Now that reflects a totally new approach in Government thinking in terms of this province. In terms of recent history, it is a marked departure from the way in which this department used to operate, and it is a drastic step backwards in terms of the way in which other provinces are beginning to deal with the policy areas that fall under the umbrella of the Department of Family Services.

The Minister has clearly indicated that she has no understanding or appreciation or willingness to recognize that there is a responsibility on the part of Government to be involved in economic policies that respond to the needs and demands of all citizens as well as to social policies that respond to the needs and circumstances of all Manitobans. Instead she has indicated that her responsibility is one of responding totally in terms of crisis. She said by and large the purpose of this department, her Department of Family Services, is to respond to families in crisis.

I would hope that there is a chance that we can turn around the thinking on the part of this Minister and this Government when it comes to that approach, because if that is the case, then we will be forever paying the price for that kind of reactive passive response to the needs of families in our society today. If the Government of the Day is not prepared to deal with the circumstances of families as they now exist

in this society and address the reality of families and communities in this province, then they will forever be in crisis, and the Government will forever be having to increase its expenditures to respond to that crisis.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, it is well documented that the cost of investing now in families from a positive point of view, from the point of view of recognizing the need for quality child care regardless of economic position in life, from the point of view of recognizing the need for community living and family living arrangements for all members in our society who are disabled, from the point of view of recognizing the positive preventative role that Child and Family Services agencies can play in our society, all of that together it is clearly documented is a saving in the long term for taxpayers and for our society. So to hear the Minister today say she is basically only concerned and her department by its very nature is primarily concerned with crisis to me is a scathing comment on this Government's present approach to family and community services.

I think it indicates what we have feared for a very long time, for certainly the last 18 months. When this Government took office it began a very slow, subtle approach of dismantling our social services and denying the right of citizens everywhere to gain from Government access to programs and policies that will help them ensure healthy, happy lives and not always be ending up in crisis before they get any kind of Government assistance, which is far more costly in the long run.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I am really disappointed that the Member has totally misrepresented what I said. I said that the great component of this department, or granted I said that it is in response to crisis, it was, it always has been. We respond through Child and Family Services agencies to families in crisis with children. We respond to wife abuse from wife abuse shelters of women in crisis. I am sure the Member would be the first one to say that we should be doing that. We respond to people who are in financial crises. Beyond that, we do have a lot of other functions in the department.

Some days it seems as if we only deal with crisis, but we have prevention programs. We have programs in place to help people deal with their problems. We have programs in place to help people become independent. We have youth programs like Careerstart, and we have Income Supplement Programs to help people who are lower income to prevent them from being in crisis. All of these things are part and parcel of the department, but there is that component which has always been there, of dealing with crisis.

Of course we would like to prevent, but it is very difficult. The Member having been in the Cabinet knows that it is very difficult to get enough money in place to do the prevention programs you would like to do. I find that a frustrating thing, because you know you cannot absolutely prove that if you put X number of dollars in, you would prevent so many families from having problems. You cannot prove that on a balance sheet, but you try. You put those programs in place and hope that they work.

The programs that we have in place for sole-support parents, for social assistance recipients to try to help them become independent in getting jobs is one way of helping families along. So I do not want to leave it on the record that the Member feels that I say that is the only function of the department, because it is not. We have that function, we have the function of prevention, and we try to do programs that will help people so that there is not a crisis in their lives, but we cannot prevent every single crisis.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): 1.(b)(1)—pass; 1.(b)(2)—pass; 1.(c)(1)—pass.

1.(c)(2)—the Honourable Member for Ellice.

Ms. Gray: A few questions, 1.(c), in the area of Research and Planning. I recall that in the throne speech of this Government in May, there was a fair amount of words put to paper in regard to a plan for community living, and that there would be an emphasis on community living by this Government. I was somewhat unclear as to what exactly was meant by that in the throne speech. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate for us, has there been a plan, a development plan, an implementation plan established in the whole area of community living, and could she share that with us today.

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, there have been discussions. I do not have the throne speech in front of me of course, but I believe it referred to a working group on community living. There have been discussions with groups that provide services to mentally handicapped and others, and there are plans being formulated and they will be announced in the near future.

Ms. Gray: The Minister alludes to a working group. Has that working group been established, and what is going to be the terms of reference or mandate of this working group?

Mrs. Oleson: That is part of what is under discussion and part of what will be announced, as I indicated, will be announced shortly.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate to us in regard to the promises that were made in the throne speech which relate specifically to her department, what is the time frame within which those promises are to be acted upon or at least initiated? Are we looking at one year, two years, five years?

* (1640)

Mrs. Oleson: Many of the things in the throne speech have already been implemented as the Member is aware. There is no set time frame on it. I am hopeful that the announcement to do with the working group on community living will be announced certainly before the end of the fiscal year. If I go out on the limb and say that, then maybe it will not be ready, but I am hopeful that it will be.

Ms. Gray: Will this working group be established with members of the department and also with particular

individuals from various community groups? I would also ask in regard to community living, which target populations are we referring to when we speak about community living?

Mrs. Oleson: It is all under consideration, to the Member, and I am really not at liberty to give her the information. I will give it to her as soon as possible.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Chairperson, it sounds like there was a vague idea put down on paper in the throne speech as Governments are wont to do, but there is really no thought or not a lot of context behind that. So we will wait and see as to what will come out of this community living, which again appeared to be a major thrust in the last throne speech.

There also was a mention in the last throne speech—and again I would assume it relates to research and planning—that there would be much more of an emphasis on services to the disabled. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate to us—one of the results of research and planning would appear to be a Government-wide plan, and now that we are into the second budget year of this department, can the Minister indicate to us, is she prepared to share that Government-wide plan in regard to access and services to the disabled?

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, that, as I had indicated, is part of the discussions that are taking place with the plans that are being formulated. I should point out to the Member that we have added resources to the Community Living section this year which we will get into. When we discuss that Rehab and Community Living section of the Estimates, we can discuss just exactly where those funds have gone. As I referred to in my speech before we started the questions here, we were obligated we felt to do some things this year in answer to the Wiens Report and that has sort of put us on hold with some things we would like to do.

