



Fifth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

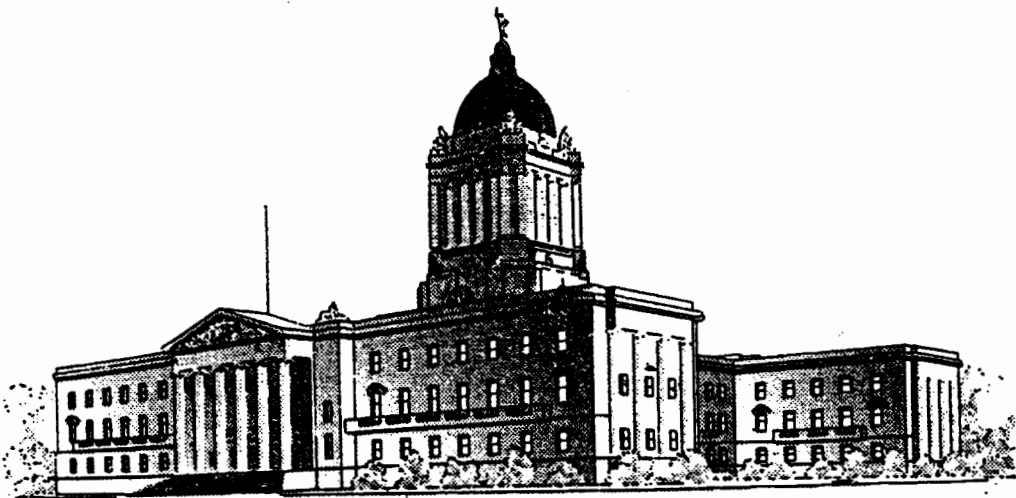
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 23, 1994

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Pharmacare Benefit Levels

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Henrique Rigatto, Don Cates, Kim Kwiatkowski and others requesting the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider restoring Pharmacare benefits to their previous levels.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I would like to, firstly, table the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Board, 1993 Annual Report.

Capital Construction Program

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): I would like to make a ministerial statement, please.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to announce an \$18.3 million capital construction program for '94-95 that includes 15 initiatives for Manitoba's public school system as recommended by the Public Schools Finance Board.

The projects range from roof repair and replacement projects to the construction of three new schools and the planning of a fourth.

The capital construction program includes these projects identified in previous budgets to be started in this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, firstly, construction of a new N-6 school in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 to replace two schools that

no longer meet either educational or building standards. Completion date for construction of Greenway School is December 1997.

The replacement of an old section of Foxwarren School in Birdtail River School Division No. 38 with predesigned classrooms, the construction of a new administration area and minor renovations to the gym, completion date December '94.

The new projects include, Mr. Speaker, replacement of the older section of the Hazel M. Kellington School in Beautiful Plains School Division No. 31, the construction of a 2,200 square foot addition to the physical education multipurpose room at Crystal City Elementary School in Pembina Valley School Division, the construction of a new K-8 French immersion school in St. Vital School Division No. 6, and completion date for the construction of the Ecole Ashworth School is September '95.

I will let the members read the rest of the list on their own. The \$18.3-Million Capital Construction Program is expected to create 365 jobs. I would like to say that these capital construction projects have been carefully considered, and priorities have been chosen on the basis of school board requests and long-range capital plans. They are an indication of this government's commitment to improving the public school system by ensuring that students have the facilities they need for their education. Thank you.

* (1335)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement.

I believe that we completed the Education Estimates a couple of weeks ago, and it is rather typical that we are seeing the capital vision of this government well after the budget Estimates have been completed. This is a similar situation to what we had in the Department of Health. We would

like, at some point, to have a discussion of capital decisions that the government is making in the overall context of the total Estimates so that we can have a comprehensive review of these proposals.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the public education system has been decimated by the provincial government. For two years in a row, the public education system has been reduced by this government, so for this minister to stand up in this House and feign his commitment to the public education system runs hollow in terms of the spending priorities.

On the specific proposals, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased after six years in government that the Greenway School has been approved. I know that the Winnipeg School Division has pushed for this for the last few years. I am pleased that the minister and the chair of the Winnipeg School Division have proceeded with this project, although it is a little later than we would have wanted and I am sure the chair of the Winnipeg School Division would have preferred.

I would also caution members opposite. I recall in July of 1990, there was a major announcement of capital expenditures in the Department of Health. I also recall shortly after the September date of 1990, after the unfortunate majority government was obtained, that many of these capital decisions evaporated and disappeared. So we will judge the capital decisions of this government brick by brick. We will judge their commitment to the public education system dollar by dollar. We will not judge them by press release alone.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see this Capital Construction Program come forward, albeit I asked the minister some time ago for it and I know that in the Estimates process the minister had indicated that he did not want to come forward with it. He called it privileged, and I think that we have some concern over perhaps the

timing, as the Leader of the Opposition has indicated.

However, having said that as the Leader of the Opposition has referred to—although I think he has a bit of the historical synopsis wrong—it is very good to see that listed No. 1 is the construction of a new Greenway School. That has been a long time coming for the residents of the west end area who also happen to be my constituents.

Through that experience, I have seen this school ride literally the top priorities of the capital schools finance board for a number of years. There were, let us say, some difficulties, I think, and delays in dealing with the school board. However, we were very pleased to see that resolved recently and happy to see this included in this project.

I can assure the minister it will be very well received indeed from those parents, many of whom started this discussion and this effort when their children were first entering that school. The children are now graduating, and we are just now seeing this project come to fruition.

I am sure that equally meritorious are the other projects in this announcement, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to congratulate the minister on coming forward with this level of capital projects in this coming year. As well, I am sure there are many others that are deserving and that there may in fact be some disappointment today around the province.

I think it behooves us as members of this Legislature to make a continuing commitment to public education and a critical part of that is a continuing commitment to adequately fund the construction of facilities in the public school system to properly educate our children. Thank you.

* * *

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1994-95 Revenue Estimates.

* (1340)

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Committee of Supply

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to revert to Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees? [agreed]

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): The Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 28—The Off-Road Vehicles
Amendment Act**

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you seek leave of the House to introduce for first reading today, Bill 28, The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to introduce Bill 28, The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act, as I understand it? Is there leave? [agreed]

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): I thank members of the House, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), that leave be given to introduce Bill 28, The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les véhicules à caractère non routier), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Over the course of Question Period, I will distribute to my critics the spreadsheets for the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today Her Excellency Lillie Chitaura who is the High

Commissioner of the Republic of Zimbabwe. On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

Also with us this afternoon in the gallery to my left, we have Chief Ralph Caribou of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation in Pukatawagan. Accompanying Chief Caribou is Elizabeth Bear who is a government liaison officer. These are guests of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

Also, we have from the Andrew Mynarski School thirteen Grades 8 and 9 students under the direction of Mr. Lebar. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

From the Van Walleghem School, we have seventy Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Kim Pepler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

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

* (1345)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Kenaston Underpass
Justification**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier again about the Kenaston underpass, a project, of course, that we raised on May 26, and a project and an area of the city that the Premier has dealt with for a number of years, even going back to his City Hall days when, at that point, he was opposing the federal Liberal government in placing the trucking centre in the area where it is now located. When I raised this question on May 26, 1994, I was raising the whole issue of the \$30-million expenditure as the largest amount of money in the whole infrastructure program going to a very questionable project with very little, in our opinion, cost benefits and with very little anticipation of the future.

The Winnipeg transport study was not completed. The whole issue of relocating rail, truck and air sites to the vicinity of the airport had

not been completed and, of course, the whole situation with the CN and CP merger was still raising numbers of questions about the long-term viability of the proposed \$30-million expenditure.

I would like to ask the Premier: In light of the fact that at City Hall, in 1993, the administration requested that the city look, examine and explore, in consultation with the railway, the trucking industry and the residential neighbourhoods, the feasibility of relocating the CN intermodal terminal vis-à-vis the site at Kenaston, and in light of the fact that we are all working towards a plan to go closer to the railway for trucking sites, why are we proceeding with the \$30-million proposal underneath the railway track whose future we do not know?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, normally when one is speculating on the future of a particular facility such as a rail line, the first people you should ask are the people who own that rail line what their intentions are. Since that question has been asked, and asked publicly, and since the answer has been unequivocally that that CN main rail line will remain there, I find it difficult to understand why the Leader of the Opposition would perpetrate some false expectations or false hopes about relocation, when CN itself says that the rail line will remain there as its main line.

That is the only information on which we have to go. It is not speculative. It is not something fabricated by the Leader of the Opposition. It is fact.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, that grade separation is the No. 1 priority grade separation in the City of Winnipeg's transportation plans. So why would they not want to see a grade separation there when there is indeed—there have been many accidents, collisions and other things in and around that intersection, and all of that is rationale behind why that was chosen.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, that three levels of government, in a co-operative effort to try and meet the needs, the highest priority needs of the infrastructure of Winnipeg and this entire province, have agreed on that particular project as

part of the infrastructure needs, and I might say that the project also, of course, includes the twinning of Kenaston between Wilkes and Scurfield Road, and if anybody has driven in that area and does not believe that that is a hazardous route with the tremendous volume of traffic it takes, then I would say that that person is irresponsible.

* (1350)

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Neither is it a fabrication to note that the \$30 million is the most amount of money that the federal, provincial and civic governments and municipal governments all across this province have allocated to a project that they are now putting on the fast track, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of citizens in the Premier's own riding who are quite concerned that they are the David fighting against the Goliath with the federal government and the Premier and the city all against their concerns about their local issues.

Mr. Speaker, we are spending \$30 million on this project. We have designated \$30 million for this underpass, and the City of Winnipeg planner of transportation and research indicates that there has been no detailed benefit, cost and prioritization analysis, that it was not undertaken for the Kenaston underpass project.

Would the Premier now stop this project and have the cost-benefit analysis and prioritization analysis of this project?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Urban Affairs, he did not cause a cost-benefit analysis to be done when he chose to build a bridge over the Red River, a Chief Peguis Trail, a bridge that was not the city's No. 1 priority at the time, but he put \$10 million of provincial money on the table as the carrot in order to force the city government at the time to build that bridge which was not its No. 1 priority.

It was not its No. 1 priority, but he said, we want this to go to the top of the list, because it services the East Kildonan-North Kildonan area he

represented and that others represented. That is the kind of politics he played, Mr. Speaker.

We are not playing politics with this. This is three levels of government, three levels of government that are building a project that has been on the books for a long time. It is the No. 1 priority grade separation for the City of Winnipeg's transportation plans. That is why it is going ahead.

Independent Review

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): The Premier will find a cost-benefit analysis, Mr. Speaker, before we did match the city grants as part of the \$100-million city capital project, but even if there was not, two wrongs do not make a right. There was an analysis, and I would ask the Premier to review it.

There is no cost-benefit analysis, Mr. Speaker, and the citizens of that area believe their own MLA is not representing their interests in terms of the people adjacent to the Kenaston area. They believe that the politicians, the Premier, the south end federal M.P.s have stacked the cards against them, and they cite as evidence the fast-track process that is outlined in the project guideline.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier then grant his own constituents and the people in his own community, along with the people of Manitoba that are concerned about this \$30-million expenditure, will the Premier grant an independent review of this process as these people have asked, so that they can have an objective review, and we as taxpayers can get an objective review of this \$30-million expenditure?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this evening there will be a public forum for people to make their views known, for people to express their concerns and put on the table legitimate issues to do with that particular project.

Those people will be able to do so in a public forum, and not try and do what the Leader of the Opposition is doing, making cheap politics out of this to try and pit one area of Manitoba against another area of Manitoba.

We know what motivates and drives the Leader of the Opposition, and we know that there are opportunities in place for the people to make their legitimate concerns heard, and they will be listened to.

Pukatawagan, Manitoba Public Health Emergency

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health.

The community of Pukatawagan has been facing a health emergency for approximately six months. During that time, the community has been forced to boil all of its water, a community of approximately 1,700 or 1,800 people because of the inadequacy of the water treatment plant, and the consequences—and I want to table this—are some 1,100 cases of skin disease in a population of 1,700. Intestinal diseases, as well, are rampant.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Will the Minister of Health use his office and the public health office representative to attend Pukatawagan to determine the scale of the health emergency in that community and perhaps outline some remedial measures that should be taken to resolve that problem?

* (1355)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. He has raised this with me previously and outlines to me what I believe to be a matter of serious importance for the people in the region to which he refers.

I have had discussions, through my office, with Dr. Guilfoyle, Chief Medical Officer of Health, to find out what he thinks about this particular matter. We really ought to engage the local member of Parliament in this discussion, as well, as well as the representatives of the band and the Swampy Cree Tribal Council.

I understand that the federal government makes some dollars available to the tribal council for the purpose of looking after medical health issues in those regions, and Swampy Cree has not used the dollars made available, I understand, for that

purpose to this point. Now, that does not mean they have not done anything, because I have not ascertained what else they might have done.

Certainly, this matter should be raised at the band level and also with the federal government. Our government is responsible for issuing those kinds of orders to ensure immediate safety, but other levels of government are responsible for remediation of the problem.

Mr. Storie: The community understands that the federal government, who is responsible for the infrastructure, would be responsible for remediation.

Mr. Speaker, the community has been without safe drinking water, safe water to use for household purposes, for bathing, for more than six months.

My question to the minister is, if the Health department officials are prepared to declare a health emergency in the community of Pukatawagan, will the minister agree to meet with the federal minister of health and welfare of Canada and the federal Minister of Indian Affairs to push for a solution to this long-standing and unsatisfactory situation?

Mr. McCrae: I believe the suggestions the honourable member makes are worthwhile and are certainly worth considering very seriously. Whether we do all of those things or some of them, I will report back to the honourable member. I intend to follow this matter up.

The relationship of the community with the federal government I did not think was so terrible, but something is going on in the sense that they are not getting the job done, and it needs to get done. The honourable member's concern is very well placed, and I am sure it is shared by all of the people in the community.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat ironic that the Mathias Colomb Band is the only Manitoba band that is the signatory to Treaty 6, which specifically references the federal obligation to health, the medicine chest.

My question to the minister is, will the minister authorize staff to travel to Pukatawagan today or at

the earliest opportunity to begin the process of assessing the health risk first-hand from a provincial point of view?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member's suggestion about the declaration of a health emergency is certainly something I will follow up with Dr. Guilfoyle's office and Health staff, if that is the appropriate thing, according to their advice. Of course, the honourable member's urgings and my own are now on the record, so we will make sure that the concern is understood.

Burns Committee Report Tabling Request

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this morning, we have had confirmed by two members on the Burns committee that the report has, in fact, been completed. I would ask the First Minister if, in fact, he is aware of that, if he has received the report and will he be tabling it today.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have not yet received the report, and I am still awaiting the results from the Burns committee.

Mr. Edwards: Well, Mr. Speaker, I trust that the First Minister will, in fact, seek his own confirmation that it has been completed and seek to receive that report as soon as possible, given the time constraints that the entire situation is currently under.

* (1400)

Winnipeg Jets Bond Issue

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): My second question for the First Minister: This morning in the Department of Finance Estimates, there was a lot of discussion about the success that the province has had in bond issues, whether it be the Grow Bonds Program, the Hydro and Builder Bonds, as a means of raising local capital and retaining that capital in the province of Manitoba.

I have raised this previously with the First Minister. Has the First Minister spoken to the Minister of Finance or his department officials and

prepared that as an option for the raising of capital for the Winnipeg Jets, potentially a new arena, private money through a bond issue?

Has that option been pursued so that it can be put forward in a relatively short time span in the event that that is seen as a way to raise capital to preserve the team and, in fact, potentially finance a new arena?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Clearly, the government of Manitoba can issue bonds to raise money for any particular purpose. In that particular case, though, it costs the people, the taxpayers of Manitoba the interest on those bonds. Secondly, the full cost of the loss of that capital, if the team loses money, is totally then the responsibility of the government.

My understanding, No. 1, is that people are not likely to put equity investment in an investment that is guaranteed to lose money, so who is going to take the responsibility for the losses of putting in the capital? So the government then guarantees the bonds, pays the interest and, finally, is responsible for losses beyond that. I do not see how that solves the problem, Mr. Speaker.

Financial Status

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): The very losing investment that the First Minister says the people of this province would never invest in, he on their behalf has invested heavily in and has committed us to a long-term commitment to that very losing venture that he has just talked about.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of a guarantee, the issue of interest payments, are not issues that are necessary to a bond issue.

My final question is for the First Minister.

Many weeks ago, I believe three weeks ago, I raised with the First Minister the issue, and I cast it as what remains today, which is the suggestion that, in fact, some of the initial capital which was used as the buy-in to the NHL by this franchise, approximately \$5 million, I am led to believe, which has simply been financed in the interim period, was, in fact, being paid down. At this point,

the principal was being paid down. It was raised as a suggestion which I felt needed clearing up. The First Minister indicated that he had no knowledge and that he would look into it.

Does he have information today, Mr. Speaker, about whether or not that allegation, in fact, has any validity?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I am told that the allegation has no validity.

In response to the member's preamble, I want to say that he is critical of us taking responsibility for team losses. He now not only wants to take responsibility for team losses, but he wants to take responsibility for \$150 million to buy the team and the arena and the interest on that annually. That is why he is taking a leap of faith well beyond anything that he has been critical of.

Point of Order

Mr. Edwards: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister's response is spurious and misguided. There has never ever been a suggestion that it necessitated a guarantee or—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order. The honourable member clearly has a dispute over the facts. There is no point of order.

Northern Fly-in Sports Camps Lottery Revenues

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Foundation Act): Mr. Speaker, I took as notice, on, I believe, Tuesday last, questions from the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson).

The member for Rupertsland questioned why the number of communities served by the Northern Fly-In Sports program had dropped from 16 to six in just the past two years.

I can advise the member that the program will operate with six communities this year, as it did in 1993. In 1992, the program did not have 16 communities, Mr. Speaker; it had four. In 1991, it had seven, and in 1990, it had eight. The member

would have to go all the way back to 1989 before there were 16 communities in the program.

The second question I took as notice was why there has not been an increase of the \$50,000 currently committed. The member should be aware that government officials met frequently with Northern Fly-In Sports Camps last year to develop an appropriate level of funding.

Against the budget of \$182,000, the Department of Northern Affairs has contributed \$50,000, not from Lotteries but from the AJI fund. The Manitoba Community Services Council also allocated \$50,000 in lottery funding. CareerStart has contributed \$8,400, and the Manitoba Telephone System has also made a corporate contribution. That represents a total provincial commitment of \$108,600, representing 60 percent of the camp's budget.

The province has been the most reliable funder of this project and has met the expectations of the board of the Northern Fly-In Sports program. There is also a complementary program run through the Department of Recreation providing another \$150,000 for training of northern recreation directors, providing long-term community-based funding and community-based leadership.

Port of Churchill Grain Exports

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Mr. Speaker, I will have further discussions with the minister with respect to my previous questions on the Northern Fly-In Sports Camps.

Today my question is for the Minister of Transportation.

The situation facing the Port of Churchill is becoming increasingly serious, as it does about this time of the year each year. This week, town officials met with the Director General of Ports Canada, Mr. Bob Tytanec. Mr. Bob Tytanec also met with the Wheat Board officials this week, yesterday, in fact, and the report that he brought back was there was nothing new to report. While grain could and should be shipped out of the port

now, as of this morning, no commitment has been made, and just 15 people are working at the port.

What commitment has the Minister of Transportation had from the Wheat Board or CNR concerning the port this year?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the member that we do not have any additional information on what he has brought to the House today. Again, we refer back to Manitoba Liberal M.P.s in terms of their commitment that a million tonnes should go through the Port of Churchill. The season is now very close to being upon us. Next month, the ships should be coming in.

We now have a federal Liberal government in place in Ottawa which is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, responsible for following up on that commitment they made to the citizens of Manitoba that a million tonnes should go through there. I fully expect them to follow up on that commitment, and we expect announcements from them at any time to fulfill the commitment they have made to the citizens of Manitoba.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, has the minister received any response from the federal Transport minister concerning the opposition of Manitoba to the elimination of the grain transportation subsidies? I am referring directly to the letter that was signed by this honourable minister and the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we sent a letter on June 19 to the honourable Doug Young, the Minister of Transport in the federal Liberal government. To this date, we have no acknowledgement of his receiving the letter or any response to it.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the same minister.

Considering the seriousness of the situation, is the minister prepared to consider sending an all-party delegation to Ottawa to press the federal government to live up to their commitment of one million tonnes of grain this year?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we certainly expect the federal Liberal government to respond to a number of issues in front of us. I think I have told the

member that we have sent some 14 letters and got response to four.

I can tell the member that provincial ministers across the country are meeting in Calgary on July 7. We fully expect Mr. Young to be there, and we have brought a number of issues to his attention, including the ones raised by the member here and which are also of equal concern to other Transport ministers across western Canada. We expect Mr. Young to start consulting with us and talking to us directly about what his plan is and how he plans to fulfill the promises made by his peers during the course of the last election.

* (1410)

Unemployment Insurance Commission Training Freeze

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, last year, the federal government had spent all of its training allocations for Manitoba by July. This year, the monies were frozen by the beginning of June, and at KCC, for example, I believe that this has meant the reduction of UIC-supported training by about 50 percent.

Will the Minister of Education tell us what the impact of this has been on Manitoba? Could he tell us whether he has met or spoken with the federal minister since I first raised this issue with him last week?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I have not met with Mr. Axworthy since that point in time, but we will be having an internal meeting today, preparing for the national meeting with respect to all the ministries, and in our government, there are three that are involved, as Mr. Axworthy brings forward his blueprint for social reform.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us what advice he would give to those 50,000 unemployed Manitobans who have no UIC training support in Manitoba and who face diminishing opportunities for training as a result of the actions of this government in ACCESS programs, in New Careers and in adult basic education?

Where do disadvantaged and unemployed Manitobans turn for training?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, if the member is asking me to reply to a question that should more legitimately be directed towards a federal member or the federal minister, then I suggest the member put that question to either Mr. Axworthy or, indeed, the Liberal government.

Let me point out, however, though, this government recognizes the impact on those who are unemployed who have been drawing support through that insurance program and, of course, who will be caught in some of the changes, but, Mr. Speaker, being mindful of that statement, I also recognize that the fund has to continue to be supportable, that there have to be changes considered, although we will do the best we can to ensure that those in Manitoba who are impacted are impacted in the least negative fashion.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, adult basic education, New Careers and ACCESS are clearly provincial programs. That was what I was asking the minister.

Worker Adjustment Branch Training Programs

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I would like to ask the Minister of Labour a final supplementary question, to explain why his department has changed the programs under the worker adjustment section of his department to reduce the number of training opportunities for individuals from an estimated 275 to an estimated 125.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I think the key to the answer to this question lies in some of the wording of the question itself; that is, the estimate.

The reduction that is shown in our budget is reflective of actually what our draw was on that particular fund, and I look forward to discussing this further with her, in greater detail in Estimates, which I understand we will be into this afternoon.

Health Care Facilities Rape Assessments

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, a woman is raped in Canada every six minutes. Currently there are in Manitoba no standardized protocols to deal with these victims in emergency rooms, and only the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital do rape assessments.

Will the Minister of Health ensure that when the Departments of Health, Justice, the major police forces and the Manitoba hospital organizations meet, as he said they would yesterday, to establish a protocol, that they set uniform standards in all Manitoba hospitals which include the training of all medical staff, as recommended in the Pedlar report?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I commented on this particular matter, I made it clear that criminal activity is criminal activity, and if we appropriately deal with victims coming into our hospital system and if there is a reporting mechanism that can be used to protect other potential victims and to deal with the offenders, then we should be doing that.

I will take what the honourable member is saying as a good suggestion for the meeting that we are arranging with the various agencies she referred to.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, will the minister, when this group meets, also ensure that the group investigates the possibility of instituting mobile crisis teams so that rape victims and other victims of abuse, assault and neglect have access to trained medical and social services personnel wherever they live in Manitoba, even if they do not have immediate access to a hospital?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand what the mobile crisis team to which the honourable member refers would look like. I would be interested in hearing further from her as to how such teams should be put together and so on.

We do have various services available now, but mobile crisis teams in this area are not something I

think we have developed to the extent that the honourable member is suggesting, but I would like to know more about what she is suggesting.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I will provide some information that I have to the honourable minister.

Nurse-Managed Care Committee MNU Representation

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): My third question is also to the Minister of Health, and it is that the implementation committee on nurse-managed care has now been struck.

Can the minister explain why there are no representatives from the Manitoba Nurses' Union on this implementation committee?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, unions are there for the purpose of protecting the rights of workers. I do see a distinction between an organization like a union and a standards-setting organization or a regulation-setting organization, and with respect, I do not quite understand.

I do recall asking the MNU to join us for some round table discussions on issues relating to the role of nurses and educational issues for nurses. The Manitoba Nurses' Union, at the last minute, unfortunately, let me know that they were not coming. I pleaded with Vera Chernecki that if she could not come, would she please send someone in her place, and the answer was no.

Department of Health Untendered Contracts

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): My question is for the Minister of Health.

In information we have received on untendered contracts, Dr. Moe Lerner has been given a contract for \$105,000 to, and I quote, participate in health reform activities which require medical input foremergency-specific matters.

