

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, 26 June, 1986.

Time — 8:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY — COMMUNITY SERVICES

MR. CHAIRMAN, M. Dolin: Committee will come to order. Page 34, Item 4.(b) Child and Family Support: Resolution 32.

The Member for Kirkfield Park.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Yes, I'd just like to briefly go back, Mr. Chairman, about the review committee, consulting with front line social workers and the confidentiality, would the Minister be able to tell us exactly how they would go about speaking to — and I'm not talking about the supervisors — I'm talking about the social workers who are going into the homes all the time and doing the actual work?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Community Services.

HON. M. SMITH: If I understand the question right, the member is wanting to know what procedure will be followed in such case. I think we've outlined to them the type of questions we want answered, and in a sense we've hired a social worker who specializes in social systems and a doctor with special knowledge and experience in child abuse and rely on them, in a sense, to design the process they will use.

I expect that they'll follow the usual ethical principles of accepting being open to people who offer them information and seeking out people who may have direct experience. I presume they'll use a type of sampling, plus letting it be known where they're available if people wish to initiate contact.

I would presume that conversations would not — if they were about specific cases — it wouldn't be for the purpose of specific cases being written up. What would be written up would be samples of how cases are being handled and suggestions how that could be improved, if that is what they find. Perhaps if the member could focus me — for my benefit — a little more closely on whether she has fears or concerns or just straight interest.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Interest certainly, but I guess the concern is the people seeking out, say, the social workers under the supervisory level. If someone wanted to speak to the committee, how would they be able to do it? I think there's sometimes fear of talking to committees about things. How would they be able to go about that without the world knowing about the fact that they were there, not what they were saying?

HON. M. SMITH: Well, the place, I've passed on the address of the people, they don't yet have a phone number. But we will certainly make it known throughout the system that we expect — as a matter of fact, I think we already have — people to cooperate fully. If

anyone had any fear, they could certainly expect protection from us.

I think if anyone wants to know how to submit in an anonymous way — well, maybe not anonymous, but to be sure that their concerns are heard — is to write in. I think they can be sure that their identity would be protected, though. I don't recommend anonymous letters, but I do think that what they say and the fact they've written in would be treated with respect and confidentiality.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Will there be any families, contacted mothers in this review?

HON. M. SMITH: Again, we didn't design this study to the nth degree by selecting professional people with expertise in how best to do these types of studies. I think we've had confidence that they would pursue their review in an ethical way.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Yes, I am not doubting that it be done in an ethical way, I'm just wondering how deeply they'll go and possibly the Minister has given them instructions to, say, talk to some families who have been, some mothers who have been in a position of having abused children, front line social workers, just areas that possibly the committee might not delve into.

HON. M. SMITH: I'm certainly more than happy to pass on that notion and would encourage the member, if she had any other suggestions, that she herself could submit them to the review group.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: I had asked before we adjourned about the number of staff in the different agencies — and I've got the figures — and I was looking at it in a more general way. What I am wondering with the number of staff attached to each of the agencies, have the agencies considered going into more specialization with a number of the people, possibly not all the staff, but specialists in, say, child abuse, specialists who deal with foster homes, adoption, pre and postnatal care?

HON. M. SMITH: The pattern that we see evolving and which we expected to evolve is varied depending on the size of the caseload in a particular area. The service delivery pattern will depend largely on the volume of particular types of problems that emerge.

Certainly the larger agencies are already developing some degree of special responsibility or ability. The smaller ones tend to use a more consultative mode without necessarily, you know, specifically designated experts. But there are other backup people that they can call on for advice.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Mr. Chairman, from what I can understand about some of the problems that have been happening in the agencies, is that the social workers aren't, or people aren't necessarily dissatisfied with decentralization, but they are feeling that a lot of the

foul-ups come because of inexperience; and that a generic social worker — if that's the term that's being used — can't possibly know everything about every phase of what happens.

So if someone — the need in other words — to go out and be able to assess what is actually happening without having a fair amount of expertise in, say, child abuse or in these areas, it's knowing whether to apprehend or not getting — I think the word that was used once was "conned" — by the people and the feeling was it was not from anyone not doing their work properly, it was just the inexperience that was happening; and that the feeling of a lot of people in the field is that they need more specialization because you can't expect everyone to have the kind of expertise that is needed in all these cases.

HON. M. SMITH: As I understand, most social work situations call for a blend of professional judgment by the individual, based on their training, access to a supervisor and to an executive director for consultation. In child abuse one of the temptations sitting at it from this side would be to say, let's have specialists out there and they'll really know what they're doing.

The problem with that is as we get into the child abuse area we're finding such a large number of cases that may not present as child abuse, but as the worker gets further into the situation and is more skillful in detecting underlying causes, we're finding it in so many of the cases that we really have no choice but to develop the skills of detection and initial treatment, or activity with a case in our general workers. We emphasize training throughout and I think if we could lay out all the people who have skill and expertise in this area, it would form a sort of hierarchy with the more skilled and experienced, teaching those at the next level down.

We know there is a lot of training and worker development in the field, but the individual cases don't sort themselves out on first blush so easily into different specialties. So you have to have a combination of general worker, and then access to more specialized knowledge.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: From what I hear the Minister saying, I believe that she's talking about specialization along with the generic worker and I certainly don't disagree with that.

What I'm not getting the feeling about is that anyone is really trying to deal with the specialization and I hope that the review committee will be looking at that area so that there isn't just one coordinator, one consultant to be dealing with it, but when I look at the numbers in some of the agencies, certainly there could be three or four in one area, four or five in another, certainly.

HON. M. SMITH: In a system where there are some things centralized and some that are decentralized, it's important to sort out what is better done at which level. From our point of view, we have the coordinators in some of the special areas, at the provincial level. We have a coordinator, for example, of child abuse at the city level.

We have also put in a case study and a management study to sort out some of the workloads and the staff ratios for the different types of cases, and to sort out

management issues in the sense that we can help agencies learn from one another, perhaps the best way to build in a good process so that the field worker does have adequate supervision and that difficult cases are reviewed by the executive director.