Ms. Gray: Would the Minister care to elaborate what particular things her department was obligated to do in regard to the Wiens Report?

Mrs. Oleson: We could get into that further when we get into the Rehab and Community Living section of the department, but the Member will recall, having read the Wiens Report, there were recommendations in there which called for training programs, which called for expenditures and we can get into exactly what expenditures went where; that is what I was referring to.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister indicate to us, under the Activity Identification in this section, it refers to program assessments in support of the department's operations. Does Research and Planning have any involvement with the reviews which are conducted of various workshops?

I am referring specifically to the decisions that were made to cut funds to EPC in a number of workshops and I am wondering—I am quite prepared to keep my

questions until later—does or did Research and Planning have any involvement in those aspects?

Mrs. Oleson: Research and Planning has not been involved in that area. The question would be better put under Rehabilitation and Community Living.

Ms. Gray: The Minister is aware that I have written her a letter in regard to the Disabled Persons International, that particular organization who are wishing to have their head office located in Winnipeg. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate to us what her position is in terms of assisting that particular organization in having their headquarters located in Winnipeg. Does she support that, and if so, is she prepared to assist in any way? Has her department assisted to perhaps help in the lobbying of having that headquarters moved to Winnipeg?

Mrs. Oleson: I believe the Member, she referred to Disabled Persons International. I met with Mr. Enns of that organization sometime within the last year or so. The funding for that has not been included in this current budget, but the door is not closed on them, and we are still open to some discussions with them. Yes, it would be very nice if that centre was moved to Winnipeg, but I am wondering what other funders they have. There would have to be some more discussions on it.

Ms. Gray: I was not necessarily referring to assistance from the department that might be of a monetary nature. I am wondering if the department sees any role for itself in regard to any sort of assistance, whether that be through resources, influence, et cetera, in the lobbying process to have this particular head office located in Winnipeg. I would ask the Minister to comment on that.

Mrs. Oleson: It would probably be very advantageous to have it in Winnipeg. As I said, we are still considering this. I believe, if my memory serves me right, there was a request for funds that came with that and one of the problems we had was budgetary. There may be other things we can do to encourage them. The Member is quite right.

Ms. Gray: One of the functions of Research and Planning would appear to be the co-ordination of the department's multiyear priorities and plans. Given that as one reads the last document in regard to looking at this department in detail, which to me would be the throne speech, I am wondering, now that we are in the spending Estimates of this department, if the Minister is prepared to share with the House and to table what the particular priorities and plans are for this department and what they are in regard to, I would assume, this next year and at least year two, three. I do not know if their multiyear planning includes up to year five or not.

Mrs. Oleson: The Member will hearken back to my opening remarks. I laid out for the Members what our plans are for this year. Of course, we are already into planning for next year as well. That is not information that I am at liberty to give the Member at this time.

Within the department in many areas we have plans for how we would like to proceed in coming years, but because of budgetary secrecy, or whatever, we cannot announce them. Within the department, of course, we have plans of where we are going to go, but I cannot give the information on next year's budget, for instance, and say, yes, we are going to spend this on that and X on something else. We cannot give you that information. What I can give you are our budget plans which are laid out for the current year.

* (1650)

Ms. Gray: My further question to that is, in regard to those community groups and agencies out there, how do they have any sense as to whether in fact they should even be bothering to apply to this Government in regard to funding? I think of the POWER group, I think of the parent-child centres who have applied for funding a number of years, and for a variety of reasons have not received any funding.

If we are not to have information on what the priorities of this department are, other than within this fiscal year which is three-quarters over, how can we, as legislators, and how can community groups and agencies know whether, in fact, they should even be bothering to spend a lot of time, energy and resources in submitting proposals to the department if, in fact—they may not know it—perhaps the parent-child centres are not even close to being within the priorities of this Government for year two or three. What is the point of them putting in the application if this is all going to be held in secrecy?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member maybe has not been in this Chamber long enough to understand the functioning of Government and how budgets work. We all would like to announce plans for the future and announce funding. I would love to get up and say, yes, we are going to spend X number of dollars and Y number of dollars on into infinity as long as I am the Minister. That is not something you can do. That is how Government operates. You operate from budget to budget.

With regard to those agencies and those groups which put in proposals, we look at them all. The Member referred to what our priorities were. She has got them clearly set down in this year's budget. Those things which we are funding this year are our priorities, especially and more particularly those things to which we have increased funding.

If the Member cares to read it over, she could get a clear picture of where our priorities are in this budget, with increases; 9.1 percent increase in the funding of this department indicates to me very clearly, and should indicate to other Members of this House, the importance that our Government places on this department. I think there was one other department that got a higher percentage increase, but it is a much smaller department, so in actual dollars this department fared extremely well. To have to listen to people saying that we have no priorities, and we are dismantling the system and all this hogwash, it is really rather annoying.

Ms. Gray: The Minister will have to bear with me in regard to the discussions about multiyear priority setting

which, of course, ties in to budget. While we are not necessarily saying that when you set your priorities, year One, two and three, that in fact you have specific dollar amounts that are attached to all of those so that you know exactly which programs and pilot projects are going to be funded. I am talking about overall priorities and direction of a particular Government.

As an example and perhaps the Minister could answer this question: when the budget was prepared for this particular year and priorities were set, were day programs for the mentally handicapped a priority?

Mrs. Oleson: We could get into that discussion later in that line. I have already indicated to the Member the problems that we had in that particular area, and the funding needs that we have. The Member should also be aware that, since that time, there has been an adjustment to that in that people in crisis are able to get some day programming. I think that is a very important move, and the people receiving that assistance are very grateful for it.

To say, oh, yes, we have a priority, does not immediately translate into money. The Member, if she has ever worked through a budget, would know that. I think this budget definitely reflects the fact that this Government feels this is an important department. It provides important and needed services and they will be funded. Now, the Member mentioned before—groups that come forward and I, of course, have not been the Minister long enough to have seen some of them come many, many times, maybe they have, but there are some groups that come forward, and we just cannot fit them into our spending plans for next year.