I am wondering if the Minister of Health can tell us, why is it necessary to contract out for \$105,000 for consultation on medical matters relating to emergency, and what is the length of this contract that is costing \$105,000?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is quite a project when you are, as the honourable members know from previous history, keeping health functions, the whole health system operating year in and year out. It is a very big undertaking. Add to that a move right across this country to alter and change and renew our health care system, which adds quite a lot to the whole effort, as the honourable member would realize. In that process, it is necessary for us to have the expertise of the likes of Dr. Lerner with respect to emergency issues and others, as well.

I will get the details of the contract itself for the honourable member as to the time period that it covers, but certainly, Dr. Lerner has worked with us, and his background is such that it lends itself well to the issues we are faced with these days.

Ms. Gray: Of the some 85-plus committees that the Minister of Health has looking at health reform, there are very many physicians who sit on those committees who do it on a voluntary basis, so that was the reason for my question. I look forward to the answer.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why his department is spending some \$10,000 given to Ernst & Young to provide training sessions for Manitoba Health staff that will look at history and current status of funding reform across Canada? I ask that question because you spent over a million dollars on your planning and audit secretariat and your Executive Support, so why do we have to go outside—

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

Mr. McCrae: I will report back to the honourable member. I will take the specifics of the question, ascertain the response and give it to the honourable member.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, with a final supplementary to the minister, can the minister indicate to us, when untendered contracts are given out through the Department of Health, does the minister have access to the information on every particular contract, and does he approve those before they are actually accepted?

Mr. McCrae: I will take that question as notice and give the honourable member the detailed answer.

* (1420)

Child Poverty Impact on Dropout Rate

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, we have been calling on this government to address the high rate of child poverty in Manitoba for quite some time. We have the highest rate in Canada at almost 27 percent. We all, I think, would agree that this is unacceptable.

Youth service workers in the community are talking about research that shows a direct relationship between child poverty and dropout rates from school, the relationship obviously being that children in poverty are more likely to drop out of school. The government is aware of this research, yet they have eliminated ACCESS programs and CareerStart programs, or New Careers programs, I should say.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Ms. Cerilli: I want to ask the Minister of Education, why are there no programs in Manitoba particularly to deal with 16- to 18-year-olds who are more likely to drop out of school if they are living below the poverty line?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, we, as a society, make an incredible contribution to all those in the public school system. For the member to suggest that we do not have in place programs that try to reach out to those who drop out along the way I think is grossly unfair.

I see the efforts that some school divisions—and I think of the Fort Garry School Division. I think of some others who have programs in place to try and reach out to those, for whatever reason, in many cases voluntarily leave the public school system. The member's thesis is wrong in my point of view.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, I have a problem with the way the minister is dismissing this issue. There are research studies that show—we are talking about poverty in relation to high school and school

dropout rates. I urge the minister to take it seriously.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Ms. Cerilli: I will ask the Minister of Education or the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) if there has been any research by this government on the number of students on student social allowance and those students dropping out of school and what the reasons might be—

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

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, there is a fair amount of research. I do not think it is terribly conclusive, because there is research in other jurisdictions that show where socioeconomic factors are taken into account, that the public school system works well.

The greatest emphasis, of course, depends on whether or not there is a love of learning instilled within the home setting and whether or not that is brought with the student to the public school system, which is fully funded by the taxpayers of this province. There is not a program, there is not a law that can be passed to instill the love of learning and indeed the support necessary within the home.

The members opposite, when they were in government, and when we are in government, we have devoted millions of dollars to try and provide remedial programs in support of that type of individual, taking into account, in some cases, poverty or in others, socioeconomic factors.

Mr. Speaker, society is doing all it can in this regard.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that poor children come from poor families—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate. The honourable member for Radisson, with your question. Time is extremely scarce.

Ms. Cerilli: I would ask the minister if he would consider doing two things, No. 1, begin to keep statistics on dropout rates in Manitoba, and No. 2, a study in Manitoba to see why young people are dropping out of school in Manitoba and if, in fact, there is a higher relationship—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question. These multipart questions take up an awful lot of time.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are trying to determine the statistical base and trying to draw, with greater confidence, conclusions with respect to the numbers. There is no doubt Statistics Canada is reporting. Their report was in some respects 30 percent. That is rejected by many of those within the educational community.

Mr. Speaker, it is what Ministers of Education in Canada have been doing. They are now mandated, of course, the statistical group under the CMEC organization, to try and come up with better statistics.

This is not a Manitoba phenomenon, Mr. Speaker. Everybody understands and we have a reality where many of today's dropouts are not using as a reason any socioeconomic factors. Many feel they are not being fully challenged within the public school system and are coming from a wide cross-section of backgrounds and are dropping out for those reasons.

So the issue is ever so much greater than as portrayed by the member for Radisson.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a document because the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Edwards) has denied that he was advocating that governments guarantee a bond issue.

It is a communique that is headed, Axworthy and Edwards propose Community-Based Initiative To Build New Arena to Keep Jets in Winnipeg, and the quote is: "Axworthy and Edwards propose the creation of a community bond program, that would sell Winnipeg Arena Bonds. Original investments should be guaranteed by the federal and provincial governments, . . ."

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister has tabled the document.

Point of Order

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I

am very happy the minister tabled the full document, and I hope members will take the opportunity to read the full document.

Mr. Speaker, the First Minister should talk to the Finance minister about the revenues—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member clearly does not have a point of order.

Provincial Magistrates Deployment

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

Next week, Manitobans will be short a quarter of the full-time judges to be on the provincial court, and the Minister of Justice has stated that as the government nears the end of its mandate, that she wants to refresh the bench. Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have a word for that.

My question to the minister is, given that five legally trained magistrates were hired by this government back in 1991 to hear liquor control offences, highway traffic offences, some Criminal Code offences and by-law issues instead of more costly judges and given that the government broke its promise to use those magistrates as announced, will she now deploy them as they should be so we can have an effective justice system?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member, I think, should know, I believe we do have an effective justice system. As the member knows also, it is the responsibility of the chief judge to assign judges to courts. The chief judge, I believe, will do that job. We also know that there will be, as there is now, a pool of part-time judges available.

I have also made the commitment, and the member knows, that the judicial committees for the three judicial vacancies which are current are well on their way. They are in progress. The member knows that they are in progress. So he deliberately appears not to notice all of the steps that have been taken to ensure that our courts continue to function in an effective way.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Miami Collegiate Graduates

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable First Minister have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate a fine group of young people who graduated last evening from Miami Collegiate. I had the pleasure of meeting all these young people, 18 in number, and I might tell you that I was personally overwhelmed by the quality of these people and their tremendous enthusiasm and commitment to the future.

The graduating class of 18 had 10 of the graduates receive honour certificates as part of their graduation. There were 51 scholarships, prizes and awards that were awarded to this small class of 18. It was one of the most impressive groups of young people that I have had the pleasure of meeting within a long, long time, and I certainly think that our province and our nation have a very secure future with people such as this graduating from high school.

I might, in particular, like to recognize just a few of the graduates for the awards that they received. One individual, David Orchard, was the Governor-General's medalist, and I see members opposite grinning, and I will say that David Orchard is the son of Gordon Orchard, who is a member of the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy, and the president of the Deerwood soil and conservation project in Manitoba. David is not only the Governor-General's medalist, but he won numerous awards as well. I am pleased to say that he is entering the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Manitoba this fall. David was also the class valedictorian, I might say.

Sheri-Lynn Duncan received, I believe, seven or eight awards and will be entering the Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Manitoba.

Arlene Orchard, who does happen to be closely related to a member of this Legislature, received seven awards, including a full scholarship to Jamestown College to major in education with a major in drama and music.

I believe all of these young people ought to be congratulated on their tremendous achievements that they received.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Leader of the official opposition have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed].

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I want to join the Premier in congratulating the 18 graduates from the Miami Collegiate and the number of awards that they were granted and bestowed last evening. Fifty-one scholarships for a group of young people of that size is truly remarkable, and they are to be truly commended by this Legislature.

I also want to congratulate the gold medalist, David Orchard, and wish him well in his chosen educational path in the future, and Sheri-Lynn Duncan and her career choice in physical education. I believe I have met Arlene Orchard in the past, and I want to congratulate her on her great achievement—seven awards is truly remarkable—and congratulate her on the full scholarship that she has been awarded in her chosen profession.

Congratulations to the total group of students and all of the award recipients.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to join comments with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Leader of the Opposition in congratulating these students who were honoured last night in Miami and who come from that part of our province.

Their achievements as recounted by the Premier are outstanding indeed, given the number of students and the number of awards which were given, and, in particular, to the two individuals which the First Minister spoke of, one which is, of course, I assume the daughter of the Minister of

Energy and Mines (Mr. Orchard). Our very hearty congratulations to her and to all of the others who were so successful.

This also gives me an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to add then in this period when our high schools are having graduations for so many of our young people in this province, it is indeed a time I think that all of us can have faith in the future.

I have been to graduations of schools in the area that I represent. I know other members will have done the same in this period of time. I think what I always find, and what I have found again this year is that despite a lot of the bad news about young people who are having a difficult time fitting into society, we see continuously an enormous wealth of talent, knowledge, good will and commitment to the community which is coming forward in our young people. We are seeing that again, and indeed the students in Miami typify that for us today.

I want to extend that congratulations to all of our graduating students in this province and wish them well in their future pursuits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (1430)

Turn Off TV Week

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

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize a program at Joseph Teres School, a school in my constituency, in recognition of Year of the Family.

The week of June 13 was Turn Off TV Week. This is a week where all the students in the school participated in planning activities with their families that they would do instead of watching TV. It was a very successful week. The students have all written reports submitted to the school detailing all the fun, educational, interesting activities that they did with their families instead of watching TV. I have had some reports of those activities, and I look forward to getting some of the letters that are going to be sent to me.

I think this exemplifies the kind of initiative of Year of the Family. I want to recognize the parent-teacher council at the school for all the good work that they do. They have a number of volunteers active in the school, and they run a number of very creative, innovative and wonderfully educational programs for the community.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I have several announcements of House business.

Firstly, the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Tuesday, June 28, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon to consider Bills 3, 5, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 26.

The committee will also meet again later that day at seven o'clock p.m. to consider any bills not dealt with in the morning plus Bills 2, 4, 18, 19 and 21.

Secondly, the Standing Committee on Economic Development will also meet on Tuesday, June 28, from nine o'clock to 12 noon to consider Bills 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 23.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the House announcements for the moment.

I, therefore, move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, having Housing in the Chamber and Labour in the committee room.

* (1440)

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

Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Housing.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

LABOUR

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

Does the honourable Minister of Labour have an opening statement?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. First of all, this department is relatively small in size compared to many others in the government, but it provides a wide range of services in administering a large number of laws and regulations of the province.

For 1994-95, the department is requesting a total of \$16,759,000, which is a reduction of 4 percent from the previous year. The department recovers a significant proportion of its expenditures through various sources of revenue. This year it expects to recover about 67 percent of its total budget as revenue to the provincial Treasury.

In staffing, the department's allocation has been reduced by 7.26 staff years, but there have been no layoffs within the department. Part of the reduction reflects savings from combining the executive offices of Labour and Northern Affairs, other savings from integration of Pay Equity function into Conciliation and Mediation Services branch. Reductions achieved through vacancy management, showing the department's continuing success at avoiding staff layoffs, have, I think, proven successful.

The organizational structure continues to evolve as we pursue our continuous improvement activities. This spring, for example, senior management restructuring flattened the organizations' reporting to the deputy minister to an assistant deputy minister for Labour Services and executive directors for Employment Standards, Workplace Safety and Health, and Management Services. This is expected to help the

departments look for ways to serve Manitobans more efficiently and effectively.

I would like to also express appreciation to all the employees of the department for their commitment to excellence and good service over the past year. I would also like to acknowledge the significant contributions made by members of the department's external advisory committees. These people have contributed their valuable time and efforts to providing advice and assistance to ensure that our legislation and policies meet the needs of Manitobans.

In support of labour management co-operation and relationship building, the Labour Management Review Committee cohosted a Labour Business forum with the Economic Innovation and Technology Council. More than 60 prominent Manitoba business and labour leaders participated in the forum which provided an opportunity for face-to-face dialogue among Manitoba's labour market partners.

Earlier this year, the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre submitted a report on a study of the appropriate roles government can play to facilitate effective labour-business relations. The study was commissioned by Ministers of Labour across Canada. The report contains a number of recommendations that will serve as a useful guide in our efforts to foster positive labour-business relationships.

The membership of the Minimum Wage Board is currently under review, and the board will be convened shortly once all of the membership has been finalized.

As part of NAFTA developments, this department, along with its counterparts in other provinces, participated in the federal-provincial consultation process on the North American Agreement on Labour Co-operation. Mr. Jim Nykoluk from our department, in fact, was even part of the Canadian delegation to Washington, and from all reports, played a very significant role in Canada's part in those negotiations.

An intergovernmental agreement to implement the labour side agreement is presently under

discussion and all provinces have participated in this process.

The department continues to expand its use of technology to improve customer-client services. Efforts have been made to link many of our staff, including the executive offices internally and ultimately externally to the global information highway. Such enhancement to our technology infrastructure has resulted in improvements to our decision-making process, better and faster information for our staff, and as well as the potential to interact in the future with our external clients. This puts the emphasis where it must be, which is on client service, not on unnecessary paper flow.

With respect to the Office of the Fire Commissioner, which is an integral part of the Department of Labour, construction on expansion of the Manitoba Emergency Services Training Centre in Brandon is presently underway and expected to be completed next fall. This will give the centre an additional 18,000 square feet of space, which will considerably enhance emergency services training for our province and allow us to sell these services outside of our province and make Manitoba a centre for emergency services training in the central part of North America.

The centre has just completed an accreditation audit. Results, which I understand are now final, are favourable for our centre receiving the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress certification of our training programs.

Since the new training initiatives will be on a cost-recovery basis, potentially the centre will be able to have, as I have mentioned earlier, a big impact on the Brandon area.

The \$2.5-million expansion could lead to additional jobs through services for students taking courses at the centre.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner will purchase a fifth high-volume emergency response trailer this fiscal year to serve our mutual aid districts and be available for forest fire service under the Department of Natural Resources. This

particular trailer will be strategically located in the province, along with the others, where they are needed. Availability of these units is critical during the forest fire season.

Recently the Canadian Tire child protection foundation has provided national sponsorship for the Learn Not to Burn program, which was implemented in Manitoba by the Fire Commissioner's office in 1991.

* (1450)

This has made it possible to have the Level I program materials available in schools across Canada, and they are now being translated into French.

The Conciliation and Mediation branch of the department, in 1993-94, was successful in resolving 82 percent of the grievance mediation cases that came before it, and 96 percent of conciliation cases without work stoppages.

The branch's record in resolving grievance mediation cases continues to facilitate good relations between labour and management generally in our province as well as generating substantial savings in arbitration costs.

With respect to pensions and the Pension Commission, 1993-94 saw the efforts of this branch focused on smooth implementation of regulatory changes that came into effect in 1993.

Special attention to introduction of Life Income Funds, the LIFs, and Locked-In Retirement Accounts, the LIRAs, is underway. To the end of May, the Pension Commission has approved 73 financial institutions for offering LIRAs and 20 for offering LIFs.

The commission has completed work on a series of public educational materials designed to help average pension plan members better understand the role of the commission and their rights and obligations under The Pension Benefits Act.

The Manitoba Labour Board has fully implemented its mediation initiative, which gives parties to a dispute the opportunity to mediate the dispute before the adjudication process.

The success rate for a mediated settlement has been more than 80 percent.

In the area of Workplace Safety and Health, this branch in the past year has begun three initiatives to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses.

One was working with the Workers Compensation Board to find ways to obtain more commitment from employers and senior corporate management concerning the need for workplace-specific occupational health and safety programs.

A protocol on how to resolve indoor air quality problems has also been developed jointly by Manitoba and Alberta and is now available from the branch.

Individual industry occupational health and safety guidelines are being developed in co-operation with the roofing, auto recycling and shingling industries.

The branch's client services desk project has been so successful that it has now become a permanent service offered by the department.

Last year, 3,282 inquiries, approximately 12 a day, were answered on a wide variety of occupational health and safety issues. We are quite proud of that particular initiative.

In the area of the Employment Standards division of the branch, this division is continuing to promote a wide variety of public education initiatives.

The multiculturalism initiative has added community liaison this year with people from the Italian and Sikh communities. Public education materials have been translated into these languages.

The division is implementing and developing initiatives to improve client services in a number of other ways.

A cross-training initiative with rural staff in Employment Standards, Worker Advisor and Labour Adjustment functions is now underway to ensure that a complete range of services can be

more effectively given or offered to our clients in every rural office.

Testing and the taking of employment standards claims over the phone to enhance accessibility of services was also an initiative of this particular branch.

The Labour Adjustment unit within the department has been very active in handling rural northern adjustments through community-based initiatives, which better use existing municipal and local structures.

This particular unit is developing an initiative to significantly expand services in order to better serve smaller rural workplaces.

Considering what assistance they may be able to offer in smaller layoffs where establishing a labour management committee may not always be feasible is another particular problem area that the unit is addressing.

The Worker Advisor Office, which provides a very important function to claimants of the Workers Compensation Board, continues to pursue co-operation with the Workers Compensation Board to provide and fund a more comprehensive range of services to injured workers and meet their needs better while they take their claims through the redress system. The office is more active in developing resource materials and co-ordinating initiatives of external advocacy groups to better focus issues and concerns.

That is my opening statement, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I am sure we will have an opportunity to get into a lot more detail on these various subjects as we pursue these Estimates. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Wolseley, have an opening statement?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. We do have an opening statement, but I think it will be more of a list of some of the items that we want to discuss since at this stage in the Estimates we do not have a long time, or

enough time, in fact, to deal with the Department of Labour. So we will have to be selective.

I want to say from the beginning that our disappointments with the Department of Labour, particularly the labour policy of this government as it is reflected in this department, continue. The labour relations climate which this government has created, I think, by its ending of final offer selection legislation, by its overriding of thousands of individual and collective contracts in the province of Manitoba as a result of Bill 22, its continual delays in the calling of a Minimum Wage Board in Manitoba, the delays in The Construction Wages Act that have been there over the last few years, and I think in some elements of Workplace Safety and Health, all give an impression to many people outside this Legislature of a government which is intent on an anti-labour agenda.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister makes much of his equal treatment of labour issues, and yet it seems to me that there is a far from equal treatment of labour issues in this province. This is a minister who, on the one hand, is well known for his looking after his own backyard very carefully, rushing out to deal with the sugar plant and the rural producers who were represented in that dispute, as well as the pulp and paper issue and the nuclear energy plant in his constituency. So great interest and great speed in dealing with those kinds of issues, but not the same kind of speed, and in fact a clear lack of interest from the perspective of people both inside and outside this Legislature, in dealing with very long-standing strikes in Manitoba, at Trailmobile, at Northern Blower and at Building Products.

The minister's interest in that seems to have been limited to picking up the phone once a month or having a part-time employee pick up the phone once a month. Not nearly the same kind of energy has been given to addressing what are very, very serious situations for people who have been on the picket line and out of work for many, many months, in fact several years, in some cases. One would like to see a Minister of Labour who

showed some concern for those workers who were on that picket line.

In fact, moreover, not only is it an unequal treatment of different labour disputes across this province, but it is also an unequal treatment of labour and management in some of those areas. I have brought to the minister's attention the areas where, in fact, the balance is being tipped in favour of management with the granting of Workforce 2000 grants to two out of the three plants where there are continuing strikes. That does not seem to me to contribute to stable labour relations, nor does it contribute to the equal-handed, even-handed treatment which this minister is so anxious to brag about on every possible occasion.

When you give training grants to replacement workers—I am convinced, in fact, that some of those grants were used to train replacement workers. I have seen no evidence from this government, in spite of the fact that I have asked for it many times, of the job classifications of those people who have been trained. The government simply gives me assumptions about who has been trained. I would like to see the job classifications, that there certainly has been some training of replacement workers. Not only is that unequal treatment, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, but I think it is a practice which this government should cease immediately.

Secondly, it also seems to me that if those Workforce 2000 grants have not been used for the replacement workers, they have been used in fact to benefit the management of plants who in the minister's own words are not interested in coming to the bargaining table. That again does not seem to me to be equal-handed treatment of labour relations in this province.

I would like to also deal with issues of the Labour Board. We have some issues dealing with inspection and with conciliation and mediation. I have some issues, if we have the time for it, looking to the future, particularly dealing with part-time workers and the issue of homework which is certainly concerning people in other parts of Canada, and I would like to know what the

minister's position is on that in this particular province.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we will move I hope quite quickly to looking at each section of the department.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Thank you. Does the critic from the second opposition party, the honourable member for Osborne, have an opening statement?

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to make a brief opening statement with respect to the areas that I will be concentrating on. I am going to be asking some questions specifically to determine uniformity. There is an increasing concern that there is inconsistent implementation and enforcement of acts and codes and that some of them are in fact in conflict.

I am also concerned about the updating of many of these acts and regulations with respect to the accommodation of new information and technological advancement. I am going to be raising some issues around responsibilities as assigned and acts and regulations with respect to responsibilities of owners, contractors and those having jurisdictional authority.

I have some questions with respect to the penalties and enforcement, the deterrent costs for noncompliance which are in acts and regulations which do not appear to be keeping up with time. I also have some concerns with respect to qualification of people who are at this point in time inspecting and enforcing many of the acts and regulations within this minister's mandate.

* (1500)

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

I am going to be raising some questions with respect to the issue of revenue recovery which the minister alluded to in his opening statement. I have questions around apprenticeship initiatives, again, the Minimum Wage Board, and anything that we might anticipate from this government in the area of adjustments to minimum wage. I am interested in pursuing specifically within the Workplace

Safety and Health division the status of several regulations which currently have gone from its advisory council before the minister and the status of these is currently uncertain.

I am interested in pursuing the impact of the pay report on this particular department to determine the extent to which the principles that were laid out some three or four years ago have in fact taken in the Department of Labour which in my opinion should be the flagship in terms of redressing some historical imbalances.

So those are primarily the areas I will be pursuing in this Estimates debate.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): Thank you very much for those opening comments by the member for Osborne (Ms. McCormick).

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

Item 1.(b), page 117. At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce them once they are seated.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, it is my pleasure to introduce to the committee my deputy minister, Mr. Tom Farrell; as well as Mr. Jim Nykoluk, who is at the end of the table who is one of our executive directors from Management Services; as well as Mr. Jim Wood, who is the financial officer of the department. As we proceed through the Estimates book, we will be bringing in other staff who I will introduce.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to ask some general policy questions at the beginning. They may not specifically refer to Management Services Division, but at least we will not repeat them in other areas. I wanted to start with the three continuing strikes that I mentioned in Manitoba and to ask the minister what the state of proceedings is on each one, how often each of the two sides is being contacted, why the minister has over two to three years now been unable to

achieve any success in bringing those three strikes to a close.

Mr. Praznik: I am going to ask Mr. Davage, who is the director of the Conciliation & Mediation branch, to join us for some specifics. I believe the three disputes that the member is talking about is Trailmobile, Building Products—I look to the member for Wolseley—and Northern Blower.

First of all, I want to say to the member that we may have a little bit different approach to labour disputes, I do not think a great difference, but we may have a subtle difference. The member said, why have we not been able to resolve these disputes? I approach these things—I think it is very important to have a fundamental principle that these are adults who come to disputes. They have a responsibility. Our job is to facilitate, to work with them, to attempt to push them together to settle their issues.

Wherever we have done that, in fact in the vast majority of cases, whether it be with just the help of a mediation, with a conciliation officer, whether it be a mediator as we have had to appoint, whether it is in the case of Manitoba Sugar where we have had to bring the parties in here as both face the precipice and were falling over, it has generally worked.

In the three particular disputes that the member refers to, there has been a great deal of effort by this department, and it has not been just a phone call by myself or a part-time staff, I believe the member referred to, in attempting to settle them. There has been a lot of effort. In some of these disputes, I have been contacted by people on both sides or on one side. We have had discussions. But what has been missing in each three is the necessary willingness, quite frankly, on the part of both sides to bring it to a conclusion. I look to Mr. Davage to correct me or flag where I may be wrong in some of my details.

In the case of Building Products, that particular dispute, we had conciliation, we had mediation, we had discussions with both parties, and quite frankly, and I say this with no hesitation today, that there was not in my opinion a sufficient willingness on both sides to bring that strike to a

conclusion. Of course, everyone will say they were willing, but when it came to make the moves that were necessary, they were not there.

I say to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), when that strike first occurred, I had a visit even from the shop steward of the day who came to see me, who brought to my attention from his point of view, did not even know why in fact they were on strike. There were other issues of course on the management side. I am not trying to say one side is right or wrong.

In these things, both sides tend to blame, but there were a lot of problems on both sides and at the end of the day, and it continues to this time. I do not believe, after spending a fair bit of effort on it with staff, that there truly was a willingness on both sides to resolve it. Quite frankly, what has happened today is I do not think there is the kind of pressure to bring this thing to resolve because events have gone beyond it. That is regrettable but that happens because of decisions that people make.