We require permanency planning within a certain time frame and will be undertaking periodic review of cases. It's a question of some functions being left at the centre and some devolved to the responsibility of the community boards. The community boards have community representation on them and then they hire trained professionals. Part of being a professional is having specific skills and experience. It's also the development of judgment, where you can sort out what you are able to deal with and what is beyond you.

So, really, we are relying on people making professional judgments appropriate to what job they hold in the agency and try to build in some checks and balances and accountability patterns. But they will vary somewhat from agency to agency. Executive directors and presidents meet regularly and certainly they exchange a lot of information about how each group is handling particular types of problems. I think at this stage there's probably some wisdom in a fair bit of diversity, because there is no one pattern that matches every community.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Could the Minister inform me if all the supervisors — in that the majority of the people in the agencies that are dealing with people and with the front line social workers — are they all social workers? Are the supervisors all social workers?

HON. M. SMITH: In general, if there are any para-professionals in the system, they would be working at the front line with careful supervision by either a BSW or MSW with experience. There may be some people with somewhat comparable training and experience such as a degree in psychology and experience in a related field, but the supervisors — I guess we would call professional — have professional training.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: They're all social workers, you were saying?

HON. M. SMITH: Well, I said some may be psychologists with similar training but by far the majority would be BSW or MSW's.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Did I see during the past year an advertisement for an executive director at one of the agencies?

HON. M. SMITH: I understand that Central did advertise for a new ED.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Did they hire someone, and if so, who is it?

HON. M. SMITH: They have an acting at the moment. As I understand it, they haven't completed their interviewing or recruitment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for St. Norbert.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, going back to the Minister's response to me this month, I had asked a

question with respect to the facilities available for abused children, for example, foster homes, group homes, level-four beds, and homemaker services. The Minister responded by indicating there are presently approximately 1,400 foster homes and 45 group homes and centres with 502 beds available throughout the province. Is that an increase or a decrease in foster homes and group homes?

HON. M. SMITH: We will search to see whether we have some precise answer. We believe it's in the same neighbourhood of what was there before.

MR. G. MERCIER: There would appear to be approximately the same number as it existed in previous years.

HON. M. SMITH: There are about the same number of children in care. The number of foster homes is substantially the same. There's been some build-up of special needs foster homes.

MR. G. MERCIER: Taking that answer into context with the information the Minister distributed on residential care funding which shows in a comparison from April 1, 1985, to April 1, 1986, a decrease, a reduction of 79 beds, and with the increase in abuse cases, where are these children being kept?

HON. M. SMITH: We do have some data, October '85 over October '84, that I think gives the general pattern. Foster homes, including regular rates, special rate in support homes, were at \$5.87 and are now in October '85 at \$7.04. We have the cumulative rather than the broken down data. While my staff are leafing through the stats book, maybe we can go on and come back when they've found the . . .

MR. G. MERCIER: There is a significant decrease in the Level 4 homes. Could the Minister indicate where that decrease has occurred?

HON. M. SMITH: The general shift from Level 4 beds has gone into special rate foster care. From 1984-86, over a two-year period, MacDonald Youth Services went from 52 to 24, a reduction of 28, again because agencies weren't placing youngsters there.

In the 1985-86 period, Knowles went down six and Marymount went down six, and Children's Home sold a home that had six, so there were 18 in the 1985-86. We think we're at a fairly stable level for the Level 4, but we'll be watching closely the demand pattern.

MR. G. MERCIER: That reduction in Knowles and Marymount because of a government decrease in funding for them, was it not?

HON. M. SMITH: In fact, the Knowles and Marymount six and six, or total of 12, the Winnipeg agencies were not buying those by choice, but the Indian agencies were, so in fact each of those agencies now has six beds being purchased by the Indian agencies.

MR. G. MERCIER: I wonder if the Minister could explain the statements then, that were reported at the end of

last August, to the effect that government cutbacks are resulting in a shortage of space for severely disturbed children. Mr. Clay Witherspoon, services director of the Marymount School said, "I strongly suspect there's a bunch of kids on the street that shouldn't be." And Charles Meltzer, the executive director of the Knowles Centre said, "The cutbacks are coming at a time when more problem teenagers are needing treatment," and indicated that because of the lack of facilities kids end up wandering the streets or are in holding facilities like Seven Oaks.

Mr. Meltzer referred to the loss of funding for six of his 30 beds as of September 30, 1985. All of these facilities specialize in long-term intensive treatment centres for children considered to have the most severe behaviour and emotional problems. I would ask the Minister if this is the case, how does she reconcile these statements with the action in, what I believe she said, in changing the emphasis to the special rate foster home?

HON. M. SMITH: I think what we're observing here is an historical pattern where the child welfare system was, in a sense, driven or serviced by the agencies that provided a type of care and, in a sense, the beds were there and there were no options so that's where children went.

Now what we said was that the new agencies would be responsible for developing the individual plans for each youngster and they would have available to them more choices. In other words, they could fund a proctor or a full-time parent in what I'm calling these foster settings with special rates. In some cases, the child could be placed back in their home with a child care worker helping to train the parents how better to get along with the children or provide them extra supports.

Because these options were available to the workers, they in fact were not selecting the agency beds. Again, I guess I can understand agencies who have operated in the past. By this I mean the agencies that service the child and family agencies, thinking that they were doing the best possible and should go on expanding; but in fact we think the best determiner of what the needs are in the system is the workers and the agencies who are dealing with the individual young people and planning for them.

If the preferred plans pointed to an increased need for the high level care, we would consider expanding there, but the demand pattern has shifted and we feel that the decision is better made on the ground by the worker dealing with the individual, rather than by us saying that there's some magic ratio of levels of bed that happens to match the agencies that are out there offering it.

In the particular agencies, I can imagine they might think there's a great demand that is unmet, but we've been through the new agencies, certainly identifying a lot more young people, and to date the pattern of usage seems to be following the pattern we expected.