Now that does not say they should just give up forever. If it is a worthwhile program, they should perhaps work with the department in the preparation of their proposal. Perhaps we felt that there would be some other way to work it in, that it would not be as costly. There are all sorts of things that can be done and as far as the parent-child centres, it is not a case of ignoring them. They have been invited to put in a proposal for next year and it will be considered in next year's budget.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Chairman, but how do these agencies know if the Government views their project as worthwhile, which is very subjective at best, if in fact, number one, there still has not been selection criteria established in regards to who gets funding and why, if the priorities of this Government over the next year and the year after are a huge secret? How can these agencies know if in fact they are even close to being within the priorities of the Government? I question why this Government and why this department seems to be so reluctant to share what the multiyear priorities and plans on a general basis would be for this particular department.

I thought that this particular Government campaigned on openness and honesty. Certainly we, as Members of the Legislature, in order for us to do our jobs better, would like to know what in fact those priorities are. Certainly the community agencies out there need to know what the priorities and the plans are so that they as well can modify their proposals, perhaps take a closer

look at what the philosophy is of this Government and see if they are in line with that philosophy, if in fact they want to submit even further projects or proposals.

The community has a great capacity to develop services and programs, and they can only do that when they have some sense or some idea of where this Government is going. I have heard time and time again from Child and Family Services agencies, from many other agencies, all they want to know is what is the direction of this Government. They want to know that so they know if they are in line, if they should be modifying their own agency direction. That is all they want to know. I find it difficult that this Minister and her Government cannot at least indicate to us what some of the priorities and plans are for year two and year three.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, internally in the Department of Research and Planning, of course there is work done on projections for the coming years with regard to many of the programs that we undertake and that is a given. That is what they are there to do, is plan. I am not at liberty to say yes, the next year we are going to spend X number of dollars on Y plan and we are going to this. Is that what the Member wants me to do or what? I am just at a loss to know what answer would satisfy her. I strongly suspect none, but anyway, having said that, maybe she could narrow it down a bit more. I mean, we have plans within the department if that is what is worrying her. If she thinks there are no plans, stop worrying, relax, because there are plans. As far as announcing exactly what will be spent on what in the coming year, I am not at liberty to say.

The Member can glean a great deal of information about priorities from just reading the document in front of us. For instance, in the field of wife abuse, to have put a 47 percent increase into that gives a little hint to me that there is a priority there.

* (1700)

Mr. Chairman: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for Private Members' hour. The committee will reconvene this evening at 8 p.m.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

RES. 29—HEALTH OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution of the Honourable Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), Resolution No. 29, Health Ombudsman, the Honourable Member for Kildonan.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Resolution No. 29 states that

WHEREAS the provincial health care system is large and complex, which may be confusing to citizens when asking and using health care services; and

WHEREAS at a time of crisis, people needing professional health services and caregiving are likely to feel heightened distress and confusion; and

WHEREAS serious criticisms, complaints and problems with the health care delivery system should be reviewed by an impartial third party; and

WHEREAS such an impartial third party may informally resolve difficulties within the health care system and make recommendations to prevent future problems.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recommend to the Government that it consider the creation of a Deputy Ombudsman for health care, who would be accountable to the Speaker of the Legislature through the provincial Ombudsman; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly further recommend that the proposed Deputy Ombudsman for health care be authorized to investigate and report on significant non-medical criticisms and complaints involving provincial health care facilities and services.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on this very important Resolution No. 29, the Health Care Ombudsman resolution, because during the 1988 election our Party promised that we will have a resolution which will address the needs for health care in Manitoba. I would very briefly speak on some of the important issues and why we think that we should create such an ombudsman who should be responsible to the provincial Government through you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, as you know the health care system in Manitoba is very complex and comprises of the Manitoba Health Services Commission and the AFM. Their primary aim is to provide a variety of services. Those are varying from primary health care to the very complex modern treatment services to all Manitobans, it does not matter whether they live, north, south or other parts of Manitoba, in any part of Manitoba.

Manitobans after spending \$1.5 billion—that is \$1,500 per person in Manitoba—expect that they should receive the best possible care. We feel very strongly that they deserve it because they are paying such high taxes, and they are guaranteed that universal health care system should be accessible to all at all the times. However, we have seen, and all the Members in this House have received a number of complaints from some residents of Manitoba who are not satisfied either because of the care they received or the surrounding circumstances of their care. It takes a long time for them to find even a very easy answer that should be available to them.

Right now we have the system where most of the complaints, if they are addressed to the Manitoba Health Services Commission, that department itself

cannot grant impartial decisions to the people who are complaining. I will give you a couple of examples.

The 1988 report of the Ombudsman clearly indicates that there was one example that one person requested a payment for the treatment they received in Texas, U.S.A. It is very clear from the report that this person went through a lot of stress. There was effort there by the physician. However, they were not able to get clearance from the Manitoba Health Services Commission, and they ended up paying a lot of money. They were not at fault. The reason is very clear, they did not know which agency they had to approach and what services they could receive outside Manitoba. That is just one example.

There is another case where inquests were held in a number of cases by the Chief Medical Examiner, and there were a number of deficiencies made.

Ultimately to achieve the best possible care, people must be given ample chance to explain their cases, and that is not happening right now. First of all, people do not know where to go. Second, they do not have an impartial body where they can ask for the proper decisions. Mr. Speaker, it is very simple when you are sick, when you are in hospital or you are receiving care from a doctor, people do not really think at that time what they are receiving and what will be the ultimate outcome of the treatment. Once they go home and if something goes wrong, they have two ways of dealing with it.

This particular resolution will deal with the non-medical significant problems because we have professional bodies like the College of Physicians and Surgeons, we have the Dental Association where the complaints in regard to the medical care given to the individual is addressed. However, any other complaints in terms of whether it is the hospital administration or complaints to the accessibility in other areas of services, we do not have anybody right now. By creating such a system, it will help them to bring those concerns forward, and then the reasonable conclusions can be made, so that in future at least we can deliver the best possible care.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying that when people go home after getting treatment, on their mind the first thing is whether they got better or not. They do not think of complaining. Also, when you are dealing with the particular hospital, it is very difficult to go there and complain and still get the best possible answers, because if you are complaining to the same body who are going to decide about the decision, it really puts a lot of questions into the minds of the public.