In the case of Trailmobile, without letting too much out of the bag, if I am not mistaken, I believe that there was a resolution achieved as to the outstanding issues in the strike but the problem was the back-to-work agreement. It boils down to a very fundamental issue, and I am not going to comment whether it is right or wrong, but it is, I think to anyone who examines it, a very legitimate issue in which there would be grievance.

During the course of that strike, there was a particular event where I believe there were charges laid in which criminal acts took place. The question there is whether or not the people involved in those criminal acts, who have broken the Criminal Code of Canada or are charged—I do know if convictions have flowed from it—convictions have flowed, so they have been convicted of breaking the Criminal Code—should be taken back, and that is a fundamental issue of difference between the union involved and the company.

The company does not want those employees back who have been convicted of breaking the

Criminal Code. The union feels strongly enough that they must go back that they have not been able to achieve a back-to-work agreement.

I am not going to comment on who is right or wrong. Each shares their opinion, but I do say this to those who have been convicted of breaching the Criminal Code. When you do break the laws of the country or the province, you then should not be looking for other laws to be invoked to save you from the consequence of that action.

Quite frankly, everybody has to live with that situation. The issues of the strike were resolved, a fundamental difference in the back to work and those people have to live with that. They made choices. If they can resolve it, if they can reach an agreement between the union and company, fine, but they have to live with the consequences of those actions. I do not think there is anything that this department can do, short of legislation, which it would not be my intention to recommend to the cabinet, that would resolve it.

The third issue, Northern Blower, is perhaps I think the saddest of the group, because there I have had personal representation made by many of the employees who were on the line, approached me at a public meeting, had meetings and discussions with them. We spent a great deal of time through a variety of channels in trying to find out a means in which we could get the parties back to work. There is a history here that goes back to another labour agreement in which concessions were made and promises were made as part of that concession and then were not lived up to on the part of one side, which I think was unfair to those who work there but that in fact happened, and it created a very, very bad situation.

From the work that we have done in trying to resolve this particular issue, I have come to the conclusion that on one particular side there was just absolutely no willingness to resolve this. I think there were some health issues involved and a host of things that made it very difficult.

* (1510)

Of the three here, this is one where I feel it was the toughest one in essence because of some very

regrettable situations, and I gather that was shared by many on the labour side as well, that it was an unresolvable situation.

We also received information, and I have no problems sharing this with you publicly here today, because I think these issues are now in the public realm—this was coming from the labour side—that their sense was the company was not all that strong economically and may not survive, so that changes the scenario as well for resolving the particular issues.

I appreciate the public concern, and I appreciate the comment of the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). It may often look like we are not doing a lot of things but given the nature of labour relations, it is important that many things go on behind the scenes that are never in the public realm until after the day. I can assure the member that in all three cases a great deal of effort was put in by myself, my staff and by other people that we solicited voluntarily to find avenues to resolve these. In each case, due to the particular circumstances of those disputes, they were not able to be resolved to date, and they may never be resolved.

Ms. Friesen: Well, will the minister then provide evidence of what he has done? He said things go on behind the scenes. Now they can be in the public domain.

It is my understanding that in both the cases of Northern Blower and Building Products that this has amounted to one phone call a month. Now if the minister has evidence of any other action, I think the public would like to know about it. Certainly, it would be useful evidence to know what in fact is not succeeding. Why is there failure here?

The minister, for example, says that the Building Products strike that neither party is prepared to come to the bargaining table and that is simply not the information that I have. I understand that every month the call is made from the department that the Building Products workers insist very clearly that they are ready to return to the bargaining table.

I have no evidence to indicate that the people at Northern Blower in fact are saying anything differently. The last time we met, over a year ago, the minister was talking about the health problems of the employer's side in coming to the bargaining table, now are we still at exactly the same position? What has gone on? Where is the evidence? Where are the documents and will the minister provide them?

Mr. Praznik: No, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson. I say to the member for Wolseley, she has never had the opportunity to be Minister of Labour; she may some day. A lot of what goes on within this department is not something in which I can table you letters and correspondence and reports. A lot of the work that goes on are telephone conversations, it is private conversations, it is work through other parties. Quite frankly, I do not keep a list of all of that. I do not have enough time in the day to document every phone call or every conversation I had, nor if I did, would I provide all of that to this committee because many of those contacts, the confidentiality of them, are important to the work that has gone on.

Now, the member also said something that is not correct, and I would assume it is a slip. She said that it has boiled down to a phone call a day from the minister or implied that—or a month. It is not the case. What I have always said publicly is the conciliation officer in this particular dispute, who is Mr. Davage, who is sitting right here today, contacts each party every month to see if there is any movement, but every party is saying, yes, I am will to go back to the table. If there is not sufficient movement or a willingness in terms of the detail of what they express to Mr. Davage, it is a pointless exercise. Anyone who has been involved in this kind of negotiation from the middle point of view knows that. So there has to be a true willingness to move.

I also want to say some comments about Building Products for a moment. Let us remember how Building Products started. There was a dispute at Supercrete. A vote took place among the 25 or 30 unionized employees at Building

Products. Allegations were made by the shop steward and others that there was intimidation involved in that vote. I am not going to get into whether or not that is true or not, but the fact is the vote was conducted, they went out in support.

Relationships between the parties at the table, quite frankly, became so bad and so deep that in my opinion they became unresolvable. An action—the world moved on, quite frankly, and they are to the point now where Building Products feels very comfortable that it can function without settling this dispute and so they continue. The pressure is no longer there. That is not my fault, that is not the member for Wolseley's fault, that is what happens. Life goes on and the number of many, many of the people who were employed there crossed the picket line and went back to work, for whatever reason, good or bad, but they have.

Although there is still a dispute that cannot even be taken off the books, I put it down to a whole host of factors. The bottom line being is that the two principals at the table who were in charge of those negotiations—and, by the way, I have met with both of them personally, and this assessment comes after a lot of discussions, and I believe it is not just mine but shared by others—is just so bad that neither one would be prepared to make the necessary moves to a middle ground to resolve the thing.

It became an issue of pride of a host of other external issues becoming involved, each of their relationships to their organizations they are involved in, their companies, in roles and other things, taking a place in this thing. Call it whatever you will. It became so bad that it could not be settled.

Let us also remember that in the early part of that strike, there was a host of activity going on, including the destruction of concrete, the lead balls through people's windows. There were charges laid. In fact, even a member of this Legislature, in his role—and an opposition member of this Legislature, in the employment that he also had at that particular time, had a bullet through the window of his office and through his chair.

So there were very serious things that went on that so soured the relationships between the parties that, quite frankly, I think made the thing unresolvable. But again, people take courses of action, they create a set of circumstances, and they ultimately have to live with them.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, but by ending final offer selection, of course, this government made a choice. It took a course of action which made this particular strike much less easily resolved than it would otherwise have been. That applies to the two other strikes as well. So for the minister to throw up his hands and say, this is unresolvable, people make choices, life goes on—I find very unpleasant. Life does not go on for those people on the picket line.

The minister has many opportunities and many visible opportunities to bring parties together, just as he did at Pine Falls, just as he has done for the people at the sugar factory. That kind of visible proactive action on the part of the minister has not occurred in either Northern Blower or in Building Products. I have asked the minister for evidence that it has. He claims that it has. I am prepared to believe him, but I would like to see some evidence. I am asked to accept a great deal on faith from a government which has ended FOS and which has been providing public assistance to both of these companies in the form of Workforce 2000 grants. So it does seem to me that it does require, from the public perspective, some evidence of the government's activity in both of these areas, to ensure that the Department of Labour in fact does maintain its equitable treatment of both company and worker.

It seems to me, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, if monthly phone calls are made by officials of this department, that records should be kept, and I am sure they are kept. So it would be useful, perhaps, for the minister to have a look at those and to table those. It is my understanding, from those phone calls, that the workers are very clear that they are prepared to come back to the bargaining table. The minister continues to assume that both parties are at fault in this case. If that is the case, then let the minister put the evidence on the table.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, there is a big difference between Manitoba Sugar, between the Northern stores in Pine Falls, the 90 percent of the cases that come to our Conciliation and Mediation branch solve—the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) says political. No, there is another very big difference. He may not have noticed it.

In the case of Building Products, people were having windows shot out. People were being threatened. There was sabotage of a host of other things. There were infractions of the Criminal Code in Canada. You know, it is a funny thing. I do not remember one infraction of the Criminal Code of Canada in the Manitoba Sugar's dispute or the Northern stores issue in Pine Falls or the vast majority of other labour disputes in the province.

* (1520)

I do know that it occurred, and there were convictions in the case of the Supercrete-Building Products strike, and there were at Trailmobile. So when people break the Criminal Code for whatever reason, I find it very, very interesting to see others wanting to find some law to invoke to their salvation after. Those things all take a toll on the relationships. They all take the toll on the relationships between the parties and create a situation that makes those disputes unresolvable, and people have to live with it.

Now, the members want to talk about final offer selection. Let us talk about final offer selection for a moment. Let us talk about FOS. Let us remember that the FOS that their party crafted was not a mutual tool. It was only available actually with one party really having a veto over whether or not it applied. I will tell you, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) says, why did you not make it neutral? Well, I have to tell him something. I made that offer to his then-Labour critic in the hallways of the Legislature.

I said to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), would you support making final offer selection neutrally applicable, in other words, the employer could invoke final offer selection and it could not be vetoed by the employees? And you know, he looked at me in total horror. He said the

labour movement would never want that. They would never accept that because that would infringe on their right to strike. We would not want that, he said to me.

So I tell you, I made that offer and quite frankly if you want to have a tool like final offer selection, then you have to make it neutral, but there is another principle at stake here with final offer selection. It is a fundamental flaw in the process of final offer selection and there are benefits for that. I have always said there were some benefits to it, but this is a fundamental flaw, I believe. Final offer selection, in my opinion, can be a very useful tool when you have bargained down to a couple of outstanding issues, and you have a range in which you can settle them, and the parties cannot for whatever reason come to a conclusion on what that settlement should be. They agree to a third party settling that, and they put both their offers to that party where they want to be, and the other party can either mediate or choose one of the two or however they agree to settle it. But they can live with that.

We had a case with final offer selection that members of the New Democratic Party always conveniently forget to mention in this debate, and that was the issue of a meat company in Winnipeg where that company was taken to final offer selection by the Food and Commercial Workers and put their final offer and the union put their final offer and the company said very clearly, if you accept the union offer, we will close this plant because we cannot live with it. We cannot live with it, and the selector made that choice. The company closed down, and I think there were a hundred and some people out of work. What we should always remember, whether it is a good deal, bad deal, whatever, a negotiated agreement is always the best, because then people have agreed to live with the terms and conditions with it.

In final offer selection, you could have a host of things that a selector chooses because it is on one side or another that make it unliveable for the parties, and if it is unliveable for the employer and they shut down and the jobs are gone, who is going to stand up for those people who are out of work

then? Not members of the New Democratic Party. So final offer selection is not the answer. People have to accept responsibility for their actions on both sides. We try to bring people to the table. We try to push them, cajole them, whatever is required, to get them to concentrate on the important issues and reach an agreement that both sides can live with.

I think, and I have come to this conclusion even more strongly after being Labour minister four years, that that is the way to go. Anything that allows people to go off to third parties to settle their issues—unless it is that specific case where both parties have agreed to go to a third party—anything that takes them off to a third party, all that, quite frankly, is for those who are weak at the table or who have lost control of the situation to find an excuse to put it off to somewhere else, to blame someone else, instead of accepting their own responsibility as negotiators at a table to negotiate agreements. I do not support that.

Ms. Friesen: Well, what the minister is saying is that he supports a different type of final offer selection legislation, and since he has had a majority government for four years, I do not know what he is doing making allegations about private conversations in the hallway. That seems to me a very weak argument. If you think that there is a different kind of legislation possible that would benefit both labour and management in Manitoba, then I think the minister has a responsibility to put that on the table.

I wanted to ask the minister about Northern Blower, and I am going to come back to Building Products in a minute. Let us continue on the discussion of the activities of this department in the last year to bring the parties together at Northern Blower. What has this amounted to?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, with respect to Northern Blower, we recognized after discussions that people in the department had with both sides, after some discussions I had with some of the parties involved, that we required the services of an outside mediator, and we appointed Mr. Lou Plantje who is well respected in the Manitoba labour relations community. Mr. Plantje

spent a great deal of time and effort working with both parties trying to bring things to a conclusion. The report that he provided to us was that it was an unresolvable situation, that it had come to a point where, in his opinion, it could not be resolved.

We still, I would report to the member, have a conciliation officer in place who is available should that situation change. If we had any signal, I say this to the member, that bringing in a particular individual where movement was needed to forge an agreement, we would appoint whoever was necessary to facilitate that, and that is an offer we always make. But when you put someone into place of Mr. Plantje's skills and reputation and he comes back with that report, it underscores to me that there are a host of issues and problems there, and as I have said to the member, part of the whole situation may be the financial soundness of the company in general.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me what the date of that report to the minister was and what the grounds are? What are we looking at in outstanding issues or difficulties facing the mediator?

Mr. Praznik: Staff cannot recall the exact date of Mr. Plantje's report. We will undertake to provide that to the member. The issues there, we got into them a little bit before, really revolve around money, the financial soundness of the company, concessions that were asked by the management. But there is a history to this that has made it such a difficult set of negotiations, because I believe in the previous round of negotiations the company had come to its employees requesting concessions with some guarantee that they would maintain a level of employment. The employees agreed to those concessions, and then at the next opportunity for bargaining or the agreements that the company had made as part of that were not lived up to.

Then the company came back and asked for more concessions which, as you can appreciate, does nothing for relations in bargaining. That is why I am saying this one is a very difficult situation and one that I have a great deal of sympathy and time for—a great deal of sympathy for, we have a lot of time for all of our disputes.

But the reason is because of that very bad relationship coming out of the last agreement.

In talking with some of the employees who we were involved with and some of the work we have done, there really is the question—I mean, I am not in a position today to get into detail, but one suspects and the comment has come up that there are financial problems involved in that particular company that could make the resolution of that dispute, quite frankly, academic, and certainly underscores—at least the labour people that I talked to there who spoke to me at a public meeting that I was at thought that there were a lot of questions about the soundness of the company, and even if they had accepted the concessions that were requested, the thing might just shut down anyway.

So there are a lot of questions of believability and history and relationships there and also just a sense that their personal relationships had also come to a bit of a head that was not conducive to resolving these things. Of the three disputes the member has mentioned, this is the one that I have a great deal of sympathy for the employees involved in here because of the past and the history and the situation that generally developed. It is a tough one.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: Well, one of the issues that I raised last year was in fact the many delays that there had been in getting mediation or conciliation to Northern Blower. At the time we met last year, in fact, there were promises of coming to the table, and then there were various illnesses on the part of one side. So I am interested in knowing particularly the date of the report to the minister. Was it, for example, December; was it February? I do not need to know the specific date, but I would like to know generally when that report was made and what progress has been made since then.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, our director of Conciliation and Mediation tends to recall that being sometime, probably early fall, September of 1993 in which the report was tendered.

My deputy minister also reminds me that he from time to time has been in contact with various parties as well, as we try to find avenues to explore a willingness to move and to resolve the thing. We have not been successful in finding the willingness, particularly on one side, to make a move.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, it was my impression that that report was done before Christmas, and 10 months without any movement, as the minister calls it, by one party is a long time. Could the minister tell us what has been happening in the those 10 months? What efforts has the government made to bring those two parties together?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Praznik: There are continuing and have been efforts by Mr. Davage and his staff to be in touch with both parties, and arrangements from time to time have been made for meetings of the principals that have not happened. One should remember, I imagine it is a matter of public record, that the owner of this particular company has been in court over the last year on a variety of issues, and that may in fact suggest some of the reasons why we have had difficulty in bringing this particular side to the table in a meaningful way.

Ms. Friesen: If this company has some financial problems and if there is an issue of financial viability with this company, can the minister explain why it was given Workforce 2000 grants, payroll deduction grants for two years, I believe to the total amount of at least \$80,000?

Mr. Praznik: The owner, as I said, has been involved in an ongoing case involving a trust fund, I believe, in another company, et cetera, and it has probably been taking up a great deal of his time. It would not be appropriate to go into the details of that particular case because it is before the courts and it is still not resolved.

With respect to the member's question regarding Workforce 2000 grants, I am not familiar with what those grants are; they are not administered by my department. I know when the member raised the issue in the House some weeks ago with respect to the grants being provided to companies

that were in an active labour dispute, either strike or lockout, the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) and I have had some discussion about that and that obviously should be taken into account in the developing of criteria for that program. I would gather that was something that was not considered in the criteria prior to the member bringing it to our attention. In the development of any program, one does not always foresee every contingency.

I can tell her that it was not a specific desire on the part of this government to break a particular strike. Criteria are set; if they met the criteria they were eligible for the grants. But the issue she does raise about active work disputes, et cetera, we have always taken the position that we should not be involved in them one way or the other, taking sides. In consistence with that, I know the Minister of Education will be looking into that in terms of setting criteria, and it is valid concern that quite frankly just was not thought of at the time, I am sure, that the criteria were developed.

Ms. Friesen: In the case of Northern Blower this happened twice, it was not just once, and I understand the minister now, on reflection, looking at a different policy, will he undertake to ensure, in fact, that the monies that have been estimated for this year in the payroll deduction plan for Northern Blower then will not flow?

Mr. Praznik: I cannot give that commitment because it is not within my ministerial competence to do that, but I will certainly pursue that issue with the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness). As I said, he and I have had a chance, after the member raised it, to chat very briefly about the issue. There is a recognition that we should not be involved in any kind of program involved in these, one way or the other. The member raises a valid point, and I will undertake to raise that matter again with him with respect to this specific situation.

Ms. Friesen: In the case of Building Products, I have asked the minister to investigate the payment and hours of work at Building Products since there are clear concerns that the payments to the replacement workers are less than The Construction Industry Wages Act and possibly

even less than the minimum wages act when we look at the hours at which the workers are required to be on site, as well as the ones in which they are actually involved in loading and delivering. I have asked the minister some weeks ago to look at this, and I wonder what progress he has made on this issue.

* (1540)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am going to ask Mr. Jim McFarlane, who is the director of our Employment Standards branch, executive director in the department, looks after a number of things including the Worker Advisor office. Just while he is coming up to the table, I can tell the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) that Mr. Plontje's report to us was dated September 16, 1993, so the recollection of September was correct.

First of all, to advise the member for Wolseley, we have had no employee complaints from those people working. We have not had one filed. The last complaint we have had regarding this particular situation regarded vacation pay, the paying out of vacation pay to those who are on strike, and as a result of that complaint, the money was ordered to be paid out and has been.

The third issue regarding paying currently the construction industry wages rate in Building Products' current operation, first of all, if their drivers are owner-operators, they may not be covered by the specific legislation. The batching/mixing—and I know that this may be the issue—I have confirmed they are not covered if they are owner-operators of those—[interjection] We have not had a complaint of anyone challenging it.

Ms. Friesen: I can challenge it.

Mr. Praznik: Well, we have not had one of them. I say to the member for Wolseley, she may have asked the question, but they would have to make that complaint and have it adjudicated because that is a matter to be adjudicated before the Labour Board, if I am correct. If the member is asking me to do a reference, I do not know if I have that ability. I could check into it, but none of the people who are working under that situation have

complained or wanted an adjudication of that issue. The member for Wolseley may want it, but none of the people who are affected have asked or complained about it.

The other issue that I just point out with respect to the batching on site at Building Products, they are also not covered by The Construction Industry Wages Act. They are only covered if the batching/mixing plant, whatever, is moved to the construction site. So in both cases, under current definition, they would not be covered by that act. If any of those employees feel they should be, they have a perfect right to make that complaint because the issue will come down to whether or not they are owner-operators. That is a definitional issue that would have to go, I believe, to the Labour Board. I look to my staff for confirmation of that process. It would have to be adjudicated in that body, and none of the people who are involved in that have made that complaint.

The caution I would make to the member for Wolseley is, whenever there is a dispute like this, particularly where there are those who are on a picket line, all types of accusations and things are made. We get that regularly. It makes it difficult because sometimes the correct situation is not conveyed to members as to what is going on, but the rumours fly. My experience has been that this often happens.

So that is the information I can report to her now at this particular time. If any of the people who are working under that circumstance want to test that definition, they certainly can.

Ms. Friesen: Well, what the minister is saying then is that if replacement workers in a strike situation, where they are crossing picket lines every day, unless they make an application to have this adjudicated, the minister is not prepared to do anything. That seems to me a—well, I am not even sure I have words for it.

But the other issue is that I did ask, and I am well aware that in situations like this accusations and rumours do fly thick and fast. That was why I raised in the House, as a member of the Legislature, with the minister, to investigate those conditions. He is responsible for The Construction

Industry Wages Act. He is responsible for the minimum wages act. It seems to me quite a reasonable request and a responsibility of a member of the Legislature to raise that issue with the minister and to ask that he investigate it.

The minister is saying back to me that, no, he is not going to investigate that, and the only way that any information will be forthcoming to the public on this, from the minister responsible for the minimum wage act and The Construction Industry Wages Act, is if a replacement worker who crosses a picket line everyday in fact lists a complaint. It seems to me something is wrong there.

Mr. Praznik: Just a number of other points for the interest of the member for Wolseley and just terminology. I understand that not all of the people who are currently employed are replacement workers. Many of them are people who have worked there for many years. So I just want to clarify that, that not many of those people who are working there today are people who have worked there for many years. They may have crossed the picket line, but they are not replacement workers.

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, a point of order. It was the wages of the replacement workers which I was specifically asking about in the House and now.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Well, I would add to the member, determining who is a replacement worker and who is a worker who crossed a picket line, makes it even more difficult, determining what people's circumstances are. But I say to the member as well that even the Teamsters union have not filed a complaint with the department in this regard. So there has not even been a complaint by the Teamsters union.

As my director points out to me, if the member can bring forward to me some evidence, some information, some evidence that would provide us

with an ability to investigate, we would be more than pleased to do that investigation. As the courts have cautioned us on a number of occasions, it is inappropriate for us to go onto fishing expeditions. When the union involved, the Teamsters, is not able to do that or file a complaint, when any of the people who are working there do not do that, I have to say to the member, if she has some evidence that she can bring forward, we will investigate. We need to have that. Rumour and innuendo are not evidence.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what does the minister consider evidence, and why is he not prepared, as minister responsible for the minimum wage act and The Construction Industry Wages Act, to investigate a question—not an allegation, a question—in the House that there may be a situation here where those laws are not being upheld? What does the minister consider as evidence?

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I say to the member for Wolseley, whether it be a question in the House or at this committee or on the pages of the Free Press, a fishing expedition is a fishing expedition. The member has some evidence, and that evidence would be the statement of the employee that they are not being properly remunerated or first-hand knowledge of someone who has knowledge that they are not being properly remunerated, or there is some violation of the act. We will investigate on that basis, and from time to time we have that type of evidence brought to us, and we investigate it.

The member for Wolseley may ask a question in the House, but she brings no evidence, and she asks just a question without any supporting documentation, and she asks me for lists and documents and statements, and I ask her for the same—even the statement of an employee or someone who has first-hand knowledge that people are not being properly remunerated. If she brings that to the director of Employment Standards, we will conduct an investigation, as we would do for any other Manitoban who brings us that kind of information. What we will not do is go on a fishing expedition for the member for Wolseley.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, well, then, the minister responsible for The Construction Industry Wages Act and the minimum wages act, is he prepared now to say that people at Building Products, replacement workers and others, are abiding by that act?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am prepared to say that I have no evidence to warrant an investigation. I cannot warrant to the member today that everything there is being done properly, but that is only—

Ms. Friesen: You are responsible.

Mr. Praznik: Well, the member for Wolseley, from her chair, says I am responsible. I am responsible for the administration of those acts. The courts of this province—and I might say, the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) may not respect those processes, but I do, and the courts of this province—

* (1550)

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. That was a totally unnecessary remark on the point of the minister and quite erroneous.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, the courts of this province whom my department has to deal with—when we enforce laws we like to succeed. We do not like to have them thrown out of court because we have not done something properly. When the courts of this province have said, when you are enforcing you have to have some evidence or information on which to carry out an investigation, that is what we do. That is not my choice. That is not the choice of Executive Council. That is what we are instructed to do by the courts who will throw us out if we do not.

Now, I do not know the kind of world that other members live in, but if we had the power, and I imagine the courts have some very good reasons

for wanting us to carry this out, particularly in this day and age of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, if we lived in the kind of world that I gather the members are suggesting, then like the Gestapo of old, the Department of Labour could come in at any time of the day and night and investigate and seize records and we would live in a police state. That is not what we are to be. That is why our courts put those requirements on us, and we should respect them.

So I say to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), if she can come forward to our Employment Standards branch, she does not even have to deal with me, if she wants to provide the evidence to the director of the Employment Standards branch, a statement by an employee, someone who has first-hand knowledge, we will, like we do as a matter of course in every other like situation, carry out a thorough investigation. If it results in infractions, we will issue orders as we do in any other situation. If those orders are not followed, we will proceed with the charges or whatever through the Department of Justice that we would do in any other situation.