The Seven Oaks situation is a little different because it isn't a long-term placement; it's a shorter term situation.

Most of the treatment centres that used to give residential care have now shifted some of their programs to children still at home or they're offering

proctor parent service. We found that for the most part they've been quite willing to play a very helpful and cooperative role in providing a greater mix of options for treating young people in need.

MR. G. MERCIER: Is the Minister satisfied or of the view that children are receiving better treatment in the facilities that they are now going to than they were going to these longer-term facilities?

HON. M. SMITH: Well, that's a question that I guess I could argue one side or the other, but I think my opinion in this should come secondary to the people who are working with the children. When the group home treatment mode developed rapidly there was a lot of — I remember, being involved at sort of second-hand with it 15-and-so years ago. It offered a lot of hope to people, the idea that you could offer children the kind of support they needed and the treatment and the protection and all in a group home and that the staff would be able to give them the personal support and the psychological help that they needed.

I think for some youngsters that still may be the preferred mode, but there were a lot of children who stayed in those homes and who eventually left them, some running, for whom the social workers were not completely satisfied that they offered all the answers. There seemed to be a shift in emphasis to a more personalized care for a child, particular for the under 12's in more like a family-style home. That's when the mode of practice started to shift somewhat.

Again, I don't feel complacent about any mode of dealing with youngsters in need. I think the jury is open in terms of what the mode of practice is going to be in the future. I think the best that we can do is to try to train people who work carefully, evaluate their work, get good feedback from them and help the system to revolve according to the best insights of the day. I feel confident that there's a lot of very careful systematic work going into trying to deal with these issues, and I think some downsizing of the group home treatment care was appropriate.

Now, as we're moving into a newer era where we seem to be having more disturbed adolescents, we may see some shift in the other direction. Again, I think the best decision-maker and monitor of that is the person in the field and their supervisors who do have to take responsibility on a daily-weekly basis for the well-being and improvement, or the opposite, decline of the young person.

MR. G. MERCIER: Could the Minister indicate what that increase in foster homes was again from October '84 to October '85?

HON. M. SMITH: That was just a Winnipeg number. My number crunchers are working very hard over here to put together some tables for you so we will distribute those as soon as they're ready.

MR. G. MERCIER: Perhaps the Minister could indicate what percentage of those increases in the foster homes were foster homes for abused children. It was indicated last fall that Seven Oaks was being overtaxed because there weren't enough foster homes for abused teenagers.

HON. M. SMITH: We don't designate or count the foster homes in that way. We give the choice of options to the agencies, the individual workers and the supervisors. They designate what is the best match for the youngster so we don't have them broken up into those kinds of groupings.

The foster care families that are on the special rates that are doing overtime the more skilled foster parents or the ones that are willing to take on more difficult youngsters do tend to become specialists of this sort but they aren't designated foster parents for child abuse per se.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I think it would be very important for the agencies to know how many foster homes they had available for abused children and that would have to be classed by two, into infants and teenagers, and different classifications of that sort. Surely, that is information that should be readily at hand. If you don't have it at hand and you have an emergency, then where do you go? You have nowhere to go.

HON. M. SMITH: Well, I think this bears out the fact that we've put at the local level the design of the service delivery within certain parameters and according to certain standards. The agencies know; they certainly have the list and know at first-hand the stock of resources that they have.

We will be collecting more and more of this data as we build up our computer system, our information system; but as the member knows, when you're phasing-in computerized collection systems, you have to do it in a phased way. At this point in time, that detail of data sits at the agency level.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that you need a computer to be able to do this. Could the Minister indicate what coordination there is between agencies with respect to the availability of foster homes? It would appear that obviously there is a much greater need in the Northwest and in the Central Agencies for foster homes. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether an agency is confined to using a foster home within its boundaries, what degree of cooperation is there with other agencies in the city. There may very well be areas of the city that have lesser problems but who do have people prepared to provide foster homes for certain situations.

From what I have heard and the people I've talked to, I'm not sure there is any coordination that's existing and that may be putting a great deal of pressure on the two agencies I've named, the Northwest and Central, to attempt to provide foster homes for the greater number of difficult situations which they have.

HON. M. SMITH: I now have the number of foster homes year over year: April '85 we were at 1,200; March '86 at approximately 1,400. There was at the time of regionalization an agreement worked out among the agencies to coordinate on the foster home supply. There's a lot of trading back and forth and that is also true in the rural areas.

We've put two foster home finders into the Central and Northwest Agencies; two each, so that's four and

more people to assist them with foster home location in their area but there is a coordination agreement for trading over boundaries.

MR. G. MERCIER: How many foster homes have been used by Northwest, outside of its boundaries?

HON. M. SMITH: We don't have that statistic.

MR. G. MERCIER: It's one thing to accept the general, all-embracing statement about all of this cooperation and coordination, but I'd like to see the hard facts and to see whether in fact there really is the coordination and utilization of homes outside of the boundary, because I tend to believe with the kind of system that's being set up, the top priority is to look after your area when really there should be, in a lot of these areas, a greater concern for the whole community. I wonder, does the Minister have available or can she obtain for the committee some statistics to indicate the number of foster homes that each agency has used outside of its boundaries.

HON. M. SMITH: We can obtain that, not tonight though. It'll take us a bit longer. There are some problems in maintaining a foster home network that result from just changing times. We are monitoring it and we're doing what we can to promote the development of foster homes, but some of the reasons for the changing pattern are that there's more women working and they're less willing or able to take children. There is the fear that they may be accused of abuse. That's a reality, now that we are reporting abuse and trying to deal with it. A person who's been abused and lived with that type of situation doesn't just get over it overnight.

There's no magic treatment that can wipe the slate clean, and sometimes these youngsters themselves are abusive or make accusations of abuse. I suppose sometimes we can never ignore the possibility that the accusation might be accurate, so foster parents do accept a more difficult responsibility these days. We are having more troubled adolescents and adolescents are always — not always — but in general more difficult to manage in a foster family.