At times, it is very difficult for them to go to the same institution and get further help. It is very expensive also to have lawyers and have all the legal implications to be cleared before they go in front of any hospital boards or any other bodies. That is why we think it is very important for ordinary Manitobans to go to a specific branch of the ombudsman where they can go and complain and get the reasonable solutions to them, so that other people would not have to go through the same thing.

* (1710)

Mr. Speaker, we have seen during the last year a typical example of the personal care home situation where a number of individuals were involved. There was an outbreak of influenza and parainfluenza and we did not have any regulations in those institutions. Now the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has brought the Bill forward which is going to bring those regulations; however, for those individuals and those nursing homes and other nursing homes, I think we need to have a set standard. If someone is concerned about the care being provided in any institution they should be able to go to a particular body and get the solution so we do not end up repeating the same mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other specific concerns that can be applied to not only the personal care homes but all the hospitals and other institutions. As I said earlier, for the medical problems we do have a College of Physicians and Surgeons but for the Dental Association we have seen—during the last year we had a problem where the Dental Association in Manitoba is the only body who deals with the licensing, as well as, the delivery of dental care in Manitoba.

That is not acceptable to the public because they want to—if they have a concern about particular care given—and we know what happened with the Quest case last year. There were a number of complaints filed. People feel that the Dental Association should deal as a regulatory body but not as a disciplinary body.

I think some of the concern can be addressed through our resolution. By bringing this resolution we are reconfirming our commitment so that such a body is extremely important to achieve the best possible care for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that in any other province in Canada we have such a special body which will deal with specific complaints. I think Manitoba can take a lead in this issue. It is not going to cost too much money to the taxpayers, because we already have a system. Just creating a separate branch will enhance the activity of the system, and it will definitely benefit the Manitoba health, Manitoba Health Services Commission and the other agencies who are providing the health care system in Manitoba.

Ultimately, taxpayers will be saving money. At least people can go home and feel secure that they have the best possible health care, and they are satisfied with the health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The Honourable Member for Concordia.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on the private Members' resolution this afternoon. I knew the issue. I just was trying to remember the specifics, but I knew it was the Health ombudsman.

From time to time, Mr. Speaker, we see a number of proposals to deal with ombudsmen wherever they may be. They have proposals on child welfare ombudsmen. We have proposals on urban ombudsmen. We have proposals for health care ombudsmen. We have proposals for multicultural ombudsmen or

ombudspersons. We have proposals for people dealing with The Mental Health Act. We have proposals for ombudsmen dealing with people for mentally handicapped. I dealt with that when I was a volunteer in Special Olympics, to deal with the conflict between Governments and the citizens.

Certainly the New Democratic Party supports the idea of an ombudsman. It was in fact the genesis of an ombudsman that was developed first by our Party in Sweden. The social democratic movement in Sweden was the first country in the world to introduce a - (interjection)- well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) speaks from his seat. The Member for Portage does not understand political philosophy, and I will not waste my time on his Grade 3 comments. Perhaps he should be more interested in economic development in his own constituency and less interested in blabbing from his seat. The provincial Government is going to have to transfer the whole public service to Portage la Prairie to make up for all the jobs the federal Government has cut back while this Member had the black cloud over the heads of the people from Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that an ombudsman is an essential role in Government. We actually proposed and brought in the first Ombudsman Act in this province. The Schreyer administration brought in the concept of a social democratic ombudsman, something that is very foreign to the sort of divine right of kings philosophy of the Conservatives. We proposed the ombudsman because the Conservatives have not recovered from the Magna Carta. They have never recovered from Runnymede in terms of democratic rights for citizens.

We proposed an ombudsman in our Government in the early '70s, and we proposed it because we believe the citizens dealing with a major Government should have a right of redress and a written right of redress to an ombudsman, so we established the Ombudsman's office in the provincial Government regime.

We further created the Cherniack Committee, the City of Winnipeg review committee that also developed a recommendation to have an ombudsperson in The City of Winnipeg Act, and that was accepted by our Government.- (interjection)- Well, the Member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst), who still has his business development courses in the Carleton Club, I would be very careful, Mr. Speaker, on gender neutral issues.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly am not opposed to a specific person being designated as deputy ombudsman. I am not opposed to a person being designated as ombudsman to look at health, particularly when this dictatorial, totalitarian Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is in office. How do you have a deputy ombudsman for health care not reporting to the Ombudsman who is appointed by this Legislature? Who is the ombudsman? Is it the person who is appointed by this Legislature and approved by two-thirds majority? I believe the appointment is renewed every five years by this Legislature.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if you look at other provinces, we have an excellent non-partisan history

on the ombudsman. Look at what has happened in Nova Scotia recently, look at what has happened in Saskatchewan recently, look at what has happened in Alberta recently, look at what has happened in British Columbia recently. You will see that in Manitoba we have an excellent idea of an ombudsman in the province, and clearly by any definition of it, health care is fully covered by The Ombudsman Act of Manitoba and the Ombudsman of the province hired by this Legislature.

How do we deal with a good idea to look at focusing in on health care, but how do we deal with the whole issue of having one ombudsman reporting to this Legislature on everything but health care and a deputy ombudsman hired by whoever? Are they hired by the ombudsman or are they hired by this Legislature reporting to the Legislature? I would like some ideas. I like focusing in on health care complaints particularly in the area of the non-medical criticisms dealing with our health care system, particularly when we look at the fact that there is a gag order in the Department of Health, there is a virtual dictatorship going on in the Department of Health. He is the last living dictator in the world, Mr. Speaker—not quite, we have Chile, we have South Africa and other countries. I am sorry, I take that back. I do apologize for that comment. We had an election, we have not had a change of Government yet, a lot of difference. We had an election.