When the members say enforcement, I would just remind them that there are 52,000 businesses registered in the province of Manitoba. If I were to carry out the kind of rigid enforcement that members opposite ask, we would have to have an army of labour police to go and investigate the records on an ongoing basis of those 52,000 businesses. That is just ludicrous.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, the minister can rattle on about Gestapo and police states and inability to enforce his legislation in thousands of businesses, but the point remains that he is the Minister of Labour, he is responsible for the enforcement of particular regulations. As a member of the House I did ask for confirmation from the minister, one way or the other, whether in fact that legislation was being upheld.

I understand that the minister is interpreting that legislation then to indicate that only when an employee with first-hand knowledge lays a complaint will the minister investigate anything under The Construction Industry Wages Act or the

minimum wages act. Are we clear on that? Is that what the minister is saying?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, absolutely not. That is not what I said at all. That is one circumstance in which we will accept evidence, when an employee comes forward with first-hand information or an employee comes forward and feels that they are not being properly remunerated. But we also said, any first-hand knowledge. That does not just have to be an employee.

If the member may just grant me a moment, I will have some other examples for the member.

Mr. Deputy Chair, one of the classic examples where we investigate hundreds of complaints each year is where the union as the agent of the employees onsite comes forward to the department, where they can say we have talked to people on construction sites, particularly in the construction industry where union members are in a variety of sites, that we believe people are not being properly remunerated. I would remind her in this case, the Teamsters, who are the legal bargaining agent of the people there, have not come forward with a complaint.

So I say to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), she has asked a question in the House, which is her right to do. We have checked into this. I provide her with this information here today about the procedure that is followed, and I welcome her to bring forward any such information that she wants to file as a complaint with the department, and we will investigate it.

Ms. Friesen: Well, then, let us be quite clear. If the Teamsters, whose members are not now working in that plant because they are on strike, if those Teamsters and that union brought forward a request to the minister to investigate, would he then investigate the hours of work and the conditions of pay of those replacement workers? That is what I believe he just told me.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let us remember that there are some Teamsters' members still working on that site unless they have been thrown out of their particular union. There are people who were Teamsters' members who

worked there, who are working on that site, who have crossed the picket line. We should not forget that. It is up to the union to come forward with some evidence. There has to be some semblance of first-hand information there. It just cannot be idle speculation.

In the case of The Construction Industry Wages Act and construction unions, for example, like the carpenters, they will come forward from time to time with information because their members on a particular site have said, hey, we do not think things are properly being handled here under the act, and they have that information from their members. As the agent of their members, they convey it to our department, and we investigate.

If the Teamsters come forward with some similar information, we will investigate. What we are not here to do, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is to be part of a fishing expedition by anybody, because the courts have clearly said that is not what we are to do, and we are being governed by the direction of the courts. That is not a position, I think, it is fair to ask our staff to be in, particularly difficult during a labour dispute because the rumours and the stories are flying, and everybody wants them investigated.

I can tell the member for Wolseley, in another area of this department, Workplace Safety and Health, we can almost tell in our department where we have a workplace dispute brewing because we get a lot of complaints about Workplace Safety and Health from a particular area at a given time. Not always the case, but it is indicative of the fact that a dispute is going on, and people in the dispute use whatever tools that they believe are available to them to pursue their particular interests. We have to address that with a little bit of caution.

If there is some first-hand knowledge that comes through the Teamsters to us or through the member for Wolseley or any other party, we will investigate. That is a very simple request, not one that we have created, but one that I am advised by my staff who have to deal with these things, who have to work with the Department of Justice on prosecutions, we are required to do.

So if the member wants further clarification, my Director of Employment Standards would be more than pleased to meet with her and provide her with that criteria that he uses in assessing whether or not he sends staff in.

Ms. Friesen: What I am concerned about is the public record and the minister's responsibility. I would certainly welcome the opportunity to meet with Mr. McFarlane, but the issue is the minister.

So I want to be specific about what the minister accepts, will accept, as first-hand knowledge.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I say again to the member for Wolseley, what this minister or any other minister accepts as first-hand knowledge is not all that relevant, in fact, not relevant at all because it is what the courts will accept as the basis for that. All that we are trying to do, in fairness to staff in the Employment Standards branch who have to deal with these issues every day, they have interpreted, based on recommendations, I gather, and discussions they have had with the Department of Justice on what basis that they accept first-hand information or through, I guess stretching it somewhat, the agent as being the union.

If there is one bit of evidence that people are not being properly paid under The Construction Industry Wages Act or the minimum wage act that comes first-hand, we will investigate it. I make this commitment to the member.

I am not here to stifle an investigation, no way, but I have to trust the staff in the department who have to deal with the Department of Justice if we launch a prosecution, who have over time developed this type of set of rules about where they investigate to be able to fit within the requirements of our lawyers in the Department of Justice if we have to prosecute. I have to leave it to their judgment. They are advising me what they accept, and I support that because they are the ones who have to make sure we are able to have prosecutions, and under this administration, we have prosecuted. In fact, that was not the case, by and large, prior to 1988.

* (1600)

So we support enforcement, we support prosecution where they are required, and we want to make sure we live by the rules, and when we have a prosecution, win it and not have it thrown out. The rule is somewhat simple. It has to be some first-hand knowledge, either through the agent or, I am advised, of the union, but there has to be some basis and first-hand knowledge in order to justify that investigation. If the member has some first-hand information, she is wondering whether or not it will meet the test, I invite her to bring it forward with the director to see if it does and meets that test.

We are not in any way trying to stifle an investigation. We just want to make sure it is properly done, so if it leads to a prosecution, we are not going to be thrown out of court. We also do not think it is appropriate if there is not any basis for that, then we should not be involved by one side or another as a tool in their dispute.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us when he intends to call the Minimum Wage Board?

Mr. Praznik: We have asked the constituent parties to put forward names. We finally have received in the last couple of weeks the final recommendations of names. It is inappropriate for me, I think, in fairness to my cabinet colleagues, to give a date as to when I would be bringing up a paper for it, but I intend to bring forward one very shortly. I still have to make a recommendation as to the chair of that particular board, but I hope to have it done in the not too distant future. As I am sure the member can appreciate, if I put a date on it, it is not fair to my cabinet colleagues as to when I would take a paper forward to authorize that calling of the board.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister tell us when the Minimum Wage Board last met?

Mr. Praznik: Over three years ago.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain how labour in Manitoba has been benefited by the three-year absence of this particular board?

Mr. Praznik: Well, I am very glad that the member for Wolseley has raised this question,

because the issue of minimum wage is not as simple as it may appear on the surface.

Some years ago in Manitoba, the Minimum Wage Board of the day recommended that the student differential be done away with. The result, of course, was that we now have in Manitoba what one would call the "minimum minimum" wage, which is a wage that is really there for the—our minimum wage has to be reflective of employment opportunity for the high school student who works after school for a couple of hours for pocket money, because we do not have a student differential.

Some members may look at that with surprise, but when you do away with a differential you have to accommodate the minimum situation. I would also remind the member, and I am just commenting to the member that that was not a recommendation that I made, that is a recommendation as to previous wage boards and doing away with that particular differential. As a consequence, the Minimum Wage Boards that have met since that decision was made has reviewed that on each time, and I am told from those who have been at the board consider that in their deliberations.

One should not look so shocked. That is, I am just conveying to you what the reality has been even before I assumed being Minister of Labour. So I say to members that given the time that we have been in the last few years, where we have had a very, very low inflation rate and where we have had difficulties in employment, they are all lofty arguments, those various issues as where the minimum wage should be. It is now time to call the Minimum Wage Board, in my opinion, and that is what I am going to do.

Ms. Friesen: The minister has in the past made much of his desire to call the Minimum Wage Board on a regular basis. Are we to anticipate that regular is every three years?

Mr. Praznik: The history of the board, it has been some time since the board has met on a regular basis. There was a three-year period from September 1, 1976, to July 1, 1979; two and a half years from July 1, 1982, to January 1, 1985, and if

I remember correctly, and the member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) would certainly confirm it, the Progressive Conservative Party was not in power at that time, and the inflation rate, if I remember correctly, was not 1 or 2 percent either in that particular period.

So before members get up on a high horse very high, I think they should remember that, because the fall becomes even greater.

Ms. Friesen: My question was about the minister's policy. He was the one who made the statement about regular meetings of the Minimum Wage Board.

It is a useful statement because it does give some certainty and some security and some regularity to the consideration of the Minimum Wage Board. It does not fit, however, with the absence of three years, and I am wondering what the minister considers as regular. Is that what we are to expect for the future? If that is the policy, I think that would be helpful for both labour and management to understand that.

Mr. Praznik: The member asks a very valid question. I would have hoped that one could have looked at a more regular meeting of the Wage Board. It might end up being three years.

The reality of it is, there tends to be different people in the seats of power of a particular ministry from time to time as you go through, and circumstances are different in every period of time. In particularly periods of low inflation and high unemployment, the argument for not calling the board is fairly strong, and I imagine that will govern over time. Unless we make a legislative change to provide for regular meetings of the Wage Board, it is probably going to be left up to the discretion of those in power at the day.

I have mixed feelings on it. There are benefits both ways. The member's point about regularity to business and labour is a very, very valid one. Perhaps the next time we have an opening up of our employment standards legislation, that might be an issue that the Labour Management Review Committee might want to give some direction on.

There are arguments on both sides, and the point of regularity is a very strong one.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister give us an indication of where Manitoba stands now in terms of minimum wage? My understanding is it is third from the bottom of the minimum wage in Canada. Could he tell us what the historic pattern of that has been? Where has Manitoba been over the last decade?

Mr. Praznik: We are at the \$5 mark, about to review our legislation. New Brunswick is at a similar level. Alberta is at a similar level. Prince Edward Island is at \$4.75. Newfoundland is at \$4.75. The federal rate is at \$4 and has been there since 1986.

At the higher end, Ontario is at \$6.70; the Northwest Territories at \$6.50. The Yukon is at \$6.24; British Columbia at \$6. Quebec is at \$5.85; Saskatchewan at \$5.35; and Nova Scotia at \$5.15.

We have traditionally been in about the middle of the pack. With the calling of the Wage Board and another recommendation, I think that is about where we will be, so we are slipping to the lower middle side. We will want to be somewhere in the middle range.

When you certainly look at a rate in Ontario of \$6.70, and you look at the cost of living in a place like Toronto and compare it to here and you work in those factors, it does tend to, I would suggest, mellow somewhat the fact that we are at the lower end of the range, but it is time to call the Minimum Wage Board.

Ms. Friesen: That is my impression, that, in fact, we used to be in the middle or even in the upper end at some points of the cycle and that we are now slipping. That is why it seems to me of great concern that the minister has not called the Minimum Wage Board for three years.

Once the Minimum Wage Board is assembled, then one can assume that even in the best scenario it will be in the next month, and frankly I doubt that, but it is still going to take another several months in fact before any changes are made.

Does the minister intend to conduct public hearings, for example, of that Minimum Wage Board, and what is the length and schedule of that?

* (1610)

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, I believe the minimum wage act requires the board to hold public hearings, and they will be. That will be an issue for the board to determine where they will be holding their hearings and what schedule.

Ms. Friesen: So we could be at least a minimum of six months away from any changes in the minimum wage act.

Mr. Praznik: Well, after I receive a recommendation, the process is for a minister to take that to cabinet and then to provide for a notice period before the change in the minimum wage.

Ms. Friesen: I want to look at The Construction Industry Wages Act in rural Manitoba and to ask the minister what his plans or policies are for changing or dealing with the minimum wage concerns that I think have been brought to his attention in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Praznik: One of my favourite topics of discussion, The Construction Industry Wages Act—I appreciate the member's questions, and I am sure we are going to get into an opportunity to discuss this whole legislative scheme in some detail over the next few minutes.

I say to the member, this is one area of my department that the more one gets into, the more one appreciates all the difficulties that flow with this particular legislation.

Firstly, let me say that on one side of the coin one recognizes that there are good things about this legislation. There are benefits to this legislation. There are also downsides to it. There are also a host of administrative difficulties that come out of the history of the legislation, the expectations in different parts of the province and a host of various interests.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

When I first became minister, we appointed the wage boards, under Wally Fox-Decent, to conduct

a thorough review of this legislation and ask the question whether or not we should have it. I spent some time meeting with that review committee to go over specific issues as they were writing the report and getting a sense of where they were coming from and how their deliberations were going. Although we had, generally across the province, support for a construction industry wages scheme, we had a host of differences as to what should be in it and what rules and how we should deal with this and how we should deal with these other issues.

What disappointed me in the report that I received from them was that a number of the administrative problems with this particular legislation were not addressed because they were difficult to address, and they left us, quite frankly, with not very useful advice on how to solve some of our administrative problems, particularly the boundary of the greater Winnipeg wages board district being the 30-mile radius from the corner of Memorial Boulevard and Broadway, if I am not correct. I know we had a particular case a couple of years ago in a grain elevator where that company had to have a satellite company do the mathematical calculation to find out whether they were in the greater Winnipeg rate or the rural rate, and the difference was about \$300,000 on the price of the project. I think they moved their facility 200 feet over on their property and were in one schedule versus the other. It sort of raises the question, why are we even into this?

Over the last few years, we have not adjusted the schedule other than the greater Winnipeg schedule on one occasion. I guess I have taken one general increase forward about two or three years ago, and I took one forward this winter to deal with a specific situation arising out of the virology lab which we had some very intense negotiations with the building construction industry and the building trades.

But it has not been our intention to increase them or to call the wage boards in this particular year for a very good reason in that given the high unemployment level in the construction trades, it was very hard to justify raising those particular

rates when unemployment levels, as Pat Martin of the carpenters union pointed out to me, were 65, 70 percent in that particular industry. So it was a balance of maximizing the number of construction jobs that were possible, and that is what we decided to do, to leave the current rates in place. I know the public reaction to what, for example, the rates are on the greater Winnipeg schedule was pretty supportive of that decision to leave them where they were.

I would also point out to the member, I know the rural rate is somewhat lower, and there is a different set of circumstances there, because there are not a lot of construction projects in rural Manitoba, but I do know that in some cases various labour organizations, in fact at our public hearings, came forward and admitted very candidly that they were paying back and making payments to their employers in order to get their wage costs down.

So that sort of says to me that there was an undermining even by those unions on that wages act in order to maximize a construction job. Again, it begs the whole question: Why are we in this business of regulating wages in one particular segment of our society?

There are some good reasons to do it, and there are a lot of problems with it. So it is probably the most difficult set of issues that I have ever had to deal with, simply because there is no easy answer to anything. Every one thing you do to solve one problem has a reaction somewhere else. At some point, I am going to have to make some recommendations arising out of the review as to where we go with this legislation, at least to clean up some of the administrative problems. I must tell the member very candidly, I fear that day tremendously, because whatever you do to fix one problem, you create another problem somewhere else. Every time you get into it, it begs the question, why is government even in this business?

Ms. Friesen: Well, I think the role of the Department of Labour in protecting the interests of labour is certainly one of the reasons that the government is in this. The minister, from his particular ideology, may talk about a balance

between the two, and I think, equally, that would fit, that there is a role for government.

I wanted to ask the minister specifically what his response was to those workers who told him that they were being required to buy their own jobs.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, I just ask the member for Wolseley to clarify if she is referring to—I think there were three or four people from Brandon in particular, if that was the group she was talking about, who came to see me. We have a lot of people who come to talk about these issues.

Ms. Friesen: I was simply picking up on the anecdote the minister had just told us, about workers who were subsidizing their employers by repaying part of their wages, which in labour terms is essentially the same as being required to purchase your own job. I wondered, having been faced with that evidence, what action or what response the minister had.

Mr. Praznik: I appreciate the question from the member for Wolseley. First of all, this was not put to me as a statement. This was a statement that was made by, I believe it was, Pat Martin from the carpenters union at the hearings that were made. The practice, I gather, in the construction trades, has gone on for some time, depending on circumstances, where unionized shops have made arrangements with their employers in order to be competitive on particular bidding. One has to appreciate that the minimum rate still applies to the nonunionized shop.

So these would be cases where they have worked those arrangements either to get the overall cost down to make a project go that otherwise would not so they have the work or in a circumstance where they would be bidding against a nonunion shop and their rate of pay and benefits would be significantly enough above the minimum that their employer would not be competitive on the bidding.

I am no expert in the operations of the construction trades over the years, but I gather, from many I have talked to, that this practice has been very common, and it has been one that has

been advocated by various construction unions in order to ensure that their members were working. Good or bad, I do not know. It depends on the circumstance. Remember, we are not talking about \$5, \$6 wage levels. We are talking about, in the case of carpenters and others, some pretty significant wage levels.

For example, electricians now on the greater Winnipeg scale are at—if I can just find them for the member here—in the case of carpenters, for example, the Winnipeg rate is in the \$20 range. Electricians are over \$25; plumbers, over \$25; even the labour rate is over \$17. So we are not talking about low-end rate jobs, and if the question is getting a price down on a project in order to get the project because if you are not within a limit, the project does not go—if the choice is no work or some work under those circumstances, I am not going to be the one to judge that. Those are arrangements that people have made out in order for that to happen.

* (1620)

Again, it does underscore that government tries to regulate to maintain some level playing field in construction, and we have had the benefit of generally good labour relations and a pretty well-trained construction industry in Manitoba, and that has been the benefit of this legislation. But, every time the system does not respond to particular movements in the economy, particularly in difficult times, people make other arrangements under the act to maximize the work. Maybe that should be left alone; maybe it should not be. People do it because they want to work, and they want that particular income. How do you regulate that? It is tough; it is really tough because you end up killing a job, the people do not have the work. That is tough to look people in the eye.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, yes, well, it has given us a skilled and trained labour force who are paid appropriately. I just wanted to pick up on something the minister just said. He said, who make arrangements under the act. It seems to me that these are—would these not be arrangements outside the act? Where does the minister's responsibility fall in this?

Mr. Praznik: Pardon me if I did imply that they were arrangements sanctioned by the act. They are not. The people who put these together, and people I have talked to in the labour movement who negotiate them, are very careful to ensure that they are not violating The Construction Industry Wages Act, and how they make those particular rebates or payments or whatever anyone wants to call them. I am sure there are also some taxation issues that have to be dealt with.

I am no expert in this, but I suspect—my curiosity has always been there about how these worked out. In some cases, I understand, they come off as union dues off the wage level, and then the union makes a payment, which prevents a taxation issue and also a violation of the act. So, again, you have a—you and I know, I think, what the purpose is, but it is done in such a way that it stays true to the letter of the law.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, could the minister tell us what his time frame is for looking at the Labour Management Review Committee's report on The Construction Industry Wages Act? I am particularly interested in one of the recommendations which, I believe, deals with fines and penalties, which would have, particularly given the recent action of the government in Brandon, some implications for labour management issues in Manitoba.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I say to the member for Wolseley, if one is going to have this legislative scheme, that I agree wholeheartedly, then you have to have an effective set of penalty provisions. I mean, it is no use having legislation if the cost of a violation is irrelevant.

I have to say to the member that, when I assumed responsibility for this portfolio, we made some changes internally in the department and revamped, I think, made more effective the way we approached these things. We have been working very hard on enforcement issues, and we have obtained now—and I look to my director for information on prosecutions. We have had a number of prosecutions over the last few years, I think, five or six prosecutions between

construction, industry and employment standards. There have been two directly under The Construction Industry Wages Act, and I understand one of them was an out-of-province firm that was not complying with our minimum wage rates. We obtained a judgment in that case; they were fined—a conviction—under the act. They have not been fined yet; that is still pending.

We have also endeavoured in all of our serious cases to publish their names in the WorkSafe magazine, so that any convictions under—if the member will grant me one more moment. Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, just to continue, it has been pointed out to me that in the case of the Red Lake construction firm, we also pursued a charge against the director, the owner of the company who was convicted, and that, in addition to full recovery of what was paid, which reinforces that it does not pay to breach the act because all you need is one employee to complain, and the investigation, you have to pay it anyway, so you should not bid on that basis.

The court levied a fine of, I think, \$6,500 in fines. We have also endeavoured to continually publish the list of orders that are issued in the WorkSafe magazine so that a company that is not complying, an order is issued that becomes public information, and that magazine is well read in the business and construction communities. So it becomes pretty common knowledge, which ultimately helps in enforcement because if someone keeps showing up, it encourages other people if they are being mistreated to come forward with a complaint.

Ms. Friesen: Well, at the rate of two prosecutions over six years, I do not know that things are going to keep showing up as the minister said, two prosecutions under The Construction Wages Act.

Would the minister indicate whether companies which are in violation are also able to continue to bid on public projects?

Mr. Praznik: The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) might be very interested to know—she might make light of our two prosecutions in this area, but they were the first two prosecutions in over 20 years. It says to me that those who were in

charge of this legislation before I came to this place, and they were not all of my political stripe, did not pay a great deal of attention to this legislation and enforcement in the past. That should never be an excuse for the present, but we are very proud of the efforts we have taken, because not only have we obtained the first two prosecutions under this act in 20 years, in two decades, but one of the things we have done to facilitate that is we had to go through a thorough training of our staff.

What we found when we came into these offices and we made some changes was that our staff in this particular branch had no training in doing a proper investigation, the accumulation of evidence and all of the things that are needed in order to facilitate a prosecution by the Department of Justice. We have been working with that department to make sure that our staff when they go in now and do an investigation are evidence gathering in case it leads to a prosecution.

I would also point out to her with respect to fines that under The Construction Industry Wages Act the fines can be up to \$20,000. One of those six prosecutions we made dealing with the construction area violation was not prosecuted under The Construction Industry Wages Act, but under The Payment of Wages Act, because there is a provision for continuing violation and the penalty there can be \$300 a day. So it can be a much more stringent enforcement mechanism.

So I say to her, despite the criticism that maybe we are not doing enough, I think given where we started, which was virtually limited, if any, enforcement and certainly no prosecutions, we have built the staff training, we have structured so that we are now able to move forward on prosecutions, and we have been moving forward on prosecutions.

I think we are moving in the right direction, maybe not as fast as some would want us, but considering where we started and what has happened in Manitoba for 20 years, I think we have come quite a way. We still have a way to go.

Ms. Friesen: The other part of that question was, will companies who are in violation of these acts be allowed to bid on publicly funded projects?

Mr. Praznik: Just to put things in perspective for a moment, we issue literally hundreds of orders in every given year. Some of them are very innocent violations. I just want to put this in perspective to the member as to why a clear rule would probably be unfair. Quite a number of the orders that we issue deal with what categories people should be in. One of the real administrative problems of this particular act is that our categories are many years out of date, and as construction has changed, where it has now moved much more into premanufactured material that is installed, one of the great problems our staff have had, and we get inquiries regularly, is: Under what rate do I pay people? I mean, are they this, are they that, where should they be, and they do not fit.

Many times we have struggled with even giving advice to people. So a lot of our orders, or a percentage of our orders, certainly not all of them, but a certain percentage of them, are reflective of wrong categorization—a person in one category should have been in another, it is challenged, and it has to be adjudicated. Simply to put a ban on anyone who has an order outstanding against them would not be fair because of the circumstances of the order.

* (1630)

With respect to convictions, my staff advise me that we as a province have a provision for bonding in government orders. Anyone who has had a significant conviction with a violation certainly is required to have a bond or could be required to be bonded for that particular amount, which would protect anyone working under that situation.

I respect what the member, I believe, is saying, that perhaps the province should adopt a policy where we would not allow anyone to tender who has been convicted under the act. There are some difficulties with that, because if they have been convicted and they have been fined, then they have been punished, and should they be punished further by being prohibited from tendering on government projects?

That is a difficult one to argue, but certainly there has to be an awareness, and my department has been working with Government Services in order to make them aware that there are liabilities and those things that go with it and that the posting of a bond to those companies who provide potential risk might be an avenue to pursue that protects everyone and imposes some additional but justifiable penalty.

Ms. Friesen: Does the issue of the bond apply equally to companies from out of province?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I must admit to the member, I am not entirely familiar with all of the bonding policies of the Department of Government Services. I am advised by my staff that the bonding of any company which has been charged and convicted under our acts would apply whether they are in the province or from outside the province.

I guess a good example would be Red Lake Construction which has been convicted under legislation which is an Ontario company—no, pardon me, they are a Manitoba company, but any of those companies bidding on jobs is likely to be required to have a bond.

We will check into this a little bit more. It is a complicated area that I must admit to the member I do not know a great deal about. Her point is a valid one, and we will get her some more information. I will undertake to have my director provide some more detailed information on the bonding policy to the member. I am interested in it myself.

Ms. Friesen: The Labour Management Review Committee recommended that fines be increased immediately by 2.5 times their present value. Could the minister tell me what his timetable is for considering this review for the possibility of the implementation of larger fines?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that obviously is going to form part of any package that I take forward for consideration on reforming or dealing with this legislation. I just say to the member that our highest fine was \$6,500. The limit was \$20,000.

So given where the courts have been setting those fines, unless we imposed a minimum, and I would be hard-pressed to impose a very high minimum for those circumstances where you have a very small infraction but an infraction nonetheless, so you leave that discretion to the courts, and they have not been using the full availability of our fine provisions currently.