These factors are related to a lot of other social changes going on and as we monitor what's going on — we may not have just the precise numbers that the member is wanting, an instantaneous recall here — but we do pick up the trends and plan ahead or try to keep flexibility in the system to better meet the changing need.

MR. G. MERCIER: Will the review committee be considering — in dealing with this whole child abuse area — the facilities that are available for abused children?

HON. M. SMITH: The review program or the review terms of reference is focusing primarily on the reporting and multidisciplinary — the system interface — and the system way of making decisions about abused children. The issue of appropriate treatment over the longer term is one that is evolving throughout the system. I repeat that when we read national material,

we find that they all seem to be one or two steps behind where we are, in terms of once you've identified the situation, what do you do about it?

We have some longer term treatment programs in place, but a foster home would not be expected to provide all the resource. They're matched to the individual child's needs and they're an important resource, but sometimes it has to be combined with counselling and other treatment. We've been working quite hard to build the whole continuum of service in this area.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I think the availability of facilities is an important part of dealing with the whole problem, and hopefully, it will come up and submissions will be made to the reviewers with respect to that matter.

Mr. Chairman, I had asked the Minister about the increase in caseload for workers and certainly the allegations that excessive caseloads have resulted in workers leaving their jobs over the past year-and-a-half or two years. Could the Minister indicate what sort of turnover there has been in staff with respect to the, particularly the front-line social workers?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, D. Scott: Madam Minister.

HON. M. SMITH: We don't have the detail on worker turnover. What we do have, in terms of the caseload, when we split the larger agency, we prorate the staff based on the traditional caseload pattern in a particular area. Then we made some additions — everyone got a preventive worker and there was a little loading on central and northwestern where we knew the problems were more extensive. Then, in the middle of last year, we did a very quick review of caseloads and put an additional 38 staff years into the system, again, apportioning them according to where the pressure was greatest.

At the same time, we put a longer term case study and management study in place to be done by Brad McKenzie and to be completed later this summer, which would give us criteria for appropriate workloads. Because we've shifted from having just the sort of protection cases, to having a lot of family cases and counselling at the earlier stages of difficulty, our old workload criteria were not sufficient. So what we are working out with the agencies and through that consultant study is acceptable caseload standards.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, does the Minister not have any information with respect to staff turnover during the last two years? Surely any organization of this size with personnel people would have that type of information.

HON. M. SMITH: I remind the member that we have devolved service delivery responsibility to the agencies. Now we go — and I'm sure all of us have been — to several annual general meetings and we get their reports and are certainly in monthly communication with them and there has never been suggested that there's any major staff turnover problem. Knowing our agencies, if that were an emerging problem, we would hear about it, because they are quite frank in telling us what types

of problems are happening to them. In a major reorganization of this sort, there are bound to be some people who counsel themselves out of the new work situation. I think the transition and the redeployment of the numbers of staff that we've actually managed to redeploy and have settle in fairly well is remarkable more for the few numbers of people who have opted out and the general peacefulness with which the redeployment has taken place.

There is new staff in each agency, because each agency had some vacant staff spots to fill. As the resourcing has improved, they've also had more resources for more staff. So there are new faces out there. There is new blood in each agency.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I have certainly heard from many people in the field that, during the past particularly last two years, many many experienced workers and many people experienced in child abuse have left out of frustration. I would be very surprised if that had not come to the attention of the Minister or her senior staff.

HON. M. SMITH: I think it's recognized that probably child abuse and child welfare work is among the most difficult and trying work that there can be. There's always been some turnover. As I say, we have been doing a steady increase in the resourcing, but it would be foolish, I think, just to throw a great deal of extra resource into the system without building on a fairly careful base. It takes time to build an organization and to build into it the kind of appropriate standards and workloads.

As I say, with the review that was done last fall and with the more detailed one under way now, we feel that the workload standards and all aren't too different. Some people may not adjust well to change or being expected to deliver service in a slightly different way, and I think it's probably healthy that there's a fair bit of movement in a system as large as this. No director has identified it as a major issue in their particular agency.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I had asked the Minister a question with respect to what she was going to do to replace previous specialists in abuse and foster home finding, adoption, etc. The Minister responded by saying: "As you may be aware, the voluntary Child and Family Service Agencies determine how to allocate their staff."

It raises in my mind, Mr. Chairman, a question about the relationship between the department and the agencies. Is the department not there to at least — you know, when you consider all of these agencies are being fully funded by the provincial taxpayer — does the government not have an obligation to set some basic rules and guidelines and procedures for the agencies which should be followed? Is it completely up to the agencies to determine how to allocate their staff? It really sounds like a bit of a rudderless ship when you describe it in that manner.

HON. M. SMITH: Just back on the turnover, we've just completed negotiations with the workers, and it wasn't a big issue in the contract negotiations, that is the turnover or burnout issues.

Back to the question of the relationship of the provincial department to the individual agencies, there is a change in the way the agencies must work compared to any way that they operated before, in that there are more variable types of supports available to them. So when they make a decision, they don't have just the decision about whether to remove a child or leave them at home. They also have the option of putting in counselling, parent aid, homemakers, arranging special day care and so on.

The need from agency to agency for foster care, supervisors and recruiters has varied. Each agency has certainly focused a lot on it, but Central and Northwest particularly. As I say, we've added two extra foster home searchers, as it were, for each agency based on the experience they're having.

I went into the child abuse aspect at some length earlier on, and said that each agency has a main person responsible for that area. Some of them also have specialists, some who've been added specifically from our end. They are building their mix of staff according to the need pattern in their particular area. There is no formula, other than that the basic standards of practice must be observed. Now our monitoring, I think, is something that we're working on. There wasn't a very strong practice in the past, so we are to a certain extent building that capacity.