* (1720)

Anyway, back to the resolution. I do not think it is thought out. Do we believe in the supremacy of this Legislature to appoint an ombudsman, and does that individual then have the right to appoint the deputy ombudsman, and should the deputy then therefore be reporting through the ombudsman to this Legislature? I do not think I want a two-headed ombudsman's office, one deputy ombudsman for health care, and one ombudsman for the rest of the items. I do not think that is fair to child care. I do not think that is fair to other issues that are equally important. We all agree health care is important, but I think the resolution is not thought out about where that ombudsman would fit with this Legislature, which is our ultimate responsibility.

I do not want a deputy reporting to this Legislature. For example, are we going to have a deputy auditor general or a deputy auditor reporting to this Legislature on only the Department of Industry, Trade and Technology and have the Auditor report on every other department to this Legislature?

We would like a greater focus on complaint based issues in the health care system, but we do not think that this is well thought out, and we are more than interested without deciding how to vote to listen to the debate. We put our concerns on the record. We think some of the ideas in this resolution are worthy, but it obviously needs clarification and possible amendment to deal with the inadequacy of a two-headed ombudsman reporting to this one-headed Legislature.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to rise to speak to this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that anyone in this Legislature is opposed to as good a health care system as this province could possibly afford. I am sure that today the Minister of Health would be pleased to be here to put some comments on the record, but indeed it is unfortunate that he could not be here this afternoon to do that.

The Member from the Liberal Party, the Critic for Health, indicated that it is important in this province to provide the best possible services in Health that this province can afford. As I said previously, no one is opposed to that, and no one can argue that. However, in a health care system as complex as the one that we have in this province, probably one of the finest in Canada, there are times when complaints do arise, and therefore they have to be dealt with. There are times when opinions perhaps differ and they have to be dealt with.

Indeed in this province we are fortunate that the Legislature has appointed an Ombudsman, a provincial Ombudsman, who can deal with those kinds of disputes in a very effective way. Time has shown that indeed in this province we have an effective way to resolve some of those disputes, some of those differences of opinions, some of those stalemates in a very effective way.

If we were to create another ombudsman in a particular department, I am afraid that would only lend itself to a great deal of confusion among the people who use the health services of this province. Indeed, what would we be saying in setting that kind of a precedent?

As the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) pointed out, would this individual then report to the ombudsman, would he report to the Legislature or—indeed, who would that individual report to? That in itself would lead to confusion. If a person then had a complaint regarding the health care system, would that person indeed know where to go to? Would that individual perhaps be confused as to whether he or she should go to the provincial Ombudsman, or whether they should go to the health care deputy ombudsman, or whatever this person is called?

Mr. Speaker, there are mechanisms, there are safeguards in place today in the health care system of this province which are designed to help individuals when they do run into difficulty, and there have been times when that has happened. In my own constituency, in my own experience as a Member of this Legislature, I have had experiences where individuals have come to me and indicated that they have had some difficulties in either getting payments for services they have used elsewhere, perhaps across the border, but these have been resolved through an appropriate and good system that we have in this province. We do have some laws that govern that system, and that is good.

We have gone through the ombudsman, we have gone through the College of Physicians and through these various safeguards that are in place to resolve these various problems that have occurred. Now we cannot resolve every single problem that is out there, and I agree sometimes it is difficult.

So there are some good notions that the Member puts forth, where he says the fact that the health care

system is large. Indeed it is large, it eats up a large part of the provincial budget. It is complex and indeed some people find it somewhat confusing. But when we are in a time of need, we never think of these things, and it is only afterwards that we find it difficult to resolve some of our problems.

I think if we were to spend our dollars more effectively in educating the population of this province as to the mechanisms that are already in place and which could assist them, we could go a lot further than by creating another level of Government, another level of bureaucracy, that will only confuse issues and confuse the people that are out there.

I have to say that our health care system has proven to be a good and successful one. Indeed, we have seen that the number of complaints in the Department of Health has fallen over a number of years. The statistics show that health care made up 14 percent of all complaints handled by the provincial Ombudsman in 1987, and this number fell quite drastically to 8 percent in 1988. Now that is a substantial decrease, and that means that certainly people in Manitoba are perhaps more aware of their rights and their responsibilities. But they also know where to go to in times of need, in times of dispute, in times when they need some help from an outside body. It should also be noted that we have hospitals in this province, personal care facilities, mental health institutions which have their own patient advocate, if you like, or their own ombudsman where people can go and receive some assistance.

But too many times, the average Manitoban is not very familiar with what is available. I think that maybe instead of going this route and creating something that is confusing, something that does not have a proper focus, we should indeed be spending our dollars, our scarce dollars in this province, in more effective ways by educating the population in Manitoba that there are mechanisms in place, and educating the population of Manitoba how to use these mechanisms in a more effective way.

I do not argue with the intent of the Member's resolution because I think that as a medical professional, he indeed has seen times when people have been frustrated and perhaps discouraged by the system that we have in place. It is not to blame the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) here or any individual in particular. It is just the way that our system has evolved.

I can appreciate the fact that in his own way, he is attempting to improve the system, the dispute mechanisms, that we have in place. I know that his resolution tries to demystify perhaps the health services delivery system that we have by reducing the amount of distress, the frustration, and the confusion that people do indeed feel when they have to deal with it.

I do not see that adding another level of Government, another body, another bureaucracy, would indeed help the situation. As I have indicated previously, we do have a provincial Ombudsman in place who can continue to handle the health care matters, who has handled them in the past and has handled them very effectively.

I would have to be one who would stand in my place and congratulate the Ombudsman of this province for

handling many matters in a very professional, a very above board, and a very excellent fashion. I think anyone who has had any dealings with the Ombudsman would certainly feel that way as well. I think more people have to be made aware of what the Ombudsman is really all about.

The role of the College of Physicians and Surgeons cannot be dismissed as being an unimportant body. I think they are extremely important. Because of the high level of professionalism that we see within that body, I think that the dispute settling mechanism within that body itself has something to offer to many Manitobans. Many people who have dealt with them have certainly seen some excellent results.

Sometimes it is not a matter of a right and wrong. It is a matter of explaining the rights of these people, the responsibilities, and really what has taken place in a situation. I know in one situation back home where an individual who could not receive treatment in Manitoba had to go to the United States for treatment and, after receiving it, felt that all of his costs should be recovered from Manitoba. It was just a matter of not understanding what the policies and the regulations are with regard to such situations. After some time of explanation and consultation with a variety of people from the medical field, and also from the politicians themselves, this individual was satisfied that indeed he did receive fair treatment, good treatment, and in fact was very pleased at the way that the entire matter was handled.