It will be something that we will certainly look into, and, again, I recognize fully that fines have to be appropriate, an appropriate deterrent, or they have no meaning at all, and they encourage the violation of the act. That we will have to work into our overall recommendations on the legislation, and also, we will have to take into account what other legislation the government is doing so we are sort of a consistent across other departments of government, as well.

Ms. Friesen: I have a couple of other, I think, short questions on general departmental policy. One is to do with Conciliation and Mediation. Is the government intending to move to a fee-for-service process?

Mr. Praznik: I smile with that question because it is a dilemma for me as a minister and for my deputy as we go through difficult budgets. We have not done that this year, and it is not a recommendation that we particularly would want to make because the services of the department are ones that certainly have a big role to play in the vast majority of labour disputes in the province.

There is one part to that, though, that does concern me a little bit, and that is that there are circumstances where our services are, shall we say—I would not say overused, that is not quite the word. There are circumstances where I will tell you that as minister, I would like to have been able to charge for the services, because, quite frankly, I think we were used for other purposes by the parties, and both parties could have easily afforded to have made a contribution. I am not thinking about Conciliation Services. I am thinking about where we have to bring in a mediator, and we are paying a daily fee, and it can add up to a pretty expensive bill.

At this particular time, we do not have the recommendation. I would not want to preclude us at some day looking at some charge in some certain circumstances, but I fully appreciate that if you charge everywhere, then you have defeated the great ability of that branch to do its job.

There are probably—I am sure the member would even concede the point—some circumstances where there is a need for a big name to settle a dispute. The issues are probably being settled, but it is a face-saver to both parties and a big name is needed with a big price tag, and even if it is for a few days to allow everybody to pen the deal and leave the table, et cetera, there is a \$2,000- or \$3,000- or \$4,000-charge, and both parties may well have the financial wherewithal to do it that you might want to consider charging something for that or working out that arrangement.

So I say to her, if I ever brought that recommendation forward, it would only be in that light. It is not something I particularly want to do, although there are occasions where I would like that ability.

Ms. Friesen: Which jurisdictions does that exist in at the moment?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, just while Mr. Davage is coming up and gathering his thoughts on what other jurisdictions, is there some charge for Mediation or Conciliation Services, there is one other area I should just raise to be fair to the member.

We had a particular problem in expedited arbitrations, which the process was there to speed up the arbitration process. We have had, from time to time, particularly one union which has overused it, in the opinion of our staff—I know one time we made the comment, perhaps we should charge for this service. But we had some discussions, and it became a tool that got used. You know, you apply for it, and then you would not have it, but everyone was in place to do it.

So we had some discussions with the individuals involved, and it is used now more appropriately, but that may be where some of the—if she has

picked up some sense of a charge coming, it may come from there. I look to Mr. Davage now.

Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, I am advised that no jurisdictions charge, but I am sure, in conversations I have had with some Labour ministers, that they have that same feeling about some particular cases where you would like the ability to—the musings of a Labour minister.

* (1640)

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask also about the department's policy on hiring conciliators who may be on pension from the government. Is that the case? I was told of one particular case, and I would like to raise it as a general policy issue.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I know exactly the case to which the member for Wolseley refers. We are having a bit of a problem now in the Conciliation and Mediation branch because we have had a very good staff in there for a number of years, and in the last year or so, six months, we have lost three of our conciliation officers, one who retired prior to the VSIPs and two who took advantage of the VSIPs. The consequence has been that when you have a small shop with, really, six conciliation officers and you have half who choose to retire—you know, these are very interesting jobs, and they do not have a very high turnover.

So we have reached a point where we have this—half our staff, in essence, departing. We ran into a bit of a problem that we needed to bring someone in for a particular dispute. We were short of staff at this particular time, and the one conciliation officer—who had retired but had not received a VSIP, so he was not prohibited under the VSIP arrangements—we brought back on contract to fill in the void because of his experience and ability and knowledge of those particular issues. It was better and more effective to bring that individual in than it was to train someone or find someone on the outside. We recognize you are always open to the argument of the double-dipping and those types of things. This, I can assure the member, was because of the circumstances.

I also point out to her that of our two officers who VSIPed, we were not particularly happy with the fact we were losing two. The second one to apply was very, very strong on wanting to retire. We had quite a lot of discussion, but that individual was very insistent that they have the opportunity to go. They had been a long-time and very good employee, and it is hard to say no in those circumstances.

So what we have done in the present to sort of fill in is we have combined our Pay Equity branch, because our big thrust on pay equity was in implementing in the school divisions and hospitals, and that work has wound down, but we did not want to lose the Pay Equity function within the Ministry of Labour. So we felt it was best to move that individual who was there into Conciliation and Mediation branch, where they would have a shared role, because much of the work that they did with school divisions on the pay equity side was good training for conciliation and mediation.

So given the fact that there was not a very big workload in that Pay Equity branch, this was a very good arrangement to ensure we best utilized our staff. So we still have that ability within the department, and it filled a void in Conciliation and Mediation with an individual whose experience was growing.

We also, as we look at addressing this issue, I think we posted one of those vacancies as well, and another one we are trying to decide how we are going to fill it. We filled one, pardon me, from the re-employment list, and I think we posted another one or are going to. It has been filled now.

Should we need it, we have also had some discussion—as the member may know, there are some excellent people in the last few years who have retired out of the labour movement, out of the business community, generally from the labour, management community in Manitoba, who are well respected on both sides, who have indicated to us that they would be available should they be required on contract. They are not former government employees. So we are building up a cadre of people that we can access as required.

Some of the names that come to mind, I do not think, would be strangers to the member for Wolseley.

Ms. Friesen: So the case of this particular individual who was on pension from the government or is on pension with the government is an exception, not the rule. As I understand what the minister is saying is that the department then is as a policy moving away from full-time positions and to contract positions.

Mr. Praznik: No, not at all as a policy are we moving away. We are now at full staff complement to where we were. But I have a problem as Labour minister. The arbitration or the mediation-conciliation community in Manitoba—and every time I announce that I have appointed Wally Fox-Decent as a mediator, members on the other side all say, ah, Wally. It is reflective of part of the problem we have here now, is that I do not have a large enough cadre of people who are available to fill in, particularly in mediation circumstances, where you need that outside name, where you need that outside individual whom you can bring in at the latter part of a dispute after the conciliation officers have done all that they can and you need a new face at the table.

So given the fact we have some very excellent people from the labour relations community who are now retired and in a neutral position, and they have expressed interest in being available for those type of things, we want to have a list of people that if we have a lot of disputes at a particular time and we need a spare conciliation officer for a dispute where our current staff is all tied up, we could pull someone off the list for a one-shot contract and, more importantly, where we need mediators that we have a broader list of respected individuals who can be in mediation than the very short list that I currently have.

So I am trying to build up that cadre, and I have had some very informal discussions with people in both the labour, management community about how we can develop that list beyond two or three names, and that is what we are trying to do.

It is not a policy of this department to go to contract conciliation officers, but I do have to have

the ability to have a list for those circumstances where I am caught short with our current staff. We cannot justify having seven conciliation officers. Six is adequate for our regular needs, but I need to have a larger cadre.

Ms. McCormick: In the 10 minutes we have remaining, I would like to ask a few questions which are sort of broad-brush questions before we get into the specific program areas, which, I imagine, will have to wait for another day.

The first comes out of the Activity Identification statement that the Management Services Division “coordinates legislative and regulatory development.”

Can you give me some indication of what legislative and regulatory development areas have received your department’s priority attention in the last year?

Mr. Praznik: Just to go over the list with my deputy to make sure I did not forget anything, the big area that has been drawing the work of this branch is a rather huge undertaking that our department initiated, and I have to tell the member for Osborne that this really came from within the department as opposed to being initiated at the cabinet table. In fact, the department came to sell me on it, and that is in the reform of our public safety legislation.

As the member very well knows, we administer, I believe, eight public safety acts from oil burners and gas to elevators and the whole particular gamut, and these statutes all developed going back, I guess, to the late 1800s in Manitoba, over different periods of time, with different regulatory schemes and different sets of penalties and different sets of authorities.

What my staff convinced me of was that it was a need now to look at these pieces of legislation and to combine them into one public safety act.

The one exception to that is The Fires Prevention Act, which, I believe, should remain separate in establishing the Manitoba fire commission because we were the first jurisdiction in North America to establish a fire commission after the great Chicago fire, and there is an

historical presence there that I would like to maintain, but, besides that, developing this common theme.

So what we embarked on, with my authority and, I believe, cabinet approval, was a major consultation in all of these various areas which is going on with all the stakeholders, and we hope to have prepared a draft statute sometime within the year, I guess, which we will then be consulting on, and if it receives approval from cabinet, would bring to the Legislature.

Ms. McCormick: I would like to ask the minister for the benefit of many of the people who have been consulted during the process, what year? Are we talking the calendar year '94, the fiscal period of this government, or what would you say was the year you are describing something?

Mr. Praznik: I guess I have a problem. I hope to have within this—I am advised from those who are working on it with limited resources that some time within the new calendar year, which would be 1995, I should have a draft of that particular statute.

* (1650)

As the member can calculate as well as I, it is likely, if we have another legislative session before a general election, this may, depending on what the statute looks like and the reaction of stakeholders, be a piece of that session.

If we do have a legislative session, it would be up to a re-elected administration or a new administration to decide whether they would bring it in, but the groundwork is being done and, I think, very thoroughly by so many who are involved in this process.

Ms. McCormick: I have been experiencing some increasing concern that there is a high level of anxiety out there that people who have contributed to this process are not being kept well-informed on the progress of their input. It seems there are people who fear that their input has just disappeared into a sinkhole.

Can you tell me what mechanism was used to communicate back to the many groups and

organizations who offered comment during the year '93 on your progress?

Mr. Praznik: I would like to introduce Mr. Dino Speziale, who is our director of public safety programs of this review and of our Information Systems. He is our Mr. Fix-it in the department. He looks after all our computer and information systems. Mr. Speziale has chaired the internal committee that has embarked on this particular process.

The member's question is very timely in that I am advised that the 60- or 70-so page report of the consultations will be coming out sometime within the next month or two. It is being reviewed in final form to go into printing, I understand. Anyone who has a concern that things have gone into a deep sinkhole, that is not the case.

As I am sure the member for Osborne (Ms. McCormick) can appreciate, given her work in other areas of legislation and regulation in this department in other lives, they are complicated matters, and there is a great deal of work to go into producing those kinds of documents. It will be coming out shortly.

Ms. McCormick: Some of the responses identified some issues of immediate concern for public and personal safety. Was there an attempt to review the feedback that was forthcoming from the original consultation to determine whether or not there were things which could not legitimately await a longer-term regulatory development process?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am advised from those who have worked so hard on this that, in their opinion, in sorting through the commentary, the sort of pressing issues that were raised had to do with fees and some enforcement provisions, but the regulatory frameworks and schemes and those types of things were felt that they could wait till the general review. There was nothing raised that was so pressing that it would have to proceed prior to the larger piece of legislation coming forward. We had ample ability under existing statutes to meet the needs of public safety.

Ms. McCormick: There are two areas which, I feel, perhaps are deserving of closer scrutiny. For example, there was a concern that there was no standard specifically for the electrical work done in hospitals. Given that there are hospital sites, or hospitals pending construction right now, is there an intention to examine the specific standards?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, the two issues here, one being the installation, which is governed by The Electricians' Licence Act—and I do not think there was a concern raised about the quality, the competency of the people who were doing the work and installation. The other issue has to deal with the requirements in hospitals, which are governed by the appropriate building codes.

I would look to my staff in that regard if there was a particular issue, because we are now entering the new code process again for revisions of the code—pardon me, with respect to the electrical code. There is a whole national process for dealing with those particular issues which we are now probably in about the middle of in revamping those particular codes.

So there is nothing flagged. If there is a particular issue that presents a dangerous situation in hospitals, I would appreciate a little more specific information on it, so that we could deal with that with the Ministry of Health in the interim.

Ms. McCormick: I think that what was noted was an absence of a standard for electrical work done in hospitals, and it may be something that your department might want to assess.

The other area of concern is the interesting situation, and it opens the broader issue of licensing and credentialing of people who act in areas which influence public safety, and that is the area of the credentialing of people who hold themselves out as general contractors. There is a clear licensing requirement for engineers, for architects, et cetera, and also for people who are tradespeople in various disciplines, but one of the areas that continues to trouble is that in between these people are people who are general contractors who really have no requirement at all for any kind of education, credential or even

experiential requirements. It is purely a marketplace activity.

Has any concern been raised or addressed within your department with respect to these people?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we have had representations made by some in the industry who would like us to put a provision in for licensing contractors. I do not know what the position of the member or political party is or if they have taken one on this particular issue.

As I try to sort it out, there are a lot of different ways to view this. I guess the question becomes whether one licenses the individuals doing particular work, or the work that they do.

Currently, the regulatory scheme in construction regulates the work that is done through the various building codes, as the member is well aware. If one gets to the point of licensing those who do it, and although there is training for tradespeople, et cetera, they are not restricted. There is no requirement that I have to hire a journeyman carpenter to build a house for me. I may choose to do it, but it is not a condition of me building a house. It would change somewhat the regulatory scheme that we use.

What I am always leery of in these circumstances is how much of it is a real problem that has to be addressed versus how much of it is someone trying to secure a—monopoly is not the word, but to secure some turf protection for their particular business. The government should not be in the business of doing that, although we do. I do not want to be a hypocrite. We do do it, but is it really something that serves the public good or the group of a number of contractors.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The hour being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

HOUSING

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be dealing with the Estimates for the

Department of Housing. Does the honourable Minister of Housing wish to make an opening statement?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Housing): Yes, Madam Chairperson. I have a brief opening statement.

I am pleased to present the Estimates for Housing this year. As you know, the Department of Housing is responsible for the overall development and delivery and administration of provincial housing policy and programs.

The department has a threefold mandate. One is to enhance the affordability of and accessibility to a suitable and adequate supply of housing for Manitobans, especially those of low or moderate incomes and those with specialized needs. The second is to maintain and improve the quality of the existing aging housing stock, and a third is to facilitate the housing market where otherwise limiting interventionist measures to situations where it is deemed essential to the public interest.

Housing is a provincial area of responsibility through my department, but provincial housing policy has been and continues to be heavily influenced by federal housing policy and expenditures. The federal government, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has operated both unilaterally and in cost-sharing arrangements with the province to fund the majority of social housing activity in Manitoba.

Since 1986, social housing delivery in Manitoba has been undertaken through global and operating agreements with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. These agreements set out provincial delivery and administrative responsibilities in return for federal cost-sharing on a 75 percent federal and 25 percent provincial basis. Prior to that time, most of the social housing stock was shared on a 50-50 federal-provincial basis.

Of the some 377,000 households in Manitoba, it is estimated that 10.8 percent of them are in core housing need. That represents about 40,000 households. More than two-thirds of these households are located in Winnipeg, and of those household needs, you will find that renters are

more than twice as likely to be in need as homeowners, and the largest group in need is family households. For two-thirds of those households in core need, affordability is their only housing problem.

* (1440)

In April 1993 in the federal government's budget, the federal government announced that effective January 1, 1994, no new commitments would be made for social housing. The federal government has agreed not to break any of its prior commitments. They will continue to fund all of those commitments they had made prior to that that are existing, and in effect, the announcement terminated the 1986 global and operating agreements for new commitments and for the construction of new projects, so we have no federal money for new housing initiatives.

The federal government has stated that new housing initiatives and commitments would be funded, if at all, through savings that we can generate here in the provinces. Savings generated through improved efficiencies and the administration and management of existing social housing across Canada, we have been told, we will be allowed to use for new housing initiatives.

Therefore, while committing itself to retaining funding for the pre-1994 project and unit commitments, the federal government effectively has withdrawn from any comprehensive new housing programming across the board. This poses a problem for us here in Manitoba and indeed in other provinces across the nation to ensure that we exert the requisite influence over how federal housing dollars will be expended across Canada and that federal dollars to existing communities in Manitoba and any savings generated through this existing framework will continue to be reinvested in this province and not siphoned off to other projects.

That is a concern that provinces expressed when we met in June, that we have, combined amongst the provinces across the nation, managed since this announcement was made to save some several millions of dollars, and we are concerned that we be allowed to use those dollars for our own

provinces and not see them siphoned off to some other arena.

Continued provincial cost-sharing of federal housing initiatives, either through currently existing programs or through initiatives that are new, will position Manitoba as an active partner and will work towards maintaining the federal government's financial investment in the province to the long-term benefit of Manitobans.

We, of course, also are involved in the area of property management. That cannot be overlooked as it relates to the second mandate of the department which is to maintain and improve existing housing stocks, something which has become now even more critical than it was before.

We have the Manitoba Housing Authority which has been put together as an amalgamation of close to a hundred regional housing authorities that used to exist in the province. That amalgamation into one new Manitoba Housing Authority has been in place now going on towards two years. We have managed to free up many dollars by that amalgamation, avoiding duplication and paralleling of services. We have also managed to enable consistency in decision making and an overview approach.

There was concern at the initial amalgamation that regional areas continue to be well represented, so we have made every effort to ensure that MHA has regional representatives on it. More than that, we are sending MHA out into the communities' subcommittees to meet in the communities and meet with people there.

I do not want to take too much more time. We were a little late getting started, and I know the critics have questions. I have a number of other things that I think are of interest, but they may come up in the form of answers to questions that are put to me.

With that, I will pause in my comments and give the critics their opportunity to express their concerns and ask their questions of me at this time.

Madam Chairperson: Does the critic for the official opposition, the honourable member for

Point Douglas, wish to make an opening statement?

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I would just like to make some brief comments on what is perceived to be happening in Housing Authority. Meeting with tenants from Lord Selkirk Housing and also tenants of various seniors' homes, there seems to be a lack of maintenance and repair taking place in these units. So I would like to pursue that a little further in Estimates.

When they talk about lack of maintenance and repairs, for instance, an example they gave me was, at 817 Main Street, the windows in the building have not been washed for two years. They used to be washed twice a year, every spring and every fall. There are even residents there that have not put up their air conditioning units because they are hoping that they will get their windows eventually washed.

A lot of the suites that individuals live in, that I spoke to, have not been painted for years and years, some of them up to 10 years. They are wondering what is happening. Is it because of cutbacks, or is it just maybe because there are less maintenance people now than there were in the past?

Those were some of the grave concerns that were expressed. People are getting very concerned, and when we are talking about good, safe housing, they are still questioning the possibility of providing security services in certain areas.

A good example was the community of Lord Selkirk, which is a huge housing development. They have built, through this government and the city and federal government, a beautiful recreation centre there. It has helped to keep a lot of the people permanent there. They enjoy it. They love living there, but they are wondering why cannot some of the local people, through some kind of employment initiative, be hired to do some of the local work like, for instance, the grass cutting, some of the painting that is required, because there is a lot of graffiti in a lot of the buildings, and they have not touched them for quite some time.

Also, in discussions with the tenants, and I think they had an excellent idea—there are so many dollars used to fix up after vandalism takes place, and I am sure it is in the thousands of dollars—why cannot a couple of local individuals from the community either be trained or hired as security for the area, which, I think, is an excellent idea? You have local people who know the people, and you have such a high unemployment rate for the area. I thought it was a good idea, and I would just like to pass that on to the minister. Maybe we can pursue that a little further.

Some of the other areas that I have been made aware of are the allocation of some of the contracts that are issued out by the Housing Authority, the question of how they are tendered and what is there for follow-up. Some of the individuals who have had some plumbing work for an example, the contractor would come in, start the project and disappear for months. Then they would come back later, maybe they had left a big hole in the wall where their drywall has been removed. It just creates dust collection and a very bad atmosphere to some of the homes. They are wondering why those things have to take place.

The other area that I would like to pursue is the whole issue about local housing boards. I know it was raised in the meeting of mayors and councillors—I think that meeting was in Brandon—and they even passed a resolution encouraging the Minister of Housing to re-establish the local housing boards and provide adequate funding authority for that. I guess the whole purpose of that is for the individuals to have the local individuals from those housing units have the ability to have a say in what happens in their homes.

Those are some of the areas I would like to pursue a little later on, and those are the concerns that have been raised. I would just like to mention that every issue so far that I have raised with the minister has been looked into and acted upon. On behalf of myself and the constituents and other people who have raised those issues with me that I have passed on to the minister and her office, I would just like to thank her and her staff for the excellent assistance that we have been able to

provide. I hope that will continue because as elected members we are here to serve the public and to do the best we can. I would just like to thank the minister and hope she will pass that on to her staff, that the people really appreciate the help that has been provided to individuals living in Manitoba Housing. Thank you.

* (1450)

Madam Chairperson: Does the critic for the second opposition party wish to make an opening statement?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chairperson, I want to just maybe kind of pick up on where the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey) left off, and that is by also complimenting the Minister of Housing. You know, over the past six years, I have had opportunity to deal with virtually all of the different ministries in one capacity or another asking ministers questions in Estimates in varying departments and so forth, and no one has given better straightforward opinions and at least has made a sincere attempt to try to facilitate an opposition member to be able to accomplish something. I wanted to express that and say that I do very much appreciate it.

Having said that, I wanted to comment basically on the direction that I would like to see the Estimates of Housing going because we are probably looking at an afternoon of discussion on Housing, and, that is, to talk a lot about what the Minister of Housing alluded to in her opening remarks—that is, just the number of nonprofit housing units that are out there.

I think most Manitobans do not realize the magnitude of the Department of Housing and CMHC and the role that both play in terms of providing shelter for Manitobans. I must say, Madam Chairperson, I recall one of the reasons why I was an opponent to the Charlottetown Accord was because the federal government was wanting to minimize the role of housing. We acknowledge and recognize that the federal government has to play a significant role in providing shelter for Canadians.

Madam Chairperson, if we take a look at the operational costs of some of these nonprofit housing complexes and the money that we put to the continual upgrading of capital investment, to the maintenance costs and the many other costs that are out there, you will find that the one-time capital expenditure to build a complex is, in fact, one of the cheapest. It is fairly cost efficient. It is easy to pop up a building for a half million dollars, relatively easy to pop up a building and make a commitment for half a million dollars to pop up a building. The real cost is the ongoing cost. If we take a look at how housing is financed through the Department of Housing and through CMHC, you will find that it is the operational costs that really determine a significant portion of that budget.

I understand to a certain degree why it is the federal government might have done what it has done with respect to its freeze on commitment for additional cost through new projects, and I think that, whether we accept that or not, the challenge is upon us as legislators to find out what we can do to try to better spend what financial resources are there.

Madam Chairperson, I believe that there are a number of ways in which we can do that. What we need to do is to be somewhat creative. We have a system that has been in place for years now, civil servants who have a way of thinking in terms of dealing with many portions of nonprofit housing, and that line of thinking has to be changed. I believe a vast majority of the civil servants would support the type of changes that are necessary.

The minister answers a very important question in one of the statements that she made. She drew the comparison of tenants versus homeowners and where Manitoba Housing and the CMHC subsidize, by far, the greatest where there are tenants. Where there is least amount of public dollars going is where individuals own their homes. If we take a look at the philosophical debate in terms of how we try to deliver a service that is necessary in a most efficient way as possible, that we have to be creative in our thinking in terms of alternatives to some of the

traditional ways in which we are providing housing programs.

We have a number of housing programs, and I am hoping to be able to get some of those programs and some of the actual percentages or numbers of people who are participating in a particular program, if at all possible this afternoon. So then we could talk about the most heavily subsidized nonprofit housing, and that being the ones such as the one the speaker made reference to, Lord Selkirk. I will make reference to Gilbert Park quite a bit this afternoon, because I take great pride in representing the Gilbert Park residents complex.

If we take a look at that form of nonprofit housing, is there some direction that we can take that? I believe there is. I also believe that this particular minister is receptive to looking at that change. This is what I intend to talk a lot about this afternoon and to find out where the minister would like to see this go. Hopefully, what we will see is some form of a general consensus, because I do believe there is a political will to do what is right in dealing with nonprofit housing because so many of the answers are relatively simple. It is just having the political will and the support of different interest groups that are out there, and to a certain degree, opposition parties, and those changes can be facilitated that much quicker.

I am not wanting to take up too much time in my opening remarks, Madam Chairperson. I am quite prepared to go into the questioning at this point.

Madam Chairperson: At this time, I would invite the minister's staff to please enter the Chamber.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, at this point I would like to introduce the staff that is here with me today, beginning with Jim Beaulieu who is the Deputy Minister of Housing. We have, as well, three senior staff from the Department of Housing, Gary Julius, Ron Fallis, Ken Cassin, who will be here to guide and assist me and to provide technical details that I may not have at my disposal for the critics as they go into their questioning.

I would like to just respond if I may, Madam Chairperson, to the kind comments that both critics put on the record by indicating to them, as well,

that I have found that each of these particular critics are ones who come forward with serious questions and constructive criticisms. They do not tend to play games with the issues. They are not frivolous and trivial in their treatment of the issues. I very much appreciate that and would like to state that for the record, because it is something that has made our relationship very workable and I think for the benefit of the people we all try to serve.