We didn't choose the model whereby government would deliver everything directly and run it centrally. We believe that there is an advantage in having the community involved and making those decisions. For one thing, what we're finding is that, as the boards draw in representatives from the community, we're getting a lot of spinoff in creative activity groups for young moms, second-hand clothing depots, teenage drop-ins, teaching baby-sitting, grandparenting, groups for young moms. The type of groups that are evolving are coming out of the felt need in the community, and a lot of volunteer help and donations and so on from the local community are occurring. So the very pattern of delivering service is expanding the impact of the money and the staff in those agencies far beyond what it used to be or could be from a straight top-down service delivery.

Now provinces across the country have opted for different patterns of service. B.C. and Saskatchewan have opted for a completely centralized system. Ontario and Manitoba have gone for the combination of the central direction policy and funding and monitoring with decentralized service delivery. Alberta is in the process of decentralizing the service delivery.

When we regionalized in Winnipeg, there were agreements made. Remember we went through long consultative committee meetings on each issue in the service delivery mix. We didn't start out with a fixed idea as to how best to handle adoption or foster home care or child abuse. We worked with these large committees, and they in fact worked out agreements as to how to coordinate adoption, how to coordinate foster home care, and how to coordinate child abuse services.

What I think we're seeing now is the natural type of growing pains that occur as systems settle in and develop. Naturally, some agencies are going to be a little more effective in their ability to coordinate than others, but the basic structures and processes are there

and the monthly meetings of the presidents and executive directors gives them a form where they can address issues that emerge; and our relationship, through our provincial coordinators and child day care director, gives us a point of contact.

MR. G. MERCIER: Is the Minister satisfied that this type of system is resulting in the most efficient use of public money?

HON. M. SMITH: When we combine the efficiency and the quality of service and the potential to build healthier communities, I think it's the direction to go. I think that the fine tuning will always be there.

There's nothing stays fixed and permanent in this particular field. Knowing that, anyone who works in the social service field gets used to the fact that you do the best you can with what you know at the time, but that you must commit yourself to periodic evaluations.

When we did the reorganization, we made a commitment to do an evaluation at the end of three years. So that will be coming around next fiscal year, 1988-89. All these issues will get a thorough review.

MR. G. MERCIER: Is there a coordinator in each — you indicate in your letter — well, each agency, you say, in the province has identified adoption especially. The statistics that I asked for, that you provided to the committee, which show the number of annual adoptions dropping from a high in 1976 of 1,489 down to 1985 — 679, and there were only 653 in 1984. Is that just attributable to a lack of sufficient children? As I understand it, the waiting period for adoptions is now in the range of some six to seven years. Is that for someone who wants the normal happy, healthy infant?

I wonder if the Minister could indicate whether she has any comments on the reduction in the number of adoptions and the length of the present waiting list for adoption.

Does that all go through a central registry for adoptions or does each agency put up for adoption the children available within their own physical boundaries?

HON. M. SMITH: Yes, it is an important issue because I think we all realize that an early adoption and a sound adoption can be a very happy solution to what's a difficult problem.

What is happening is the pattern of people giving children up for adoption has radically altered. The figure in 1976, just 10 years ago, was that we were getting about 1,000 youngsters a year given up for adoption. This last year we had 120. It's a radical shift.

We require permanency planning for all wards and all under-two year old youngsters go on the central registry, so we're doing the very best we can to get an early satisfactory adoption as soon as we can.

MR. G. MERCIER: All children do go on the central registry that are up for adoption? It's a centralized system; it's not a localized system, is it?

HON. M. SMITH: All under two go on the central registry and many over two, but it's required for the under-two year olds, so they have access to the whole province.

MR. G. MERCIER: The present waiting time for adoption for the person who wants a supposedly healthy, normal infant child, is that about six or seven years now?

HON. M. SMITH: It is going up because of these numbers. The numbers of people wanting to adopt isn't shifting as quickly as the number of babies available. Some of them do become foster parents or special foster parents, so there is some shift there.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, in my letter to the Minister I had asked her about the number of children of Native descent waiting for adoption, and the Minister had indicated in this letter that as of February 1986, 23 children under 2 years of age and 70 over 2 were awaiting adoption placement. This includes 12 Native children under 2 and 55 over 2. Of the 67 Native children, 17 have physical or mental disabilities or are part of a sibling group. So of the total of 93 children awaiting adoption, as of February, some 67 were Native — 12 under 2 and 55 over 2.

The moratorium on the adoption of Native children, I guess would now be three or four years of age. Keeping in mind the Minister's earlier comments that she made, and with which I would concur and I think most people would concur, that an early adoption is the best possible thing for a child. Can she explain why 67 Native children were awaiting adoption placement?

When you go back to the time when the moratorium was declared, there were just in the range of 85, 90

HON. M. SMITH: Ninety-five.

MR. G. MERCIER: . . . 95 — I accept that figure; it's certainly in that range — and three or four years later we still have 67 awaiting adoption, and at the same time we have a waiting list of people who are dying to adopt a child, many of whom I have talked to, and I'm sure members of the committee have talked to over the years, who would be more than pleased, would be delighted to take one of these children.

Can the Minister explain why this program certainly appears to be failing in what should be the highest priority, the best interest of these children? — which should be in the first place allowing them to live in a home with parents, permanent parents, and appreciating — and when I say that, Mr. Chairman — appreciating the fact that it's well recognized and it is important that children of Native descent be made aware of their background, be fully informed, and I think most people try to do now, not to simply, not to remove them entirely from whence they came and from the traditions of their background. But does it not make some common sense, when you have this list of people — the Minister might in fact indicate how many people are on that waiting list — how many people are on that waiting list for adoption now, waiting for these children? Would it not make some common sense to allow some of these Native children to be adopted?

HON. M. SMITH: I'd just like to put some of the numbers on the table and explain the perspective that

we have. The moratorium went in and there were well over 95 youngsters waiting. Now, the process of adoption takes time, and the children available are not always the ones that the adoptive parents will accept.

The number change has gone, remembering that it's not the same group always that are waiting except for some difficult to adopt children. There is a turnover. It was at 95 the first year. It went down as low as 67. It's now at about 70.