* (1730)

Yes, there will come from time to time matters before us which are not necessarily settled in the best possible way. In a general sense, I am of the firm opinion that indeed we have a system in this province, which is excellent. If you compare it to other provinces in this country, I think we can hold our heads up high, and say that we have done a very good job in that way. I do not see other provinces, other jurisdictions, setting up new ombudsmen or ombudspersons for health, or for any department, because is this going to lead to a precedent where we are going to see an ombudsperson for another department whether it is Family Services, Education or any other department in Government?

I do not think we want to get into that because then we really will confuse the system. Are we then going to be taking something away from that very important role of the provincial Ombudsman, who has certain authorities and a fairly high degree of responsibility in such matters? Are we going to be taking something away then from the College of Physicians, who have a complaints department? We see those also in many of our personal care facilities, medical hospitals and that sort of thing, who have their own patient advocate already in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, although I see that the resolution of the Member is certainly one which is genuine, I think in that he feels this is a way in which we can resolve some of these disputes, I think that there are some shortcomings. I think he has not thought of many of

the problems that could arise by creating this separate system. I think that perhaps some dialogue with his House Leader maybe could have helped to resolve his questions about how these disputes should be handled.

Mr. Speaker, although I concur with his intent here, that it is laudable and that it is genuine, I do see some problems that if we were to go on this way we would confuse our system, create another level of bureaucracy or Government which at this present time we do not need, because we do not have the resources in this province right now to be spending on such frills as is suggested by this resolution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, just wanted to, as the Secunder of the motion, put a few words on the record regarding this particular resolution. You know, in the Province of Manitoba, we are very fortunate to have the health care system, or across the country, to have the health care system that we have. It affords everyone across the land to have accessible health care, and that is a high priority to the Liberal Party. In fact, Mr. Speaker, for myself it is priority No. 1, and I like to think it is priority No. 1 for the Liberal Party.

This particular resolution, Mr. Speaker, in addressing the need for a deputy health ombudsman, I believe addresses an issue which the Liberal Party had taken the position during the last provincial election, actually during the provincial election of '86 also, and that is the need to ensure that we have adequate health care facilities across the province, whether it is in the City of Winnipeg or outside the City of Winnipeg.

It causes me some concern when the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) and the Leader of the third Party (Mr. Doer) stood up and commented on the resolution stating that it does not, or who is the deputy ombudsman accountable to? If in fact the Minister of Education and the Leader had read the resolution when it reads, and I quote from the resolution direct, "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recommend to the Government that it consider the creation of a Deputy Ombudsman for health care, who would be accountable to the Speaker of the Legislature through the provincial Ombudsman;"

(Mr. Neil Gaudry, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, when I read that, I do see an answer that can be provided to the Minister of Education and the Leader of the third Party to the questions that they were posing. It seems to me when I read that that it is basically saying that the deputy ombudsman would be reporting to the provincial Ombudsman. I do not know what the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer) was thinking of in that sense. When we look at the size of our health care system, you will see that it is humongous in terms of the individuals that use and rely on our health care services.

You will find that to many of them it is very complicated. To me it is a very complicated system, and anything that can be done to simplify the matter, to try and better organize it and so forth, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think we should be supporting, not only as the Liberal Party, but in fact as the Government and

all Parties in fact in this particular Chamber. The number of services and the number of complaints that are lodged on these services, I believe, can be best addressed if you have a deputy ombudsman who is responsible just for that area.

The Minister of Education refers to the idea, well, if we have one for the Health Department—why do we not go ahead and have one for Education?—or maybe even suggest that we have it for other departments. Mr. Acting Speaker, there is a big difference here. The health care budget was approximately 1.5 billion a year. That is a huge sum of money—the services and capital investment and so forth that money is used to pay for. I believe it would be in our best interests to ensure that we have someone who is addressing the problems and the concerns that are raised by the patients—to bring it up to a deputy ombudsman, someone who would be dealing with our health care system and services on an ongoing basis.

I believe that is very important, Mr. Acting Speaker. If we take a look at the personal care homes—for example, a son or daughter, or whoever it might be that has someone in a personal care home—you will find that most of us have personal care homes in all of the ridings that we represent. For those people, when they want to lodge a complaint, the question mark is—where do they do it or how do they go about doing such a thing?

Right now, they will go to the provincial Ombudsman, or be referred to the provincial Ombudsman. The provincial Ombudsman covers health care but he also covers everything else, Mr. Acting Speaker, and if we had a deputy ombudsman looking after health care, I think it would simplify it. I think we would have the citizens being able to address the concerns in health care to this one particular individual who would be dealing with it on an ongoing and continuous basis.

The other criticisms that we have received on this particular resolution, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that the Minister talks about scarcity of dollars. I think we could put forward an argument in which we could see that a provincial deputy ombudsman responsible for health care, in the long term, might save our health care system dollars in the long run. I think we have to get out of this short-term outlook way of looking at health care. We have to be thinking in terms of the long term and what is in the best interest of the long term.

If we hear the comments from the Minister, saying that no other provinces have it—why should Manitoba have it?—well, I would say it another way. I would say—why not take the initiative? What is wrong with taking an initiative on an issue? I think this is an issue on which we can take an initiative. I think this is an issue in which we can be the first province in Canada to address this type of a problem, and I think it would be a movement in the right direction. On that note, I would like to see this particular resolution passed and that is why I agreed to be the seconder. I would hope that the Government would give it some consideration as a role of being a positive Opposition.

You will find that several of the resolutions that we bring forward are legitimate concerns and a way of

tackling a problem in which ultimately the taxpayers and the citizens of this province will benefit from. Anything that moves in that general direction, I believe, that we should be receiving the support from the third Party in the House in the Government. On that note, Mr. Acting Speaker, I will end my remarks. Thank you.