Madam Chairperson: I would remind all honourable members of the committee that we will defer dealing with item 1.(a) on page 99 of the Estimates manual until conclusion of passing of all other items.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chair, could I make a little suggestion here? Instead of going line by line, item by item, could we just raise the issues that we have, and then at the end we could just pass line by line and go right through? That way, instead of waiting—I have one colleague that would like to raise some questions. I would like to give my colleague the floor to raise his questions and then pass it on to the member for the second opposition, and then we will work out our questions. I think it would speed things up a lot if we could because I just have certain issues that I want to raise. I do not want to go through line by line, if that is okay with everyone.

Madam Chairperson: What is the will of the committee? I guess the only consideration would be on the minister's behalf in terms of having appropriate staff available if we are not going to go line by line. I do not know if this is the full complement of staff that she has at her disposal this afternoon or not. I would like to suggest the committee give that consideration.

* (1500)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, I have no difficulty with that if the second opposition party concurs. I think the staff that is here is quite competent and capable of answering all questions that come our way if I need some help. So that is fine.

Madam Chairperson: Is that the will of the committee? Agreed.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Chairperson, I want to thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to raise a few questions today on behalf of my constituents.

As the minister is aware, we have a number of housing stock in Selkirk operated by the Manitoba Housing Authority, and I want to raise some issues regarding that. I want to start off with, of course, the Alfred Apartments. I want to ask the minister if she can provide us with some background as to why that particular apartment was closed and when it was closed, and when does she anticipate that apartment block reopening?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, I am advised by staff that both the MHRC and the MHA have looked into this particular unit and the problems associated with it and have concluded that the additional dollars required to rehabilitate, which would come to approximately \$66,000 per unit, does not make it economical to renovate. Similar new housing units can be constructed for just about \$4,000 more each. So, therefore, in 1992, the MHRC board rejected the tenders and decided to demolish this apartment block contingent on CMHC concurrence, and I am advised that Ottawa has indicated they will be responding to that on the approval to demolish within about three weeks.

Mr. Dewar: So according to the minister, the apartment will be demolished. What plans does the minister have in place to provide the housing stock that the Alfred apartment block provided to individuals in the Selkirk community, individuals who would require social housing?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, the original thinking on this issue was that a new project would be built, but, of course, that is not quite as feasible now as it had been at the original time since there is no more federal money coming into these projects. We do have an indication that the waiting list does not at this time indicate a need for the housing units that are there as of this particular point in time. There is no waiting list that indicates that this particular unit would be required.

Mr. Dewar: Could the minister provide me with the number of individuals who are on that waiting

list?—because I get calls to my office all the time about people requiring social housing, and I refer them to the Manitoba Housing Authority office in Selkirk, and they tell me that there is this long waiting list.

I would be interested to find out how long that waiting list is, and why do the individuals who require social housing seem to feel that this list is quite long?

Mrs. McIntosh: As of the end of March, we had seven people looking for senior citizens or elderly persons' housing, and we had 29 waiting for family housing, for family units.

Mr. Dewar: That is 29 families?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that is what I am informed.

Mr. Dewar: And that is not considered a long list?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chair, I am advised that, comparatively speaking, that is not considered a lengthy list. The Alfred Apartments only had 12 units and would not have been able to accommodate some of these people in any event, but that apparently is not considered an overly lengthy list, that it would not necessitate the building of a new unit in that there is an expectation they could be placed within a time span that would not necessitate the building or expensive renovation of the Alfred Apartments.

Mr. Dewar: I want to thank the minister for that. If the minister would provide me with a complete list of the housing stock in Selkirk and their status in terms of repairs and maintenance—if she could provide me with that list at another time perhaps?

Mrs. McIntosh: I would be pleased to do that for the member.

Mr. Dewar: Again, because I have constituents who tell me that, this apartment is open, and this house is open, yet we go down to the office, and they tell us there are no housing units available. I would just like to be able to tell them, well, this one is in this state of repair, and it will become available at this time, just to help clear up some of those issues.

The other thing is, I do recognize and appreciate the government's efforts to provide some

maintenance on the housing complex in the Outhwaite-Sveinson area of Selkirk. I had a chance to tour the complex recently and met with some of the constituents who raised some minor concerns, but I felt that they were dealt with by the housing staff that were there.

One issue that they did raise is that they do recognize and appreciate that there are new windows being replaced and certain floors are being retiled, but they also raised concerns about the doors and the poor state that the doors are in. I was wondering when can they expect to have those doors replaced?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am advised that this particular project is considered a fairly major one, around \$300,000, and staff here does not have the breakdown on the doors. I will obtain that information for you when we finish here and make sure that it is made available to you.

Mr. Dewar: I would appreciate that information. What is the smoking policy of Manitoba Housing Authority in terms of housing units and housing apartments that they manage?

* (1510)

Mrs. McIntosh: The decision as to whether or not a unit will become a smoking or a nonsmoking unit would rest with the people who live in the units themselves, much like tenants in a regular apartment building or renting a home as a rule. Some landlords perhaps would have guidelines, but most do not.

Mr. Dewar: I was referring to common areas, because there was a block in Selkirk that we had a bit of a debate a few weeks ago with whether or not they could smoke in common areas. I was just wondering what the policy is? I could never find that one out.

Mrs. McIntosh: Sorry, I misunderstood the original question. By and large, in most of the complexes, the common areas will tend to have a smoking and a nonsmoking area. It is not a hard-and-fast, kick-them-out kind of rule, but it is a practice that has been followed that there would be one section reserved for those who smoke and another for those who do not.

Mr. Lamoureux: I want to start off by talking about our more heavily subsidized nonprofit housing and by asking the question, Manitoba Housing Authority is now responsible for how many units? I guess if she can also give some sort of indication, how many of those units would be elderly person units?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have about 5,500 elderly; about 7,500 family; about 13,000 in total rent-managed units that we control. They are directly managed by MHA, those ones.

Mr. Lamoureux: I know that there has been somewhat of a problem in filling much of the elderly persons housing because when they were built a number of years ago there was concern expressed in terms of the size of these particular units, whether it is the annex on I think it is Logan and Keewatin there, the Bluebirds. There are a number, Elgin and so forth.

Can the minister give some sort of indication of the vacancy rate, what both vacancy rates would be, the elderly and the family units?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have overall throughout the province 8.7 percent vacancy, and about 900 are vacant seniors or elderly persons units. Of those 900, Madam Chairperson, 700 are bachelor suites, the very small one-room suites. That is an interesting problem there which you may want to talk about later. We also have about 600 family suites that are not in use at the time.

Mr. Lamoureux: I wanted to talk a bit about the bachelor units but before I do, the 600 that are vacant from the family units, would a majority of those be because the units are unavailable to be rented? Are they in reconditioning of sorts, or would they just be sitting idly waiting for someone to go into them?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have a normal turnover, and those will show up as vacancies whenever we sort of photograph the list, if you know what I am saying, and they may just be vacant for a week or two while somebody moves out and somebody else moves in. They show up listed as vacancies, but they are not places that are not spoken for or that people are not seeking to live in.

We do have some 50 that are vacant right now because they are undergoing repair of some sort. We will also have some vacancies because people are looking for a unit in a particular area of town. Maybe they want to live in this particular area, not the other, so they are waiting for the location they are seeking to pop up. Those would not be desperate-need ones, obviously, but they are people who are needing to have some assistance with their housing.

Mr. Lamoureux: I just seek, like my attentions were to talk about Gilbert Park in a bit, but I know, for example, in Gilbert Park, there is—I do not know the actual number, but I believe it is somewhere around 60 units. Would the 50 be a portion of those 60 then? When you say 50, are we talking like all the 60 from Gilbert Park, for example, would be a part of the 600 and the 50 would be a part of that? Does that make sense then?

Mrs. McIntosh: With specific reference to Gilbert Park, we have 12 to 19, 18 units there that are not being used. We do not count them as vacant. We have mothballed them pending certain things going on. As you know, we have turned two of the units into the recreation centre there. It does seem at the present time that we are going to be using those in the immediate future, those ones that are mothballed, so they are just kind of on hold, but they are not showing up on a vacancy list.

* (1520)

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister give us some sort of indication in terms of the total number of units that would be mothballed? I know, for example, I believe Churchill a number of years ago, when I was the critic, had a number of units mothballed. How many nonprofit housing units have we actually mothballed?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, staff has just finished doing a quick calculation as to current status, and we believe it to be in the neighbourhood of 150 units that are currently mothballed, some of which are ones we will not be using again, some of which we may be using again, but they are just sort of currently being held without being used or

repaired at the present time. We have 60, for example, in Leaf Rapids alone.

Mr. Lamoureux: The MLA from Selkirk had made reference to Selkirk, and there was a complex there that was going to be set up for demolition potentially. Are there other units that have been requested for demolition, and how many would those be?

Mrs. McIntosh: As the member knows, I have indicated just a few moments ago to the member for Selkirk that we are awaiting a decision from Ottawa on the Selkirk situation, so those are not counted as ones that are slated for demolition, but we do have others that are. We have five units that will be taken down because of fire damage. There was a fire. We have 15 others in one complex where there was a foundation problem. An underground stream had dried up, I guess, and the units kind of fell into it. The renovations on those are extremely expensive. It is deemed that we will just take them down rather than try to restore them.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, at the onset, I was hoping to get some sort of an understanding in terms of the housing units that are available, or shelter units, through Manitoba Housing. I appreciate that. I want to touch briefly on the seniors', elderly persons' units. As it was pointed out, 700 of the 900 are, in fact, the bachelor suites, fairly common vacancy.

I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of indication if the government is doing anything to try to rectify that particular problem, in particular, specifically, if they are looking at renovations to try to turn them into one-bedroom suites, if they are looking at the possibilities of getting the private sector involved. I know from past experiences that there are many different volunteer groups, for example, that are out there, whether it is religious-based organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, for example, or Lions. There is an ample number of organizations, I am sure that are out there, that would possibly be interested in doing something with some of these facilities, because many of those 700 units, no doubt, are in buildings that are not really all that old, because they were built, from what I

understand and I could be wrong, in the late '70s, early '80s, is when these buildings were being erected.

I am wondering if the minister could just give us some sort of an indication of what we are doing to try to address that particular issue of the bachelor suites.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for the question because it has been a frustration. We are trying something now on a pilot project and we think is showing some positive results. The member is probably aware, because I have the feeling he has sort of followed this issue, that one of the problems we had is that when we talk about people being on a waiting list and vacancies and that type of thing, we have elderly people who would like to be in public housing, but they would prefer a one-bedroom suite and so they wait.

Now they are on a waiting list, but there is housing available for them in the forms of bachelor apartments, but they prefer to wait until there is one that has a one bedroom. While they are on a waiting list and they have a need, they are obviously not in dire straits or in desperate need, because the bachelor suites are being rejected by them while they wait for something they prefer a little more.

What we have done to try and address the problem, on a pilot basis, we have four buildings that we are opening, the bachelor suites, making the bachelor suites available to nonelderly persons, specifically we are talking about students. We involved the tenants in these buildings in the discussion and the decision as to whether or not these bachelor suites should be made available to the younger generation in an effort to fill them up. There was some concern expressed when we were first looking at it. Would the older people want to have the younger people there? Indeed, what we have heard said to us and what seems to be happening, it is still in its early stages, is that it does seem to be, if the right personalities are there, a good blend.

We are trying this on a pilot project in four buildings to see how it works. If indeed it proves to be as workable as it seems to be starting off, then

we may have another market for our bachelor units that would be very appropriate for the need addressed, the student need, for example, and then have a mixture of people in the building, not just elderly but elderly with another age group.

Mr. Lamoureux: Right now, in order to get into a unit I believe it is 55. Has the minister given any thought in terms of lowering that particular age other than to students, like dropping it to 50 in order to see if there is in fact a demand that would be facilitated and possibly take some individuals out of the family units and putting them into the more elderly units? Is that a feasible thing to do?

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, yes, to the member for Inkster, indeed that has been considered, in fact, is being done in some of our buildings where we are having the 50-year-old age group coming in as the limitation. They still have to have the income need, of course. It is not just age for social housing. There still has to be a need for assistance from the public purse.

I just wanted also to very quickly respond. You had in your original question asked about social service groups and that type of thing in terms of the one bed, in converting a bachelor suite to a one-bedroom suite. We found for ourselves, as a department, that making that kind of conversion is not going to be cost-effective for us in the long run if we can find suitable tenants. As to having service clubs either do it or occupy them or whatever, no, we have not really taken a look at that concept. But I appreciate the creative thinking there.

Mr. Lamoureux: I wanted to move on to housing co-ops and in order to move on to housing co-ops, I wanted to refer to Gilbert Park, the area in which the residents complex is which I represent personally, and to talk in terms of what it is that the residents, many of the residents that live in Gilbert Park, would eventually like to see.

Just before I do that, I was going to ask just more so of the minister—if she could take this as notice and get back to me sometime over the summer—out of the 13,000 units, what funding formula they

would have fallen in under, because I understand there were a couple of different funding formulas. If we can say 6,000 of them fall under this where the federal government is putting this amount of money, the provincial government is putting in that sort of money, it would be most beneficial. If she can just get back to me on that, as I say, sometime over the summer through correspondence.

Getting back in terms of the housing co-ops, as I had pointed out earlier and in fact, Madam Chairperson, I have introduced resolutions in the Chamber in the past. In trying to come up with alternative housing than the more traditional Manitoba Housing Authority type of housing units, I have often believed that what we should be doing is trying to provide incentive for individuals to get more involved.

I was very pleased with the minister announcing that Gilbert Park is going to be a demonstration project because that works out quite well in the sense that it at least allows us now to evaluate whether or not it is something that is feasible, because there is a very healthy tenants association that is maturing and has taken a few years, and no doubt it will take a couple more years yet. This is the reason why the association itself is saying, look we do not want this thing overnight, we want to put it over a number of years with the idea of being able to do more things than just the traditional landlord-tenant relationship, of course landlord being big government, if you like.

So to try to shift some of that responsibility over I think would be very positive, and I know that the minister has made reference, along with myself and representatives from the department and the tenants association, that part of that first year of responsibilities that we can look at is something in the neighbourhood of the painting, the grass cutting, the cleaning of units and some of those sorts of responsibilities. I personally look forward to seeing how that is going to transpire.

Ultimately, Madam Chairperson, what would be nice is to see more of a co-op as opposed to a tenant there becoming a resident, if you like, in which there is a sense of ownership. I would argue

that the operational costs will in fact go down considerably because you will see more people participating, taking more pride in the area in which they live which will make it all that much better not only for the immediate community but also the surrounding communities. That was just more so as a statement more than anything else.

I did want to ask again on housing co-ops, the number of housing co-op units that are actually out there. Also, again this is more of a question while they are looking for that particular answer, what is in place—and again, I have for example United Housing Co-op in my area. In United Housing Co-op there is the section that is on Old Commonwealth Path, there is also the section of United Housing Co-op that is on, I believe it is, Hargrave, and there has been some concern in terms of some of the residents that I represent who said, what would we have to do if we wanted to become a self-sufficient complex in ourselves? In other words, is it possible to divide the two?

I know in the past, Madam Chairperson, there has been some concern that without an educational component to housing co-ops, without a feeling of community that everyone that is living in that immediate community is a part of the co-op, that in fact it might not necessarily be in the interest of the co-ops. I even understood that there are some co-ops that potentially end up being nonprofit housing units if in fact they do not become more proactive.

I guess I would just ask the minister to comment on housing co-ops in general, and if she can give me some sort of indication if—is it possible for United Housing Co-op to be able to be split if they so saw necessary in order to ensure the longevity of the both or the one co-op but as two co-ops.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, the first question on the statistical side of it, in terms of the co-operatives, we have about 48 co-operative projects in the province and approximately 3,000 units contained in those 48 projects. They are all income levels. Some are people in need of housing assistance in terms of their income, and others are not. That is co-operative living in total.

You asked the question if United Housing Co-op could be split into two co-operatives. The answer to that is, yes, it could be.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am not saying that this is ultimately what is going to happen, but I have been specifically asked this question in terms of what would be necessary in order to at least start the process if in fact some of the residents wanted to move that way.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, to the member for Inkster, with his question, if the United Housing Co-op people would like to explore that alternative, I would invite them to meet with senior staff of the Department of Housing. They would be pleased to walk them through, should they wish, the steps that would need to be undertaken to go through that process and work with them to achieve that if that is what they would like to see.

Mr. Lamoureux: The final question with respect to the housing co-ops is more of a question in terms of what can be done in order to facilitate additional housing co-ops, to promote them. Is the government doing anything in terms of putting together or does it have some form of an educational kit? Does it have individuals from within the department who go out to explain, to promote?

As I say, even many individuals who live within a co-op do not understand what a co-op really and truly is all about. For many of them, it is just like living in an apartment. I think the more that people who live in co-ops have an understanding of what a co-op is all about, the more you are going to see them participating and eventually, hopefully, in many cases stay there for a duration.

I have the privilege of having Willow Park, which is the oldest co-op I believe if not in Canada, quite possibly North America. We have tenants—I should not say tenants—residents who have been living there for over 25 years. I think those sorts of residents are fully aware that their interests are served quite well living in a co-op, and they get involved in the boards.

* (1540)

Is there an educational component, whether it is through material, whether it is through the support of the Manitoba confederation of housing co-ops? What does the government do to promote it?

Mrs. McIntosh: There is a branch called the Co-op Development branch. It was housed in Consumer and Corporate Affairs, which is why I am familiar with it. It has been transferred over to Industry, Trade and Tourism as part of the whole development aspect of industry in the province, and they have staff there. I am not sure how many people. I believe it is about seven Co-op Development people who go around the province. Their expertise is in the development of co-operatives, and they are equipped and do advise people on the things that they need to do in terms of start-up.

As for the approach that is taken, and I am sorry I cannot answer this for the member at the moment, I am not sure if it is a proactive or a responsive mechanism that they have. I believe it is primarily responsive in that they will respond to requests and go out and assist people as opposed to going out and promoting or being proactive and saying, have you ever thought of having a co-op, although there may be a little bit of that that comes up just through circumstances.

There is an organization, though, called the Housing Co-op Council of Manitoba, which is not a government group per se, although government is certainly aware of it and interacts with it and is supportive of the work that they do. That is a group of people who—or it is composed of members of existing co-operatives. They are a support group. I believe they, just through their sheer existence, if not their very diligent efforts, are very helpful in educating and supporting each other and those newcomers who are looking at co-operatives.

It is a very good group, but it is along the lines of an association of co-operatives as opposed to a government initiative.

Mr. Lamoureux: I can recall a few years ago when I was quite critical of the Co-op Home Start Program being cancelled, because I felt that that was one of the things that was being used in order to promote new housing co-ops, and it had some

form of a promotional aspect to it, if you like. I look at the Housing Co-op Council of Manitoba, I believe that is the actual wording of it, and I have had opportunity to meet with them in the past. In fact, I have even had opportunity to speak at that particular council in the past. I think, when we have councils of this nature, that there is some benefit for government if you are cutting back on some areas, if there is something residual that you could give or something that you can do to allow organizations such as this to pick up where government has felt that there was a need for restraints at the other end.

That is all I had to say about the co-ops at this point. I did want to move on to other forms of nonprofit housing, that being organizations such as Kinew Housing. Organizations such as this have done wonders in terms of providing aboriginal people—I believe it is predominantly aboriginal people—housing in different areas of the city. I think the concept behind it is a very positive one, and I would ask the minister if she could give some sort of indication of how many groups, because I am only aware of the two. You know, maybe there are others that are, in fact, out there looking at buying or the purchasing of properties, and does the Department of Housing play any role in that purchasing?

Mrs. McIntosh: The WHRC, the Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation, and some urban native groups have purchased property, rehabilitated it in the city of Winnipeg and in the outlying regions.

Mr. Lamoureux: So we would not be playing any role, then, in Kinew Housing, for example?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, with Kinew Housing, there was government involvement to the extent that that is a native housing group, urban native housing group, and they were under a cost-sharing with federal and provincial government monies with their projects. We have had some indication when we were in Bathurst at the recent Housing ministers' conference that there will be some direction—and we are supportive of it, depending, of course, on what it is—from the federal government towards looking at renewal or restructuring of an urban native housing program

of some kind. That is yet to be determined, but it was indicated that there would be some kind of federal support for that type of initiative.

* (1550)

Mr. Lamoureux: I do not really know the current—like if Kinew Housing is a board, for example, per se. I believe that it was. This urban aboriginal council that would be responsible for housing, would that be more of government appointments to a board of this nature, or would this be strictly something that would be driven from the private sector?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am afraid I am not able to provide any details at all, or even if it would be a board structure, just that the federal government has indicated that they have been talking with aboriginal leaders in the various provinces, that they have been talking to Housing ministers across the nation, about the need to do something in the area of urban native housing.

The exact form or nature or size of any funding allotments towards that type of thing has not yet been determined, but the concept has been embraced, and it is still in the initial stages.

Mr. Lamoureux: I want, because of time, to continue moving on. We have a number of different organizations, and again I am going to ask for the statistical numbers of units, organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, other units that are run by nonprofit organizations that are subsidized with government dollars.

Can the minister give some sort of indication in terms of, and again I do not need the actual number, but an approximate number that are there throughout the province?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, for the member's information, these figures are approximate, but they are pretty close. They may, in fact, be the absolute accurate ones. We have 54 sponsored units that we own but that are managed by nonprofit organizations, and they have about 3,689 units in them. As well, there are about 49 nonprofit properties that are owned by the service organization or the nonprofit group. They have about 2,200 units in them.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would the 49 incorporate things like Life Lease, that sort of programming? How would those 49 be subsidized if they are?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chair, I am advised that there are not really Life Lease components in those particular projects that have been identified. They are market rental rates.

We have the former Minister of Housing joining us in the cheering gallery, and we are pleased to have him here.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am wondering if there are any other areas which maybe I have not touched in which the Department of Housing has ownership of housing. Like, we made reference to for example the Housing Authority, of 13,000. There are housing co-ops of some 3,000 units, nonprofit of 3,689 units, again approximately. We have made reference to some very limited involvement in Kinew and then there are the 2,200 from the private, but there is no real ongoing subsidization I guess, maybe with the possible exception of shelter allowances, that might be going into the 49. Am I missing anything else in terms of where the government has ownership of the property?

Mrs. McIntosh: The only other would be the joint venture where we have ownership in the property. It is a shared ownership, as you know, in joint venture project. It is not housing that we are providing, but we do own, we have joint ownership there in terms of the venture because we had the land.

Mr. Lamoureux: I was just going to ask for an example of that before the minister makes reference to it. Would that be such as the Ladco, Meadows West and so forth?

Mrs. McIntosh: Indeed, the member is correct. We talk about the Ladco and Qualico developments.

Mr. Lamoureux: It is almost a shame, Madam Chairperson, that I have such limited time to go on Housing. Next year, we will probably have to spend a lot more time on Housing.

I did want to ask, now that we have mentioned Qualico, because again that is an area—as you can tell, the Department of Housing has a very heavy

presence in the riding that I represent, and I am so grateful for that participation. Qualico is a development which is in the riding I represent. It actually straddles my area and the area of the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski).

I am wondering if the minister can give any form of an update. We have met I believe it was Eric Vogel [phonetic] from Qualico, who is working on some plans. Can the minister just add anything to the whole package or the whole deal, maybe what her expectations are or the government's expectations are with this particular deal?

I must say right at the onset, Madam Chairperson, when I had brought this particular issue up with the minister the first time round, Qualico was most co-operative in terms of facilitating residential input. In fact, we have developed a residents association where we have a fellow by the name of Ken Mazur [phonetic] who is now responsible for area development in the thing. We have even had presentation come out from Qualico, and that might be something in which the residents association might even ask the Department of Education sometime in the future to come out and take a look and possibly answer any questions that the residents might have. But that was definitely most beneficial for the community.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, I want to thank the member for the comments he made just before we went to the answer to this question.

* (1600)

I should indicate that we currently have I.D. Engineering doing a conception plan, which we will review then as Department of Housing people. After that has been reviewed and modified or accepted or whatever is going to be done with it after it has been reviewed, we will then proceed to put in place a development plan with the City of Winnipeg, and at each step along the way we will be more than pleased to include commentary from local MLAs and interest groups in the area that have some desire to make comment or offer suggestions or things of that nature. I am very optimistic that we will have another joint venture that will be as beneficial as the first one is turning out to be.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I will pass those comments on. I know the residents committee would be quite pleased to hear that, and I would imagine even that Ken Mazur [phonetic] would likely even be in contact with the department sometime in the future to see how things are going on that particular project.

Again, I did make a commitment to pass this over in a very short period of time. I think I have about two minutes left to go. I did want to ask some specific questions with respect to capital. There was some concern with respect to Gilbert Park and the amount that was being looked at to budget in for this year for capital repairs. I am wondering if the minister can give some sort of indication what the latest is on capital for Gilbert Park.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, the capital for '94-95 for Gilbert Park will be \$180,000.

Mr. Lamoureux: Okay. Now, that would be currently approved then from the department so we would anticipate—is there something that they have already singled out that is going to be done with that \$180,000.

Mrs. McIntosh: Roofing is a concern that they plan to address.