The Native youngsters, our guidelines do not forbid adoptions out of the Native community. They require though a best effort search for a Native family. The permanency planning process that was put into the new act requires that a permanency plan be made as quickly as possible, and is under constant review to keep pressure on the workers in the field, to expedite the permanent placement of each individual child. So the system factors are there to speed up the placement, but it still remains true that the youngsters that adoptive parents want are not necessarily the ones available. It's certainly not our desire to have a lot of youngsters waiting for extended periods of time.

It may be over time, we can bring that number down. I'm not quite sure how low it will go because there's always going to be some who are waiting, but I'd certainly look forward to it shortening.

MR. G. MERCIER: How many people are on the waiting list waiting for children to be adopted by them?

HON. M. SMITH: About 1,586. We do have the breakdown of the families waiting and of the children, and the workers are trying to match. But some of the children who end up on the waiting list are difficult to place youngsters.

MR. G. MERCIER: Well, you're indicating, of the 67 Native children, 17 have physical or mental disabilities or are part of a sibling group. It may be that the physical or mental disabilities may make it more difficult for them to be adopted. The sibling group maybe wouldn't be a problem if it's more than three or four children. I think a fair number of those 1,500 people would be glad to take a brother and sister.

What is the status of the remaining 50 who have no physical or mental disabilities or are part of a sibling group? Of this group, what are their prospects? How long does this whole procedure that the Minister and the government set up for adoption of Native children take, when we have to go through the Band and relatives and everyone else? How long does that procedure take for one child?

HON. M. SMITH: We have made available a form of subsidized adoption in very special cases, and that covers siblings or disabled youngsters. So in a sense the 17, there is extra support available should a family be willing.

For the other youngsters, we have the guidelines in terms of where the series of homes that must be looked for to find cultural compatibility if possible, which I'm sure you're familiar with, and we'll distribute those.

The message we send out through the system is to place the children as soon as possible. The permanency planning should provide a structured way to review that

regularly and keep the pressure on the system. There never used to be any standards as to how long a youngster would remain unadopted. Some children never are adopted, but we're trying to shorten that list as much as we can.

MR. G. MERCIER: Is the Minister prepared to issue a directive to the agencies to the effect that, if these children presently in care are not adopted by the end of August of this year, that they would be made available for adoption to other than by Native people? Is he prepared to do that, give them two months and otherwise, make them available?

HON. M. SMITH: Native children are available to non-Native families, if the agency has gone through the steps of searching for an appropriate placement within a reasonable time frame.

One of the problems or some of the problems we're having are connected to the underfunding issue of the Indian child welfare agencies. You may have read something about the recent audit where it's been determined that something appears to have been happening at the staff level in DIAND in Manitoba, where the agencies were not being funded according to the original agreement. That severely strapped some of the capacity of the agencies to care for youngsters.

In fact, we have 222 status Indian families that are waiting for adoptive children. This desire to adopt is not just with the non-Indian, but Indian Affairs won't fund any subsidized adoptions even though it's in our act. So sometimes it's a poverty issue, I guess you could say. It's certainly one of the factors. Or in the case of the youngster with very pressing needs, it is quite a financial burden for a family to take without some extra help.

MR. G. MERCIER: How long does this process take, that the government has set up, on an average case?

HON. M. SMITH: It's about four to five months for the steps to be gone through.

MR. G. MERCIER: Forty-five months?

HON. M. SMITH: Four to five.

MR. G. MERCIER: The Member for Kirkfield Park may ask a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Kirkfield Park.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: I just wanted to follow up on that question. If the government hasn't funded — and we're talking about the Federal Government — and the Native families that you're referring to can't afford to adopt without subsidization, are other families then looked at, or are these children just out of luck?

HON. M. SMITH: No, they are looked at. Part of the guideline was to ensure that the options were reviewed, but within a reasonable time frame, because our prime concern was that the child not be left waiting without a permanent placement indefinitely. So it's that either party can alert us that they think enough time has been gone through and that a placement is appropriate.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: When you're referring to either party can alert, and I'm still referring to Native children, who is the either party that we're talking about?

HON. M. SMITH: Yes, I may have got confused with all the methods that we're using in the system. The permanency planning requirement of the agencies is that they complete the planning for the individual child within a time frame, and it's during that time frame that the checking out of the different options for the Native child is accomplished. So we keep the pressure on in terms of time by that permanency planning requirement.

Now that doesn't mean that the agencies are always successful and that's where we're getting some mismatch between the people who wish to adopt and the children available to be adopted.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: One of the complaints that had been made earlier that I'd heard was that the social workers in the field, or whoever is doing the assessing, because of the workload, didn't have the same time to do proper assessments, and that was one of the reasons that adoptions were also being held up. Is that a factor? Has it been a factor?

HON. M. SMITH: Unless we aren't connecting on what the problem is, as the children come up on the registry in a very strict sort of rotational time frame, the studies are done. Sorry, it's the families that come up for review, to see if there's a child that's an appropriate match, and those studies are done.

Again, if there is a specific concern that the member would like to alert us to, we'll check into it, but the ones that we have on our registry are reviewed regularly.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: I'm not sure if you've done it in Manitoba, but do the agencies advertise at all for adoptive parents? At one time in Ontario — and they may still be doing it — they would put a picture of either a child or a group of children, a family, in the paper and give a short description and advertise for adoptive parents. I was just wondering if they do it in Manitoba?

HON. M. SMITH: It has been done in the past. It's not currently being done. We put our heads together, we're not just sure why the practice was discontinued, but a couple of years ago it was done for a while.

I should say that Indian agencies have actually placed a great many Native children for adoption or in permanent homes, sometimes with the extended family. There really has been a very fine effort on their part, and I guess this whole situation that's been brought to light is the result of the audit that shows they've systematically been underfunded, according to the original agreement.