* (1740)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this particular resolution. As House Critic for the New Democratic Party, I can indicate that we treat health as one of our top priorities. In fact, probably really along with the economy, the environment, health care certainly has to be a major priority of any Party. We have particular pride in our long-standing history in terms of health care, in terms of raising health care concerns.

We fought for Medicare, established the first Medicare system in Canada, in Saskatchewan. Under both the CCF and the NDP it was a major initiative. As the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) points out, it was opposed at that time by the Liberals in Saskatchewan. I will indicate that eventually I believe both the old-line Parties did come to support the concept of Medicare. Some of us wonder as to the extent of their real commitment to Medicare.

Certainly when I look at the present Government, I have to question whether there is a real and substantive commitment to Medicare when one looks at the statements made even just in the last number of weeks. At the end of the last year when the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) told doctors, in justifying a cap on Medicare billings, the reason was—and these were the words that were expressed to the doctors—that the economy of Manitoba is headed for a slide; there are going to be decreased mining revenues; decreased income tax revenues; there is going to be a major cut in terms of transfer of payments to the provincial Government from the federal Government, and they said there are going to be tough times.

One of the areas where things are going to be limited, and I would say potentially cut back, will be in the area of Medicare. I think that it is important to recognize because it is no use to accept Medicare only when times are good. Medicare is a system that is in place fundamentally to be used by people of whatever income, of whatever background, of whatever province, when they need it. That should not be dependent, that should not be in any way conditional on the situation in the economy. Surely we recognize that. Surely we recognize that health should be such a major concern.

I make those comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, because in making any comments on health care concerns, I think that has to be the first and foremost thing that is on our mind in this Legislature. That is, that whoever is in power, whoever is in Government, has to be responsible for the maintenance of our universal health care system, the Medicare system. I make that comment because I do believe there are some well-intentioned elements of this resolution. I do believe it was well intentioned and I do give the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) credit.

I believe that in this particular case it is a well-intentioned resolution, but I do believe that we have to recognize first and foremost the concept of the responsibility of the Government and, in particular, ministerial responsibility. In this case, the responsibility of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) for dealing with our health care concerns, the \$1.5 billion that we put in which is a major budgetary item, the many concerns that exist in our health care system, whether they be institutional concerns, I have expressed my concern. I know the other Opposition House Critic has in terms of some of those concerns. We are looking at it now. We have Deer Lodge with 85 empty beds. We have the Concordia Hospital with people lined up in the hallways. Those kinds of institutional concerns have to be dealt with, and they are dependent on the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and this Government. No third Party can provide that responsibility, it has to come from the Minister of Health and indeed from the Government.

Today in Question Period, I asked the Premier a number of questions that I thought were very important, that needed to be dealt with, the fact that this Government has not lived up to its commitments made in the last provincial election.

What amazed me, Mr. Acting Speaker, was the fact that the Premier did not really accept responsibility for that. He said, well we have a lot of time, we will see. I do not believe the people of Manitoba though have the time to wait for this Government to get its act together. I do not believe it is acceptable for this Party that is in power now to go around in an election and say there will be a 1990 action plan. Here we are and it said commencing in 1990, we are nowhere near an action plan. There is not the appropriate accountability on the part of the Government.

The Premier is unwilling or unable to call the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to account for his inaction. How else can you describe a Minister of Health who spends \$58 out of a \$500,000 budget on the Health Advisory Network, the Health Advisory Network which is supposed to be the very basis of the health action plan for 1990? I do not believe that is suitable on the part of this Government. It is the same thing, we have a Minister of Health who calls doctors liars. People criticize his unilaterally-decided and announced policy or this Government's policy of capping medicare billings.

They walked in and they announced it. It really was a shock I know to the members of the MMA board who were there. I talked to a number of people who said they could not believe what they heard. The Premier once again has refused to accept the ministerial, the Government responsibility for that action. He has yet to tell the Minister of Health to withdraw those comments, comments which I pointed out when they were made. If they were made by one Member of the Legislature against another Member of the Legislature, that Member would have to withdraw those comments or be ejected from this Chamber.

Why Mr. Acting Speaker, when we have rules for ourselves, do the same rules not apply to other members of our society, to other people in this province, other citizens of Manitoba? Why should MLAs have

protection against the kind of vicious comments made by the Minister of Health, and why should doctors and other people who dare to criticize this Government, particularly this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), be subjected to those types of unfair and vicious comments. Why raise that? Because once again the fundamental underlying principle in terms of parliamentary Government is the whole concept of ministerial responsibility and more broadly of Cabinet Executive Council responsibility.

I do not believe that this Government is living up to that sense of responsibility. I do believe in dealing with anything, whether it be this resolution or any other matter dealing with health that has to be recognized first and foremost. I do recognize that this resolution is attempting to deal with individual complaints and indeed there are. I received a number of complaints recently, which I will just outline because it is important in terms of the whole sense of this resolution.

I received a complaint from an individual in my constituency who had been referred to the Health Sciences Centre for an angiogram, who is a diabetic, who ran into a serious situation because of the fact that he had to wait. He was on a diet, he was a diabetic, he had to wait several hours for his angiogram. It got to the point where he had to leave without the test because he was becoming physically ill, which will happen when one is diabetic and when one is deprived of the right kind of food and liquids. I do believe that is one of the key things we have to be looking at, that is those type of problems.

I can outline other problems which I think are important as well. I had another individual who was referred from my constituency for emergency medical procedure in Winnipeg, an elderly couple. I do believe that—once again, a very legitimate complaint about the medical system—in this particular case, what happened was this individual was referred. His spouse, who had never been to a hospital—he, by the way, had never been to a hospital before—could not go with him as an escort even though he was terrified of what was going to happen.

What happened was the family had to chip in to send the wife along. She went down for a number of days. He was held in the hospital for a longer period of time and then he was discharged one day before November 11, Remembrance Day, with no travel warrant, no funds to stay in a hotel, no way of getting back to his residence in Thompson—an individual, by the way, who spoke only a very limited amount of English. I have raised this with the Minister once again directly. I raised it in Estimates because those kinds of things, Mr. Acting Speaker, are happening.