Mr. Lamoureux: The figure that I have continuously heard is one of \$3 million in order to bring Gilbert Park up to an acceptable standard. I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of indication, again, what the long-term range of capital investment is that the government is looking at investing in Gilbert Park. This year it is \$180,000. A majority of that will go towards roofing. Does the government currently have some sort of a five-year capital plan for Gilbert Park?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, we have set aside some \$40,000 at the moment for predevelopment funding to take a look at developing a three-year plan and that predevelopment funding would be to facilitate, try to put that together. One of the things that we would like to do would be to talk to some of the tenants who live there to see, I mean we would make the decisions of course, but again, to try to

identify and prioritize needs. That does not give you how much will be there two years from now, three years from now at this point, but we do have predevelopment money set aside to try and do that type of thing.

Just on that, I would like to thank the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for the interest he has shown in Gilbert Park. He has really worked very hard to try to bring some of these issues to our attention and has been very helpful in being a conduit for us to have information going back and forth with the residents there. It has been helpful. We do appreciate it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, the last question I would have is the number of vacant units that are there right now, if I could actually get, if the minister has that at her fingertips, the number, the actual number, and how many of those units in fact we would be able to fill let us say over the next number of months, just an approximate. If you do not have those figures here, you can just get back to me sometime when you do have them available.

Mrs. McIntosh: We will get back to the member with that information. I do not have it available right now.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, I would just like to ask some questions on some of the issues that I raised earlier pertaining to 817 Main Street. One of the biggest concerns that was raised when I was meeting with the tenants there was, I mentioned earlier, the possibility of getting the windows washed. They have not been washed over two years and some of the residents were expressing some great concern. They said they can hardly see out of their windows, and I would like to ask the minister if there is a possibility of getting that work done soon.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for the question. The window cleaning has been contracted out. That particular project on Main Street is one of five that are being done by a particular firm. Staff here have indicated that they have been made aware of the problem, and they will have somebody out probably in about two

weeks to tend to that problem. Thank you for drawing it to our attention.

* (1610)

Mr. Hickes: I thank the minister and her staff for that answer. Also to the same pertaining to, I guess, that building and other units, like I mentioned earlier in my opening remarks, a lot of the units have not been painted, some for seven to 10 years. Will there be an assessment done on prioritizing of some of those units that have not seen paint in that long a time?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, we are playing a little bit of catch-up. As you know, the Manitoba Housing Authority has only been in place a little over a year and a half, between a year and a half and two years, and so there are some things that have been waiting and they need catch-up. Painting is one.

The staff have indicated they will check to find out about the painting in that particular unit and check into when it might be done, and they have made note of your concern about the length of time there.

Just as a matter of interest, it is nothing to do with really 817 Main Street, but staff have presented me with a little statistic here saying that last year they spent \$1.3 million on painting. So they have not been neglecting the painting with that amount of money being spent.

We do not have a schedule as yet where we say, you know, we repaint the units every so many years or things of that nature. I think once we have them all kind of current again, we could maybe look at saying, on a rotating basis, this is how often we do these types of things. In the meantime, they will look into that particular concern you have expressed to see what they can do to help.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister if at the same time, when the staff of Housing is looking at prioritized painting, they would check into or have a look around Lord Selkirk housing? You will see a lot of graffiti on buildings and on those noise barricades and stuff that are there and to see if there is a possibility of covering them up.

Some of the individuals that I spoke to there also expressed that they had not had their units painted for some time. They had been putting in a request to have it done, but nothing came about it so far, if she could check into that, and the possibility of when contracts or bids are tendered out, if there is a possibility of some of the work being done by local residents of the area where, for example, Lord Selkirk, such a high number of people out of jobs and they are looking for opportunities, and it might be a way of assisting the local residents in painting, and also, in areas I mentioned earlier, cutting the grass and possibly looking at providing security services at night to save costs from vandalism. Would the minister hopefully meet with the tenants or staff to see if those options are possible?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, I indicated earlier in questioning with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) some of the pilot project work we are doing at Gilbert Park, and it seems to me to be a fairly similar—nothing is ever exactly the same of course, but similar—kind of situation and similar kind of request.

We are just beginning to start on that pilot project at Gilbert Park to see if that kind of venture where we have tenants and residents of the housing complexes themselves actually begin to do some of the property management type work, it is an arrangement that has merit. Having said that, with that one going on there, I would like to just give it a little bit of time to see how it goes.

In the meantime they have got some specific problems and they have a general direction and a thrust they would like to go in Lord Selkirk, and I would be very pleased if you wish to accompany them and bring them to see me. I would be very pleased to sit down with them and talk about the types of things that might be possible down the line to do and also to address some of these specific problems you have identified they are experiencing, if you would like to do that once the House is out and we are back into a normal routine.

Mr. Hickes: I thank the minister for that, and I will contact her after the session to see if we could work something out.

Maybe it would be good to have a community meeting with the residents because since I have been elected in 1990 and since they have built that community centre called Turtle Island, it has brought a great deal of pride to the community, and the community has been very active and very involved in their own little community.

They are doing all kinds of excellent programs for the children and for community members and they are very, very active, and I know they would like to take more responsibility, because to a lot of the individuals living there, it is really the first time they see it as really their home, because they have everything there. The school is right close and the friendship centre is only just across the street and from my experiences in that four years things have really, really changed and changed for the better. So I welcome that, and I know that the individuals living there would really welcome that opportunity.

So with that I would just like to get back to 817 Main Street, because I raised the issue of a parking lot a while back. In fact, I raised it a couple of years ago with the former Minister of Housing, and at that time we were given the commitment that parking lot would be built. Then I attended a meeting, it was November 22, 1993, and we had a meeting with some of the residents that were representing 817 Main Street and a member of the staff of the Manitoba Housing Authority. I received a letter—I am just really asking the question for clarification here because I really do not understand what happened there, because there was a motion that was passed to acquire the land acquisition at 817 Main Street for additional parking.

The motion requested that the Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation, subject to reasonable cost, purchase the necessary property from the City of Winnipeg to add the additional parking stalls at 817 Main Street. Since then I do not understand what happened, but now in our discussions briefly in passing there is talk of using additional lots that already belong to the province for a parking lot. I would just like to ask the

minister what happened to the so-called deal the province had with the City of Winnipeg.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, you are correct in that the letter that was sent and the initial discussions that were taking place did involve the lane way behind and striking an arrangement with the city and so on. Two factors, well, actually three factors enter into this. One is that the lane itself, if we took the lane over, would not be sufficient in itself in terms of space. The city was asking a price for the lane as well, and those were two factors: (a) it was really not adequate land to begin with; and (b) the cost was not something we were excited about. The third factor is that we also own a lot 33 feet to the south on Main Street, and it is of sufficient size that we could get more vehicles on it than we could behind the building even with the lane way. So we met with the tenants and discussed it, and they expressed a preference for having that lot.

* (1620)

It is only 33 feet, which is not very far; it is bigger. We are going to have it well lighted and so on. We are needing to make arrangements with the city. We own the land. MHRC owns the land, but just in terms of making sure that that use for the land is acceptable and it is all right to do it, and if we can do that, that is the preferred option of the tenants. It is now our preferred option as well. If the city chooses to put a laneway in behind the building now, they can do that, but we will not have anything to do with that.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, my understanding was that the city was going to sell the property for \$1. That would have been a good deal if you could purchase that kind of land for \$1. I guess just to speed things up a little bit in the same question, I would just like to ask: With the alternative parking lot that is being looked at, when will that be built?

Mrs. McIntosh: In answer to the member's question, the total cost of opening that laneway to the government was going to have been \$45,000. Now it may have been, I am not quite sure how it is all broken down, but it may have been that the actual land itself would be \$1, but there were a

whole series of associated costs involved with opening that lane that would have totalled up in the \$40,000 to \$45,000 range.

As for the second part of your question, when will it be built, We are proceeding now, getting approval from the city to put in that kind of usage on the lot, and the minute we get that, we will be proceeding. If everything falls in place the way we hope it will, and we can never guarantee that, I am always really nervous about saying, we will have it done by this time or that time, but we would be not unsurprised if it would be up and running by the fall. Let us put it that way.

Mr. Hickes: I thank the minister for that very positive answer.

I would just like to move on to a meeting, the annual meeting they had, or annual convention that MAUM had—I think it was in Brandon. There was a resolution that was put forward pertaining to local housing boards and the resolution reads:

WHEREAS the communities in rural Manitoba are experiencing a major problem from the dismantling of local housing boards; and

WHEREAS the maintenance program related to social housing is deteriorating because of reduced funding and creation of central administration;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities requests the Minister of Housing to re-establish the local housing board and provide adequate funding and authority.

Have there been any discussions with MAUM, and if there have, is the minister looking at this option?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, we met with MAUM last week, I believe it was—recently. They expressed to us formally the resolution that they had passed at their convention. I have given the following response, and I will just share it with the member so he knows the dialogue that has gone on there.

The existence of 98 housing authorities was a relatively expensive undertaking as well as cumbersome in terms of the duplication of

services, the overlapping of services and delivery. We had differences in the types of decisions being made, the types of pressures that were being listened to. So consistency we felt could be improved by centralizing, which we have done.

Other provinces have done the same thing. In fact, the federal government is now encouraging jurisdictions across Canada where they have multiplicity of housing authorities to try to bring them down to achieve some sort of consistency and cost-effectiveness by reducing the vast numbers. So we have done that.

The rationale behind the MAUM resolution was that they were concerned about losing local input. They were concerned about the possibility that regional concerns might be overlooked, and so what we have done to try to address that concern is we have made certain that the Manitoba Housing Authority has about 19 members on it, and that they represent various regions around the province so that no area is missed in terms of having someone on it who comes from that area, either a community or its surrounding area. There are 15 members actually, my deputy advises me, who come from the various regions of Manitoba.

As well, in a proactive way, the MHA has made a conscious decision to begin going out to the various regions. Recently, they were out in I believe it was Beausejour. They took the committees that were dealing with specific problems right out to that area and notified people well ahead of time they were coming and invited community representatives to come in and make presentations directly to the committee, without those residents having to drive into Winnipeg or very far away.

They are also starting communications and will be with the MAUM association itself. So I think it is basically a question of communications, concern that the regions not be kind of swallowed up in this big entity that is the new MHA.

We are not going to be addressing their concern by disbanding the MHA and re-establishing 98 regional housing authorities. We are, though, going to try to get at the root of the problem if there

is one, the root of the concern, by putting in methods we think will help us to retain the cost-effectiveness and the consistency and all of the things that go with the big authority and make sure their concern that local needs are not overlooked or addressed in other ways.

* (1630)

Just so you get a sense of places where the MHA Board committees have been, to show you how they are trying to cover the province and stay in touch with local people, they have been to Swan River, The Pas, Churchill, Brandon, Souris, Morris, Winkler, Altona, Beausejour, Selkirk and Portage la Prairie to this point. They have really just sort of started this outreach not that terribly long ago.

That is the response we gave to MAUM.

Mr. Hickee: Madam Chair, I would just like to move on to follow up on some of the questions the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was raising about mothballing units. I would just like to raise a question on some of the units that I imagine are mothballed in the community of Churchill. There is a particular building there they used to refer to as the zoo. It is on Franklin Street. I am sure someone from your staff would know which building I am referring to.

With the positive potential of the spaceport taking off, there is going to be a real shortage of housing units in that community. I had calls from individuals from Churchill expressing concern that if the spaceport takes off it could create a construction phase. They are looking at creating anywhere from 300 to 400 jobs. They are looking at the possibility of a real housing shortage there. That one apartment building was pointed out to me as a possibility of single people going up to work being able to be housed there.

Other units—have there been any discussions with the community of Churchill through the mayor-in-council and also with people that are involved with the spaceport to see if some long-range planning can come into play and try and fix up or free up some of the housing units for

hopefully construction workers coming into that community?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, we have a vacant apartment building in Churchill called Tamarack Apartments. Mr. Julius of my department, Gary Julius, who is here with us today, has been in communication with the AKJUTT people, spaceport people about the possibility of that building being acquired by them. That is still in initial discussions. As well, the deputy and other senior staff will be going up to Churchill sometime early in July, and they will be meeting with the LGD up there to talk about this amongst other issues that affect housing and that community.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, I thank the minister for that answer because it looks like you are one step ahead of what is happening there. I hope it will all be positive for the community, because there is a real need for employment opportunities in that community.

I would like to just clear up a few questions in my own mind pertaining to an issue that we dealt with awhile back. That was to the tendering of contracts from the housing authority for the community of Churchill. The reason I raise that is that I received a lot of calls because the people in that community were very upset about what was happening there. I know that the minister acted very quickly on it.

What took place there and how will that be prevented from happening again? That is a question I would like to ask.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, with regard to that question, I know the member was concerned about that and had expressed concern about it earlier. Staff has been up to Churchill. They have just come back as of late last week, and they have set up a standard tendering procedure now which will apply to all contracts going out in that area so there will be consistency across the board. Hopefully, all those involved will sense a fairness and equity of treatment in the way the ability to acquire work, the message has been put out from our department.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, the question was the whole question of fairness. That is all people were asking for, was fairness, for the ability to be notified, the ability to bid. They did not get a fine as long as they had the ability to put their bids in. So I thank the minister for her quick response to that issue that was raised in the community of Churchill.

I would just like to move on into the whole area of the rental increase, because the units that people are renting from, if they were not one-bedroom units, the rent has been increased to 27 percent. My understanding from the minister's response in Question Period was because, under CMHC, who funded 75 percent of the cost for each unit, there was a request to reduce it to 70 percent. So if that request was driven by the federal government, you are looking at a 30 percent difference in actual cost. So I guess the question I would like to raise with the minister is, if the contribution of the federal government is being reduced to 30 percent, eventually will the rents per unit be increased to 30 percent? Has she done any thinking on that?

Mrs. McIntosh: If the member could indulge me, I wonder if he could restate his question. I am not quite certain, the last little bit that he asked we did not quite catch it, and I would appreciate it being restated.

Mr. Hickes: The question I was asking was: In Question Period the response I received from the Minister of Housing at that time was the increase in rent from 25 percent to 27 percent was because of a directive that CMHC under the federal government was reducing their contribution from 75 percent to 70 percent. If that is the case, then there is a difference of 30 percent. So is the minister considering or looking at the possibility of raising somewhere in the future the 27 percent to 30 percent to cover that difference?

* (1640)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, there are two issues here really. The federal government shares in the loss on public housing rent subsidies. The area where they have eliminated the 75 percent funding was in the area of new housing costs, and I do recall the day that I gave my answer

there were two things going on at once, and I never got to complete the answer. I had wondered if I had left an impression that the two issues were one when I did not have a chance to explain they were distinct.

The 75 percent that the federal government has ceased paying is their share of new social housing capital costs, and that is one issue. Because of that, then, it becomes very important that we maintain and improve our existing housing stock for rental purposes as well as ensuring that any money that we can generate or save from our rental units be acquired because the federal government at the same time had said, we are not going to give you 75 percent anymore to build new units, but if you can be cost-effective, raise and save money, you will be allowed to spend it on new housing initiatives. Hence, and I was going to read to you from a letter the federal minister sent me, there is a lot here, but then I will just read the lines that are pertinent.

He talks about the preferred option being to increase the federal scale by 1 percent a year up to a maximum of 30 percent federally. He has also encouraged the ministers across the country to begin moving their—and I thought I had a letter here; yes, it is the same letter—to begin moving their RGI up. We have seen a number of provinces already move to 30 percent; indeed, some are already there. British Columbia and New Brunswick have already reached the 30 percent. Ontario is moving to 30 percent, one percentage point a year, and Alberta, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are going to 30 percent at different rates.

We went to 26 percent last year and said, well, we would go to 27 percent this year, and then we will decide what we will do. I think there are a couple of other provinces that are doing the same thing. They have raised it up a percentage point, and they are sort of going to assess, and sit and wait and see what happens, in case there is some other action, but the general trend across the country is, as you have asked, to go to that 30 percent. The pressure is that monies that we acquire that way may then be allowed to go to new

housing initiatives, which we cannot get from the feds in other ways.

I do not know if that completely answers your question, because we have not made a decision that we are going to go past 27 percent. We have made the decision we will go to 27 percent, but we have not made a decision or we have not made a commitment to do anything more than that. We have just said that much.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, so I guess just to clarify in my own mind, the increase to 27 percent, next year the federal government will reduce their contribution by 1 percent, so if the provincial government does not increase their rent to 28 percent, then the province will have to pick up that 1 percent loss by the federal government. Is that how it will be?

Mrs. McIntosh: The federal government on the RGI is not reducing its percentage, but what they are requesting is that the provinces begin to move up which thereby decreases their dollar contribution. It is sort of a backdoor way of accomplishing something. The net effect is the same. It is the same impact, but it is—

Mr. Hickes: Somebody has to pick it up.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, because if they reduce percentage and—[interjection] Yes, I think you understand what I am saying here.

Mr. Hickes: I just have one brief question and then I guess we will be switching to Home Renovation Program. I would just like to ask the minister—I have a few questions on the Emergency Home Repair Program. Would it be appropriate to raise those in Renovation Program, or would it be appropriate to raise them now?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, you can do it here if that is appropriate.

Mr. Hickes: The one question I wanted to raise is the whole aspect of aboriginal self-government. We know that there is a will by the federal government and also under a Manitoba task force we implemented the inherent right to self-government. So, when that comes about, there is going to be a shifting of a lot of responsibilities

from the federal, provincial to aboriginal organizations.

One of the biggest issues that comes to mind is in the whole area of housing. When I look at housing, I am talking about the urban areas, the Metis communities, the Inuit people because the federal government does have the responsibility on reserve housing, but what will happen to the nontreaty people because under self-government it includes all aboriginal people? That is Metis people, Inuit people, non-Status, plus the treaty people.

Has the government been in any negotiations with those organizations that represent the nontreaty, the Inuit and the Metis, and are there discussions on looking at the possibility of turning over or giving the responsibility for housing units or the whole idea of trying to develop adequate housing that is needed in a lot of the communities of our Northern Affairs communities and urban areas?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is a very good question. It is a very timely question because the issue is really gaining a lot of interest across the country.

* (1650)

The Manitoba Metis Federation does do some property management for public housing in rural Manitoba for the joint partnership, and I know that the Minister of Native and Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) has discussions—I am not privy to the exact nature of all those discussions—on the whole area of self-government with various interest groups that he meets with and talks to.

When we were at the recent Housing ministers' conference in Bathurst, as I mentioned earlier, the federal government had indicated an intention to proceed in terms of transferring responsibility, amongst other things, for their own housing to aboriginal peoples. We did talk about, what do you mean by aboriginal peoples, for starters, what do you mean by self-government? What do you mean by transferring responsibility, because there are First Nations peoples on reserve, as you mentioned the various categories in your question.

Some of these concepts are in the birth stages in terms of what kind of transfer responsibility for assuming the public housing needs of First Nations and aboriginal peoples, and as yet there has been no definitive plan come forward.

What has come forward, however, is a strong indication that the federal government supports this thrust and intends to move in this direction. In order to do that, the federal government will need the co-operation of the provinces and the territories. The provinces and the territories were all there at that meeting. The territories have a very strong interest in this particular topic. You are probably more familiar than I am with some of the housing problems that occur up in our northern regions.

So those discussions are just beginning, and to be quite honest with you, I do not know where they are going to lead us. The issue has been identified, the concern you express is being looked at, but no definitive plan has emerged yet from that concept.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chairperson, I would just like to, I guess, more under the Emergency Home Repair Program, make a few statements. I will see. I am not sure if I even have a question here, but under the Emergency Home Repair Program, out of \$400,000, there is a reduction of \$370,000, which leaves very little under the Emergency Home Repair Program.

When I raised this issue, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) said, well, they will be able to get it through a loan program where 60 percent is forgivable and the individuals will have to pay 40 percent of the cost back.

Under the Emergency Home Repair Program, that is for individuals who do not have the means to meet emergencies and for governments to try to make sure the individuals have the option of living in their own homes for a much longer period of time. So when you look at the individuals who use the program, you will look at very poor people and a lot of the elderly people.

The big concern I have here is the 40 percent that is required to be paid back as a loan. The reason individuals applied for the Emergency

Home Repair Program in the past is because they did not have the income. So now when they are required to pay 40 percent of that cost, where is that income going to come from?

If they cannot meet that 40 percent income, what normally happens is the bill is turned over to a collection agency to try to recover it. The individuals who do not have it cannot access that kind of a program, or if they do, then if they are being chased down by collection agencies, then what happens is their name is forwarded to the Credit Bureau. So even if they try to get a \$100 loan to replace a fridge or a stove, or what little loan they need, right away that will be stopped. So that is the real concern I have.

I personally believe it is a mistake, and I hope that the minister will look at it seriously and look at the concern that I raised. I just do not see it as being well thought out, now that I have had more time to think about it.

I would just like to ask the minister if she would look at the possibility of reconsidering the cuts to the Emergency Home Repair Program, maybe reducing it to some amount, but at least making it available so that individuals still have access to 100 percent of emergency home repair funds.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for his concerns, and I appreciate why he is concerned. I would just like to give some information that might help alleviate his concerns somewhat. The point he makes may have some application in certain cases. What we are experiencing though and what we believe will happen, in our desire to be able to continue to have money for emergency home repairs as times get tighter and tighter, the concern about the direct grant was that we may not always have the money available for those who need it in emergency times. When we had the flooding and everything last go-round, we had to keep going back to Treasury Board for more and more money to make sure we could cover everybody. So how could we make sure we have money there for people?

We knew there were people, the majority of them, in fact, who could afford to pay us back if they were given a long enough time and were not

charged interest. So what we said was this. We will give them \$3,000; if they have a problem and they need money right away, here is \$3,000. Take it, do your repair. You have 10 years to return that money to us. We will not charge you any interest.

We will have the Home Renovation Program. We will give you an up-front grant of 40 percent of that, up to \$1,000, so there is a possibility that you could get \$1,000 of that as a grant, or that you could pay back just the remaining. The 40 percent would be for free but you would not have to spend \$5,000 to get the grant. But we would also help that individual set up a system of payments, set up a schedule for repayment.

If the individual is having any difficulty, we estimate it would be, on \$3,000, say, \$20 or so a month, \$15 or \$20 a month if they borrowed the maximum and took 10 years to pay it back. We would help them set up the schedule of payments. If they were having difficulty we would call them in and try to help them find a way to repay us and waive, we have the ability to waive that repayment for a short period of time to help them get their financing and budgeting in order.

We believe it will give us opportunity to service more people. We believe that, having tested the incomes as we do for this type of program, that there would be the ability to repay if there was a long enough period of time and no interest. We are just starting this aspect and time will tell if we are right or if your concerns are valid. I hope your concerns are invalid, and we will look to see how it works.

Mr. Hickey: As far as the Housing Estimates, except for the Home Renovation Program, we have asked all the questions we will be asking, so should we go through and pass Housing Estimates and leave Home Renovations Program, because if it is possible at five o'clock to ask leave of the House if we could not watch the clock for 10 minutes and then we will be all finished with Housing Estimates, and that way you do not have to bring your staff back on Monday, if we could ask leave of the House to do that.

* (1700)

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., and time for private members' hour, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there is leave of the House for 15 minutes, let us say, to continue in Committee of Supply to complete the Estimates of the Department of Housing, following which we could then resume private members' hour. Then that would leave 45 minutes. So it would not be private members' hour. It would be private members' 45 minutes. We would still adjourn at six o'clock

Mr. Speaker: Oh, yes, there is no problem there.

Is there leave of the House to extend Committee of Supply for approximately 15 minutes to deal with and, I understand, to finish with the Department of Housing? That is what we are doing, simply the Department of Housing. Would there be leave for that? [agreed]

Now then, is there leave to allow the honourable government House leader at this time to reintroduce the motion to go back into Supply? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Housing.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

HOUSING

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will continue to deal with the Estimates for the Department of Housing. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Chairperson, I just have a few questions on the Home Renovation Program. I would just like to make a very brief statement. Under the Home Renovation Program my understanding is you have to spend \$5,000 to get \$1,000 back, and you have to spend that \$5,000 up front and then you would get the \$1,000 back. When I look at my constituency of Point Douglas and a lot of the northern communities, I find it very difficult where people would come up with \$5,000 up front to do repairs in their own homes to get the \$1,000 back. That is one of the biggest concerns I have about the program. So I would just like to ask the minister, how many people have taken out applications for the Home Renovation Program up to today?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Housing): Madam Chairperson, we have had over 10,000 calls so far. We have sent out 9,788 applications to homeowners. Those, of course, have not all been returned to us. There have been inquiries, and we have said, well, we will send you an application; you can take a look and see.

Those are now starting to come back in. We have had 226 received so far, and we have about—well, I guess, of those 226, those are now in the process of being approved or preapproved and people are being notified as to whether or not their application has been seen eligible. Inspectors are going out to see the properties and so on.

Mr. Hickes: Of those 226 applications that have been received, could the minister tell me what part of the city most of those are coming from?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have the breakdown on that, but my understanding is, as of about a week to 10 days ago, that the majority of the requests for application were coming in 60 percent city, 40 percent rural. I do not have that complete breakdown here.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Chair, the question I was raising was out of the 226 applications that have

been received, where are most of those applications coming from? Are they coming from what part of the city, or are they mostly rural?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have that information here, but I could find that out for you and let you know. I am not sure which areas of the city they are coming in from, but that information will be coming out in the form of statistics as the program proceeds.