I feel particularly sad and angry about it because I think the effort being made by the Indian Child Welfare Agencies deserves an enormous amount of respect and support. I think it's really tragic that, in a sense, it's being underfunded at its most critical stage of development; so we're hopeful that the bringing to light of this problem through the audit will lead to better negotiations and better resourcing.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: When I was talking about the advertisements, it wasn't particularly Native children, but there were a number of children with special needs, and whether they were behaviour problems, or children that had a disability of some kind, had a special health problem that would need special care, and they advertised in such a way that they were looking for a family with possibly older children, with younger children, with no children. They were rather specific in a general way, and I wonder if the Minister might not consider that an area because there may well be people — and I'm sure there are in a community — that might be willing to take on some of these children who are not seemingly able to be adopted.

HON. M. SMITH: I think it is an idea that we will review. We have certainly been promoting and encouraging advertising for foster home care, and we are finding an increasing number of foster homes. Again, not enough, but we are finding more because of this special rate care that we have available, who are willing to take youngsters with special needs.

I just wanted to clarify, earlier when we were talking about the moratorium. It was a moratorium on out-of-province adoption, not on white or non-Native adoption of Native children. Directive 18 though, which set out the order of search for appropriate home was the means by which we assured the Native people that a best effort would be made to find a culturally appropriate home, but it wasn't an either/or, it was that this best-effort search must be made and, if no home could be found, then a non-Native home would be considered.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: I'd like to ask the Minister about the Child and Family Services at the Interim Guideline, No. 34. No. 2 talks about "The child abuse coordinator shall be consulted on all agency child abuse investigations and shall be involved in all major decisions such as apprehension." If a case was reported of a baby being threatened and the coordinator or someone else is not around, is the social worker not able to take it upon themselves to apprehend?

HON. M. SMITH: No, the social worker could apprehend. There would be a backup plan or a backup person available if the coordinator was not. The purpose of having a coordinator is to ensure that that function is carried out and if the coordinator was not to be available, someone would be delegated with that responsibility. The professional responsibility of the worker is to put the child's safety to the fore and they could apprehend. Then it would be the longer-term plan that would be worked through.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Just specifically dealing with babies, and I'm talking, I guess, under two, what happens when someone is suggesting that there is abuse in that case? Do they watch and assess or do they apprehend immediately and then try and find out what is happening?

HON. M. SMITH: First, the social worker would take the child for medical attention and examination. Then the police would be called. Then an interview would proceed with the family or the relevant persons. Then a recommendation or decision would be made.

Remember we talked earlier about the Multidisciplinary Committee. Because it's the legal responsibility of the Child and Family Service worker, they're the one that has to be accountable in the courts and so on for what action they've taken so that they are responsible for the final decision. That's where we were running into some difficulty where we found that there were differences of opinion between the different professionals but no clear way of resolving those. I guess we had assumed that if there was a serious disagreement that a professional would report but we're finding that that assumption needs strengthening.

This protocol requires that if any professional involved in a child abuse case disagrees with a plan or decision and reason to think the child is not safe, the onus is on them to report to the Supervisor in the agency, the Executive Director, the Child Abuse Coordinator or the Director of Child and Family Services.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Is there any hesitation on the part of a social worker because of the possibility of being sued for apprehension?

HON. M. SMITH: They can only be sued for malice so in a sense, they basically have protection; they make their best judgment.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: What kind of insurance, liability or protection do the workers have in the field from being sued? Do they have to supply their own lawyers or would the department look after that?

HON. M. SMITH: The workers have legal protection under the act. The agencies carry insurance. Should someone have to go to court, the agency would pay the legal cost. Most of the workers as well are unionized and some of them have another line of protection there.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, just relating to that Native adoptions again, could she indicate to the committee that since the moratorium, how many Native children have been adopted by non-Native parents?

HON. M. SMITH: We're checking up to see whether we keep our statistics in that form. When I have an answer, yes or no, and a number, I'll give it to you. But if we could go on with any other . . .

MR. G. MERCIER: Well, I would think in view of the special procedures in legislation that that would be available.

On June 11 of this month, Winnipeg Council of Treaty and Status Indians announced plans to create emergency shelters in the inner city for abused children. Council Chairman, Mr. Young said emergency protection for abused is at a crisis point in the city. Can the Minister indicate whether that matter has been reviewed with the Winnipeg Council of Treaty and Status Indians? Are they exaggerating the situation or do they not deal through the existing agencies?

HON. M. SMITH: It is true that as we work through the network of services that are needed by particularly the Native youngsters and particularly in the Northwest area, that we will need more services. At present the

Winnipeg Receiving Resources is the group that is responsible for initial emergency care for children that are brought into the system. They have a board made up of representatives from the agencies and the Ma Mawi Family Service Centre.

They have identified that there needs to be more Native involvement for that type of emergency care or receiving function for Native children, and they will recommend to us what the appropriate mode of doing that is. In other words, there's a process in place for identifying the need and building the resource.

Now, this other group, as many groups will, sort of sees the need and says well we're going to do it this way. However, getting funding for it, I guess their proposal or notion can certainly be considered and evaluated, but we have a group and representatives on it that are going through an orderly process in developing the receiving function.

MR. G. MERCIER: Has the Minister received the audited statements for the agencies for 1985-86 which would be their first whole year would it not?

HON. M. SMITH: They're due July 1st. So, if we sit over the weekend . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for St. Norbert is not going to suggest that, I hope.

MR. G. MERCIER: Could that information be provided to the committee then when those are received on July 1st?

HON. M. SMITH: It's public information. I don't know whether we'll still be in, but we will insure that the member receives copies.

MR. G. MERCIER: What is the budget for the review committee?

HON. M. SMITH: Thirty one thousand, five hundred is the direct cost. There's been two researchers seconded and a support secretary, and then we'll pay the rent and then this operating cost.

MR. G. MERCIER: Will they be advertising their whereabouts, office, phone number, to receive submissions? Will they be — (Interjection) —

HON. M. SMITH: Yes, but I will repeat, it's 3rd Floor, 1200 Portage. When they have a phone number and a room number, they will advertise it.