* (1750)

Another case I can relate, once again involving a constituent of mine, is in terms of disclosure of medical information. I have an individual who has a daughter who has a number of handicaps that were not made known to the parents even though they were identified by the physicians who were in care considerably before the time when they found out. They are very concerned

that she was denied the adequate treatment and the other processes that are available to deal with the disability that she has been identified as having.

Mr. Acting Speaker, those are just three examples of the type of problems that have been directly indicated to myself. I am sure other MLAs—whether it be in terms of constituent calls or other individuals—have had similar sorts of calls.

I do appreciate the intent of this particular case, of the resolution. I do think there are some concerns about the practicality of the structure that has been envisioned and to a certain extent whether, if we are getting into having a health ombudsman, we are going to start having a whole series of ombudsmen instead of what currently exists, and what I think is a very good process, and that is the fact that we have an ombudsman with broad powers that is a major development for our province. It was one of the major developments of the 1970s when it was brought in. That was the thing that was important, that the Ombudsman has broad powers.

I have had cases where I have dealt with the Ombudsman in regard to health issues, where I have dealt with the Ombudsman in regard to Workers Compensation Board issues. The Ombudsman has a number of powers. I do think the question has to be raised as to whether this would in fact improve the situation for people who do have complaints in terms of the medical system, or whether it might splinter the process.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

I raise that because, once again, I am not criticizing the intent of the motion. I believe that what the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) is trying to do is to deal with some of those types of concerns that I identified. As I said, there are those that are clearly collective concerns. They relate to the issue of the system as a whole. There are other issues that relate to individuals.

The three cases I outlined are particular cases, although in this particular case, once again I believe that the ultimate responsibility lies with the individual who occupies that chair on my left, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). I am hoping in those three particular cases—in one case I pursued it with the hospital, in two other cases I pursued it directly with the Minister—that the Minister will take the action that is required, because ultimately that is the situation, Mr. Speaker.

I remember a case a number of years ago where a constituent of mine had to be sent to Ontario for heart transplant which was not available in Manitoba. At the time the policy in terms of transportation was not to cover any costs for out-of-province transportation by air ambulance. I remember raising that. I raised it with the then Minister of Health, Wilson Parasiuk.

One of the last lingering effects of the budget that was introduced at the time—one of the last acts actually of the previous NDP Government as it turned out—was to change the policy so that individuals who require such operations and procedures, do not have to pay for the use of the air ambulance. In this case, Mr. Speaker, this would have cost the family in excess of

\$10,000 just for the first trip there for the transplant. It would have cost additional money for follow-up procedures because even scheduled air fare was not covered in the case of that particular situation.

I think those are the kinds of things that have to be undertaken by Governments. They have to deal with those types of concerns. I can indicate I will be speaking throughout this Session, in terms of not only constituency cases but in my role as Health Critic for the New Democratic Party, in regard to not just the systems problems that we have—I identified them earlier—but in terms of the individual cases that exist. To a certain extent I do believe that is the role that we all have. There is not really just one Ombudsman in this province. There are 57 ombudsmen; they occupy the seats in this Chamber. I think each in our own way we contribute greatly toward the resolution of those types of concerns. We are ombudsmen on constituency issues or provincial issues.

I do believe, regardless of whether we do have proposals for establishment of a system of this kind, that principle still has to be maintained and we, as MLAs, have to be active in making sure that our constituents are represented, and the people of Manitoba are represented, whether it be in terms, as I said, of those broader health care issues or in terms of the legitimate individual complaints and concerns that have been expressed.

So with those few words, I look forward to the other comments of Members of the House. As I said, it is a well-intentioned resolution—maybe somewhat impractical—but we look forward to the debate as it proceeds. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Uruski (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having a bit of an opportunity to speak to this resolution dealing with the specific area of health care in our province. The sentiments of Manitobans, citizens of this province, wishing to have their complaints dealt with by an impartial third party is one that has long been recognized by Members of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, The Ombudsman Act was brought into this House in the early '70s during the Schreyer Administration and I was a Member of this Assembly during that period of time. The Ombudsman was appointed by a committee of this Assembly. His appointment was made by the Standing Committee of Privileges and Elections by all Parties who were in the House. Members who sat on that committee appointed the Ombudsman. The powers of the Ombudsman in the Act are very broad and, if it is seen that citizens are not able to use the services of our present Ombudsman, then perhaps let us amend the Act. Let us make sure that the Ombudsman is able to investigate and deal with complaints, whether it be an arm's length institution of the provincial Government, whether it be a health care institution.

Mr. Speaker, I made the case here, in this House, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that I wanted municipalities to be subjected to The Ombudsman Act because I saw first hand a case where the municipality was not dealing fairly with its ratepayer where the

ratepayer had a complaint. But the local government has not been part of the jurisdiction of our Ombudsman.

So I do not disagree at all with the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) in his resolution of wanting citizens of this province to have their complaints adjudicated in terms of whether it be equal access to health care, whether it be the type of complaints that citizens may have of treatment in an institution, whatever the case may be that does not require a legal suit and requires a lot of money behind oneself to go to court, where they can at least go to someone and say, please investigate this treatment that I have received, I have been shabbily treated, whether it be by the administrators of an institution, whether it be by staff in an institution, whether it be by the professionals providing that care, let us have a look at this.

If the legislation, Mr. Speaker, is not broad enough to deal with those powers, then I for one would want to support amendments to broaden that. I say that because we have had representations made to myself when I was Minister of Agriculture, for an ombudsman to deal with agricultural complaints. Now, do we set one up there?

The case can be made in many different areas. They are all legitimate cases, that is the point, they are legitimate cases, and the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) should be commended for raising the legitimacy of the case and the complaint that is there. We want to share in the concern that he raises, but I think the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), when he said there are 57 ombudsmen here, the Member for Kildonan is one of the best ombudsmen the citizens can have in terms of health care. His intimate knowledge and his ability in the field of health care makes him one of our pre-eminent ombudsmen in this House on health care. I say that to him—in fact he was a member of our Party, and I say to him that is—

Mr. Speaker: I am interrupting the proceedings. According to the Rules, when this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have 10 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 8 p.m. in Committee of Supply.