I will inquire of staff and make sure that information gets to you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, would also be interested in that information. I notice the minister makes reference to 226. I believe that you are going to be approving 1,000 applicants in total?

Mrs. McIntosh: The program has a \$10 million allotment, and each household will be permitted, if they have spent over the \$5,000, a grant of \$1,000. If they are on one of the other two programs, the Emergency Home Repair or the RRAP program, they would be receiving a smaller percentage because those two categories will get 40 percent of—they are the low-income tested renovation and repairs.

I imagine they will not be in as plentiful a number as the majority, which will all be receiving the full \$1,000 back because they have spent \$5,000. So we are looking at 9,000 to 10,000 that could possibly be received and paid out. We do not know exactly how many are going to come back. We are seeing that many going out in terms of information requests.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess we are looking at then a minimum of a thousand individuals who would be actually successful in receiving some monies from this particular program. No?

Mrs. McIntosh: If an individual meets the criteria in the application, if they submit invoices that show they have spent up to \$5,000 on some approved renovation and if an inspection of their property shows that everything has been done according to rules, then they would be eligible to receive back a thousand dollars. The number of

people at this point is not known, nor have we said, only so many people can receive a rebate.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, I am very cognizant of the fact that we did make a commitment to pass this department. What I would ask the minister, maybe if she could get back to me, preferably soon. When I say soon, before the weekend would be nice.

What I am interested in knowing is the staffing complement, the administrative costs of this particular program and also in terms of what the government's intentions are with the advertising of this program. As the minister made reference to, we have had 10,000 phone calls, 9,780 applicants. If 10 percent of those materialize, the program is almost at capacity at that. If the minister can get back to me with respect to advertising, the costs of the particular program and possibly even the individuals who are administering. Are these appointments to people who have been brought on with the Department of Housing, or is this just internal staff?

* (1710)

Mrs. McIntosh: Just for clarification, certainly I would be pleased—maybe we could even sit down and go through some of this, if you have time, and have some staff and just go through your questions. I would be pleased to do that. But just for clarification, we have not received 9,788 applications. We have sent out that many. We have had 226 come back in. So we have only received 226 bona fide, this is what I have done, may I have approval of my renovation, type application.

We have had expression of interest in finding out if they do fit from nearly 10,000.

Mr. Lamoureux: Finally, Madam Chairperson, yes, I would appreciate that information, and if I did make that mistake by saying 9,700 coming in, I meant 9,700 going out in terms of applications. If there are any further questions on this, I might be inclined to ask it during the concurrence. So we will just leave it at that. Thank you very much, and we are prepared to pass everything.

Mr. Hickes: I have one very brief question. I would just like to encourage the minister and her

staff, under this Home Renovation Program, that they make sure that there are measures in place to protect the public from fly-by-night operators, and I hope there are strong measures in place. With that, we are prepared to pass, or I am prepared to pass the Estimates of Housing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and her very capable staff in providing good, direct answers to us. Thank you very much.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairperson, I have just one concluding statement on my part. Any questions that either of my critics feel they have not had a chance to answer here I would be pleased to answer at a mutually convenient time in the near future.

I, too, would like to thank both of them for a very positive experience in terms of constructive criticism. I wish we could see more constructive criticism in the House. I am very lucky, I happen to have two who have been able to do that. I appreciate it. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Item 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$354,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$85,200—pass.

1.(c) Finance and Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,393,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,254,300—pass.

2. Housing Program Support (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$146,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$30,200—pass.

2.(b) Research and Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$345,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$64,500—pass.

2.(c) Project Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$618,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$141,500—pass.

2.(d) Client Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$827,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$357,700—pass.

Resolution 30.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,532,500 for Housing, Housing Program

Support, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

3. The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (a) Transfer Payments \$34,899,200—pass.

3.(b) Grants and Subsidies \$6,436,300—pass.

3.(c) Emergency Home Repair Program \$30,000—pass.

Resolution 30.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,365,500 for Housing, The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

1.(a) Minister's Salary \$10,300—pass.

Resolution 30.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,097,700 for Housing, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

Resolution 27.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,000,000 for Other Appropriations, Home Renovation Program, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Housing.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Speaker: The hour being after 5 p.m.

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**DEBATE ON SECOND
READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 205—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), Bill 205, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille), standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer). Stand?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

**Bill 206—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the
Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), Bill 206, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les armoiries, les emblèmes et le tartan du Manitoba), standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, it is a great pleasure for me to stand and say that we do not have any problems with this bill. It makes April the 6th Manitoba Tartan Day, and it has already been declared Tartan Day nationally to the credit of accomplishments of many individuals.

I do not think anyone here would question the contribution that the people of the Scottish heritage have made to Manitoba and, indeed, contributed to Manitoba's rich cultural diversity. Indeed, the Scottish people were among the first European settlers in Manitoba when Lord Selkirk arrived with the first group of settlers in 1811. The descendants of this first group continue to contribute to the success and vitality of our province today.

I am happy to stand and support this particular bill and its passage to the committee at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 206, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with Bill 207 (The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail)? No.

Are we proceeding with Bill 210 (The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance)? No.

Are we proceeding with Bill 211 (An Act to amend An Act to Protect the Health of Non-Smokers; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de la santé des non-fumeurs)? No.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS**Res. 22—Action on Racism**

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that

WHEREAS Manitoba's development has always been tied to immigration and the fostering of cultural diversity; and

WHEREAS discrimination on the basis of race or cultural background has occurred and continues to occur in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS tackling the problem of racism should start at an early age in the schools; and

WHEREAS ongoing discrimination results in high unemployment, disparate representation in entry and lower level jobs, and poor job retention for affected groups; and

WHEREAS the workforce must reflect the makeup of the larger community; and

WHEREAS people experience racism in every sector of society, from the legal system to the educational system to the health system; and

WHEREAS continuing racist attitudes in our society have a severe economic and social cost; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has taken no substantive action on the recommendations in its own report, "Combating Racism in Manitoba," produced by the Manitoba Intercultural Council and tabled in October 1990.

* (1720)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the government to consider providing cross cultural and antiracism programs in every school in Manitoba, as recommended in the 1990 Manitoba Intercultural Council Report, "Combating Racism in Manitoba;" and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider delivering cross cultural and antiracism programs, both as a component of initial training and as a part of the ongoing in-service training, for child care workers, people who work with seniors, recreation workers, income security and health care professionals, as well as personnel in the justice system, as recommended in the 1990 Manitoba Intercultural Council Report, "Combating Racism in Manitoba"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider producing and distributing a pamphlet in a range of languages, detailing the laws and penalties relating to racist incidents and discrimination, as recommended in the 1990 Manitoba Intercultural Council Report, "Combating Racism in Manitoba"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to consider developing and delivering cross cultural sensitization workshops to be made available to all members of the Legislature, all deputy ministers and all political staff in government departments, as recommended in the 1990 Manitoba Intercultural Council Report, "Combating Racism in Manitoba."

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, this is a long resolution. I think it is important that it was the length that it was. This is an issue that encompasses virtually every section and segment of our society, not just for people who are of a different racial group than other people in our society, but for everyone.

Racism hurts everyone. I believe that the WHEREASes in this resolution speak to the negative impacts of racism, on the unemployment situation, in the workforce, in the health care system, in the education system and the severe social and economic costs of racism.

I actually think that there is not a member in this Legislature who does not understand that, I really believe. I also believe that it is essential that we not only understand that and pay lip service to the ideas expressed in the WHEREASes in this resolution but that we also seriously consider the recommendations that were put forward in the 1990 Manitoba Intercultural Council Report combating racism in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Intercultural Council was at the time of this report an arm's-length association representing over 400 groups in the province of Manitoba. They represented the full spectrum of the communities and groups that have made Manitoba the strong cultural and multicultural province that it is.

They not only represented those 400 groups, but they were able, because they had funding from the province of Manitoba at that time, to produce recommendations. They were able to produce documents that looked at issues such as racism.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to say that I think, as I have put on the record quite extensively in the past, the government's decision to eliminate the funding for the Manitoba Intercultural Council and thereby take away its ability to do the work that it had undertaken and had done for 10 years is a stain and a blot on this government and is an issue that will be dealt with in other areas, but the Manitoba Intercultural Council was able to produce many recommendations and papers on this topic.

This one in particular, Mr. Speaker, had some very good concrete suggestions that would enable the people of Manitoba to more fully appreciate, understand and enjoy the positive elements of our multicultural society.

They could do that and you are able to do that only if you are at the same time combatting the insidious and pervasive problem of racism in Manitoba. We have many examples of racism in our province, including, just today, there was a demonstration outside the Law Courts building because a member of a racist organization was appearing in court for a vicious attack four weeks ago on a member of the public.

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

The people that were at that rally represented many of the cultural organizations in the province of Manitoba, but they also represented a number of other organizations and groups, not as the article in the newspaper said, "special interest groups," but groups that represent a range of the people of Manitoba, who spoke out against this particular issue, this particular incident of racism, and also spoke out against the whole problem of racism in our society.

I think it is very clear that we do have a problem with racism in Manitoba. It is very clear that we are also paying an enormous price for this every time we have an incident of racism.

Incidents of racism are not always as overt as they were in this attack on this man, who by the way happens to have been a member of one of the founding, not original members of Canada, but a member of one of the major cultural components of our province and not a visible minority at all. He was just expressing concerns just before he was attacked about the racist comments that were being made by the individuals who then attacked him viciously.

We all pay the price for these racist comments, these racist actions and these racist attitudes. I think the resolution, the RESOLVEDs in this resolution, deal more with the attitude than they do with overt cases of racism.

The first resolution asks for cross-cultural and antiracism programs in every school in Manitoba. This is a very important component of this resolution, because as it stated in the WHEREAS, if we do not do some preventive work, if we do not work with children when they are young, then we are going to have a much more difficult time dealing with situations as children turn into young adults and adults. This does not just happen in the issues of racism, it happens in every area of our life. Our attitudes are established young, they are harder to change the older you get, and it is important that we begin that process early.

I also say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it is important to put these cross-cultural and antiracism programs in every school in Manitoba, because we have the same problem to a greater or lesser extent in every school in Manitoba. Another thing, too, that I think is important to remember is just because you go to a school for Grades 1, 2 and 3 in Minnedosa does not mean that you will not end up attending Grades 4, 5 and 6 in the north end of Winnipeg and perhaps junior high in the south end of Winnipeg and senior high in Virden. I mean this is a very mobile population. We are all very mobile these days. So you have to have the programs in every school in Manitoba so that children have access to that training and education.

It is also important then by definition, if you have the programs there, you need to have the training of the teachers that will be implementing those programs, and that is also important because teachers are a very important component of our socialization in our education about the world around us.

The second resolution is similar to the first recommendation and that is that there be cross-cultural and antiracism programs delivered to virtually every other profession in our society that connects with the multicultural elements of our society in addition to the educational, and that is child care workers, people who work with seniors, recreation workers and income-security and health care professionals, as well as the justice system.

* (1730)

These people, these professions, work with people and have a great deal of influence on attitudes and behaviours. In many cases, these people are in positions of control and authority, all the way from child care workers to guards in the provincial correctional system. We need to educate them as well as to the issues of racism and also the cross-cultural issues. Cross-cultural issues are not exactly the same as antiracism issues. If you have a good cross-cultural understanding, then you are much less likely to have racist attitudes. So they are very closely connected but they are not exactly the same.

The third resolution is the urging of the provincial government to produce and distribute a pamphlet in a range of languages detailing the laws and penalties relating to racist incidents and discrimination. I think that this is an important component of the resolution as well, because not only is it important that individuals who are potentially most likely to be the victims of racist behaviours, attitudes and actions, not only do they need to know what their rights are, but also individuals who might consider behaving in a racist fashion need to know what the penalties are for their behaviour.

The Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) has just recently introduced legislation that would prohibit young offenders from getting their drivers' licences if they are charged repeatedly with offences. One of the statements that the Minister of Justice has made in the introduction of that bill is that you have to ensure that they know what the penalties are for their actions.

This pamphlet would go a bit of a way in allowing individuals across the spectrum in Manitoba to understand, No. 1, what their rights are and, No. 2, what their responsibilities are, and that there are consequences for actions such as racist statements, comments, attitudes and actions.

Finally, the last resolution deals with a cross-cultural sensitization workshop to be made available to many of the people who work in the legislative process in the province of Manitoba. The second resolution talks about child care workers, people who work with seniors, income

security, health care and justice system people, many of whom are government employees, but this final resolution is discussing the need that we have to sensitize ourselves. By ourselves, I mean not only the 57 members of the Legislative Assembly but the deputy ministers and all political staff.

The reason for this part of the resolution is that because everything we do in our actions as members of the Legislative Assembly, whether in opposition or government, whether as a minister or a backbencher and, by extension, the deputy minister level, which is the level of the government that is actually charged with the implementation of government policy and legislation, as well as the political staff of not only all members but of the ministers—these individuals in their own various ways have an enormous amount of influence, power and authority in the legislative process.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if we as legislators and deputy ministers and political staff are not aware of the implications of our actions, our behaviours, our judgments, our legislation, and the implications that has on the issue of racism and multiculturalism, and if we are not aware of the impact that has on cross-cultural issues, then we are not going to provide the kind of services and the kind of legislation that the people of Manitoba need and have the right to expect.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that this resolution is one that is fairly detailed and talks about some specific programs that could be implemented in many of our systems throughout the province of Manitoba. I think it is a resolution that deserves, and I hope it will receive, the approval of all members of this Legislature, and that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) will support this resolution and will undertake to take the lead role in working with his colleagues on the government benches to begin implementation of these recommendations

Mr. Acting Speaker, I can assure you that the official opposition would support completely any actions that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship would agree to undertake in implementing this resolution.

With those few words I commend this resolution to the Legislature, and look forward to its speedy passage today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be able to stand here to speak to the member for Wellington's resolution.

I have had ample opportunity in the past, as a cultural critic or multicultural critic, to go out and meet with all different ethnic groups and experience first hand the cultural diversity that Manitoba actually offers. There is one topic that comes up consistently, and that topic, of course, is racism, and I think what is most important for not only all members of this Chamber but all Manitobans to realize is that no matter what is to be said about racism the bottom line is that racism hurts, and it hurts whether it is intentionally done through a racial slur or if it is an action that is unintentionally done.

I wanted to give a couple of the experiences that have been conveyed, and in some areas I myself have witnessed or partaken, and things can happen in a very perceived-innocence way, Mr. Acting Speaker. I recall a couple of years ago, for example, when I was over at the International Inn and I was at a function, and I was standing beside a black lady and someone walks up to us and looks at the lady and says, how long have you been in Canada? Well, I would likely argue that had she been of an Italian background that individual would not have asked the lady the same question. Because this particular individual was of a visible minority it was assumed that this individual is a recent immigrant to Canada, and nothing could be further from the truth. A little bit of knowledge on immigration, on history of Canada, would have demonstrated very clearly to this individual that the black community has been in Canada for generations.

Other incidences more recently—for example, we have heard a lot about the turban issue in which many Legions across Canada have indicated that they do not support the wearing of headwear in order to really, in my opinion, Mr. Acting Speaker, in many cases to hide what the root of their

problem really is, and that is more of a racial thing. The reason why I say that is, I was listening, and I think it was Mike McCourt, it was on CJOB, where the newscast said in Calgary a legion said, no, that you cannot, because you have headwear and a turban is a part of headwear, that you cannot wear it, but they did make an exception. They made an exception, I believe it was for cowboy hats, during their annual event.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I found that if you really read between some of the messages that come out that it has nothing to do with tradition or respect, that it is a bit more deep-rooted than that. I recall, and it was very gratifying to see other communities, in particular the Jewish community, coming to the defence that this is not a policy that is supported, and it was very gratifying to hear members from this Chamber actually speak out against that particular policy.

* (1740)

I recall another incident where a constituent of mine went to the Superstore up in the north end. Many individuals may recall that particular incident because it received quite a bit of media attention. The day that the incident occurred I had received a call from my constituent and she expressed that all she was doing was going through the checkout line and the clerk made reference to the fact that all Filipino children steal. Mr. Acting Speaker, when I had talked to her, this particular lady was crying on the telephone trying to express how she was feeling and what it is that she could do about it.

The message, as I say, that I would try to get out when it comes to racism is that it does not matter the severity of the case, in the sense that whatever racial action is taken, whenever someone makes a racial statement, that you are hurting people, real people, and the only way that you are really going to combat racism is to do what the Manitoba Intercultural Council talked about, and that is through education. To combat racism you have to take certain measures in order to educate the population as a whole.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if you take a look at any kindergarten class in the area that I represent and

you look at the kids playing together, you will see that it does not matter what colour of skin or ethnic background one child comes from, that the children in the kindergarten level all play amongst each other and they are all equals, and that is the way it should be. But as years go by, through stereotypes and other forms of problems that society has, some individuals through the socialization process become and take unfortunately racial actions or say things that do a lot of damage to society as a whole. I believe that there is a lot of merit to what the resolution is in fact saying and is something that should be supported.

But there are a number of points that I wanted to talk about with respect to the resolution. I know part of the BE IT RESOLVEDs is making the suggestion that MLAs take a cross-cultural day along with the deputy ministers and so forth. This is in fact a recommendation from the MIC. This is something that we have been asking now from our caucus since 1990, shortly after the report was done.

It is not like it is a major initiative that the government would have to do to provide that one-day cross-cultural experience for MLAs, but it does at the very least send a message. As elected officials, Mr. Acting Speaker, you know just as well as I that we go out and we meet with a wide differing, a large number of Manitobans. We get opportunities to speak. We get opportunities to sit down and talk about all sorts of different issues, and it is important that we are sensitized to what other individuals feel is important to them in terms of combatting racism and we are better able to do our part.

It would be nothing for the minister to stand up following me and to make that commitment, to say that sometime within the next two months, that that particular day for MLAs in fact will be provided, and send out an invitation not only to the MLAs, but to whether it is members of Parliament, school trustees, to all the elected officials. That would be at the very least a strong statement coming from the government that they are prepared to do what they can.

There are other issues. The member in the resolution makes reference to the curriculum, incorporating it into the educational curriculum. Being the Education critic, I have sort of an understanding in terms of the pressures that are put on the current curriculum. I could go to the Pedlar report where domestic violence and the Pedlar report is recommending that something on domestic violence be a part of the curriculum.

There is no doubt that our educational facilities do have a role to play in combatting racism and dealing with domestic violence and in the many other things that are being pressured in terms of adding to the curriculum. But I think that maybe there might be ways in which we can bring in, and we look to the Department of Education in particular and the department of multiculturalism, or the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism (Mr. Gilleshammer) should be sitting down with the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) and saying, what are we doing to sensitize? Where can we incorporate under the current curriculum to ensure that we are sending a very positive message and a message that racism does hurt, that it is important that we have tolerance amongst our children? If mom and dad are saying something, it might not necessarily be proper because it is not acceptable in today's multicultural society, and I would argue, nor should it have ever been acceptable, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I recall the member for St. Johns when she brought forward, with no doubt good intentions, to the Chamber and she asked a question about, well, why does the minister not incorporate this magazine that was being produced and supply the funds that were necessary to publish this magazine, and then it was tabled.

I had the opportunity and I read the magazine. The magazine in itself had racist messages. The reason why I bring that up is because I think this is something in which, yes, we have to take some action. It is important that government lead where it can, but it is equally important that we have got to be very cognizant that by trying to say this is wrong, that we are not overcompensating by

making a statement that others might perceive as being racial.

That particular magazine was in fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, something as a whole I could not support because of some of the things that were being a part of it, but I do believe that there is material that is out there and maybe the department—I should not say maybe—the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism (Mr. Gilleshammer) do have a role to see if there is material, and if there is not, maybe we can put together some material which would assist the Department of Education in ensuring the children, not only children, but also adults through community clubs, through other avenues, are receiving a very strong message, that message being that racism is not tolerable in society and government will not tolerate it.

One of the ways governments can demonstrate that it will not tolerate it is to give some teeth to the organizations that are there today, such as the commissions that are out there, the Human Rights Commission and so forth, if they have the ability to be able to take concrete action against individuals.

The other day I had a member from the visible minority give me a call and said that she had applied for a particular job and was told that they were not hiring from that particular ethnic group, Mr. Acting Speaker. I suggested to her that she take it to the Human Rights Commission. She was somewhat fearful that by taking it there, it was going to become some sort of a public event, and she would rather not do that.

Well, those cases that do go before the public, those cases that do go before the commissions, the government has to do what it can to ensure that action is being taken so that society will see that if you take some sort of a racial action that is hurting or going against a community that in fact government will not tolerate it, and will do what it can to ensure it is not going to continue.

I, too, would like to see the resolution come to a vote and would anticipate that this particular resolution does receive the support from members inside the Chamber, I know it does from this

particular member. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important topic that we are having an opportunity to discuss today and always a very sensitive issue surrounding it. I do regret that we have such limited time today, through nobody's fault of course that we are not getting our full hour. I know that I have colleagues here who also wanted to have an opportunity to put some thoughts on the record on this particular resolution.

The member who introduced it started by saying it is a long resolution, and certainly it is. There are many aspects of it that I think we can agree on, and I would like to dwell on some of those.

* (1750)

She also indicates in one of the WHEREASes that the provincial government has taken no substantive action. I think this is what really spoils the resolution because there is absolutely no recognition of the tremendous work that has been done by the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, the Department of Education, the Department of Justice and many other departments in implementing programs and policies that really move to the core of this issue and go a long way in answering the report that the member speaks of.

I am just sorry that I am not going to have enough time to get into all of those things today, and again it certainly is not the fault of the member that we needed that important time to spend on Estimates. While the Liberal Party has not asked questions on this topic in Question Period, I know the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) is sincere because one day she did ask me a question on this particular issue. I know that when we get to the Estimates debates, hopefully in the near future, we can spend some time on this and go into a little more detail.

I would like to say that the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship has a couple of programs that have worked exceedingly well.

The Bridging Cultures Program has provided funding to community groups to do a variety of things to combat racism and work on some of the sensitive issues that have been referenced here today. These groups have been able, through the Bridging Cultures Program, to access some small grants to work on some literature, some pamphlets, some community meetings and so forth to share their feelings and share their thoughts on racism and to bring forward some solutions within their own communities and certainly bring them forward to government.

Our government is just really happy that we have been a partner in working on these issues and finding these solutions. I know that citizens within our communities fully recognize the efforts that have been put forth by the department to find these solutions and move forward.

Too often we dwell on the negative, and I would remind members opposite that the United Nations again has indicated that Canada is the No. 1 country in the world that people want to choose to live in. Certainly, Manitoba is very proud of the many attributes that we can boast of about our province. We know that there are people in other parts of the world who are attempting to immigrate to Canada and certainly to Manitoba, and we are proud of that.

The other program I would like to just briefly mention is the program called the Respectful Workplace. Our department took a lead in developing what is called a code for a respectful workplace. To the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), who indicated, and I am sure not with a lot of sincerity, that government has taken no substantive action, if she is not familiar with that program, I would certainly be willing to provide her with some detailed information on it. This program has been embraced by the Civil Service Commission, by the private sector and also by other governments across Canada who are recognizing that Manitoba is taking a leading role in bringing forward this code for the respectful workplace.

The member for Wellington says that we should do more within the school system and make it

mandatory that the school system has programs in place and teachers in place who, in their teachings and in their programs, educate children to be more tolerant, to deal with racism that is in society and to hopefully bring forward graduates some day who have an understanding of the cultural diversity of Manitoba.

I really have to agree with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) on this issue. We are asking our schools to do a tremendous amount of work. We have a public out there who is demanding that the school system spend more and more time on some of the basic tenets of education. The school system itself is under attack by many who are saying that our standards are not high enough, that the education that is provided today is not of a quality that the public wants.

I can tell you, as someone who has spent many years in the school system, I do believe that we have made too many demands on the school system which take time away from the curriculum, which take time away from what needs to be taught as part of a basic education.

I will tell you that I think teachers, since the beginning of time, through programs in geography and history and language arts, have incorporated within their teaching ideas of respect for other students, respect for other people, an acknowledgement of what the many multicultural groups have brought to our province, but to come forward and say that we have to dedicate time and provide curriculum and teaching time in an already short day, in an already short year, when there is so much demand, we have a system that is going to produce graduates at the end of the day who are competitive and well educated and can readily move into employment in our society, to further shrink that school day by adding more courses is just not on.

We have to do that within current curriculum. We have to do that, whether it is on the playground or with existing courses, that is something good teachers have always done.

We do not need to add credit courses. We do not have to add new programming to do what good

teachers have always done. I think, if the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) would give that some thought, she would see that that suggestion simply is not one that would work. We have people demanding that we extend the school year, that we extend the school day, that we spend more time on literacy, on basic computational skills, on making people computer literate. We simply cannot be stealing that valuable time to add new

programming, new credit courses in any of the schools and any of the programs—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned till 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 23, 1994

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