MR. G. MERCIER: Just on another matter, Mr. Chairman, the Minister, I think, is on the same mailing list that I am with respect to the Child Protection Centre and their efforts to establish in Manitoba a national abuse centre. The latest letter I received indicates that a copy of a letter to Mr. Epp, the Minister of Health indicating that they are now applying to the National Welfare Grants Program for assessment of a model for the proposed centre where their ultimate goal will be to apply for a three to five year demonstration project for a national abuse centre in Winnipeg. I believe that would be very appropriate with some of the specialists

and people who deal with child abuse in Manitoba. Has the Minister officially supported that application?

HON. M. SMITH: I have not been consulted. I haven't seen the application. I think from what I have heard, sort of, well the first time I've heard specifics, otherwise it's been second hand through the media. I would question whether the prime need is in the medical emergency treatment end of the system as distinct from the treatment in field worker training. I think funding of demonstration projects in terms of long term follow-up, treatment of families, prevention; research into that, I think, would be a very high priority in the system, but I think it is a delusion because I don't know all the elements of the proposal. It's hard for me to evaluate. I do think there's room for training of medical people, and if the funds were spent for that, so that the medical people, a broader number of them were getting more specialized knowledge, I think that would be helpful.

We also need probably in the total system training for police and RCMP and educational people. So again, it's hard for me to evaluate that particular one. My priorities would have been different from what I know about it, but I have not been consulted or asked to support it.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I noticed from the beginning of this correspondence that the Minister was being copied with respect to it because obviously, I would think, its activities would have to be closely coordinated with what would be going on in the provincial system. I wonder if the Minister would undertake to have her staff perhaps consult with Dr. MacRae and Dr. Ferguson who have been signing the letters to perhaps have the proposal reviewed in more detail in order to determine whether as a Provincial Minister she would support the establishment of this project in Winnipeg?

HON. M. SMITH: Well, I would appreciate consultation. We don't recall receiving a copy of that letter. It could have gone astray. That rarely happens but it certainly could have happened, but I think consultation would be a good thing because I think the numbers of people interested in the field are sincerely interested and it's in all our interests to insure that any money available is wisely spent and spent in the way that will be most cost-effective and most valuable to children in families.

MR. G. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, the first letter with respect to this proposal dated March 26, 1986, which enclosed the proposal and an executive summary, the Minister is noted as having received a copy. They go on in the executive summary to talk about the purposes of such a national system to analyze problems related to child abuse and neglect. They don't talk and I don't think they have any intention of approaching this subject from a purely medical perspective. As I understand it, that suggestions based upon a similar national abuse centre in Houston, Texas in the United States where all of the participants and the professionals who deal with child abuse would be involved.

They talk about obtaining stimulating research projects in this particular area, national protocols and standards of practice, educational programs to upgrade

the level of professional skills in all disciplines, to utilize the resources of an established interdisciplinary child protection program to serve as a model in the provision of services to abused and neglected children in Canada.

And if the Minister's copy has been lost, I'd be glad to give her this to copy. They have a list of 44 different types of areas that should be looked at in some detail, all of which seem to me to be very important areas to be looking at, including one that I think has come to attention recently.

They've pointed out that the Shaken Baby Syndrome — and I recall reading an article recently about that. I know, from talking to people, it relates to the very serious abuse that a person who shakes a baby can give to that baby, and in actuality, in the matter of a few seconds, virtually destroy that child. It results in retardation and just about everything. I think to be fair, it can be done intentionally, certainly, but it can also be done probably in more cases unintentionally by people acting under great stress.

It seems to me, for example, that particular area alone, if it were fully delved into, if there were an educational program, could prevent very serious damage being done to infants. I'm sure that the Minister and people in her department are well aware of it.

This is not, in no way as I see this, purely medically orientated. They talk in here exactly about prevention programs and education and registry. So it would appear to me to be something worth pursuing. Manitoba and Winnipeg certainly have more than their fair share of specialists and experts and people interested in this particular problem.

If the Minister wants after, I'll be glad to give her these copies. I would tend to think that if the Minister supported the proposal that it would be very helpful to obtain the funds from this national program for a demonstration project in Winnipeg.

HON. M. SMITH: I would welcome a copy. Actually, we'll approach the Child Protection Centre and ask them for a copy.

Many of the elements that you mentioned were ones that I said I thought would really be needed — research and demonstration programs and education. So it sounds to me like there may be a real opportunity here.

When we're dealing with multi-agencies and protocols across the country, there will be a fair bit of consultation required, but I think it's very helpful to have a central group that is initiating and leading the way. So we will read it carefully and undertake a discussion with the Child Protection Centre on it.

MR. G. MERCIER: There's another aspect to this whole area of child abuse that I referred to earlier this afternoon, and that has been raised recently by MARL, the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties. It's an area that, when the legislation was introduced, I spoke to. I asked the question: if someone is falsely accused of child abuse, how do they rid themselves of this accusation? There does not appear to be, in the legislation, any remedy for that situation.

MARL refers to three particular incidents, and in speaking to people, it appears that there can be a problem, not in the abuse of children that we've been mainly talking about today but in the area of teenagers

where you can have, for whatever reason, a teenager accusing a parent, for example, of sexual abuse when nothing has happened. Then this whole system which comes into play which, you know, on the one hand, we all acknowledge that it's such an important problem that you have to have it there, but it comes into play against a person who may be falsely accused. They're right behind the gun, the child is removed from the home, and how do they prove their innocence?

It seems to me, and I recall — I should go back and look at my speech on this bill — but the suggestion at the very beginning that should there not be — let me put it that way — should there not be some type of forum in which a person who is falsely accused of child abuse can have his or her name cleared of that allegation?

The Minister, I would expect, has received the submission for rights and liberties, and it's certainly there to be commended for putting the thought together but it's certainly not solely theirs. It has been a comment that has come from a number of sources. I wonder if the Minister or her department have given any thought to considering that problem.

HON. M. SMITH: Just before commenting on what is a very thorny question, I'd just like to comment that the letter, that was apparently a copy to me, was sent on the 17th of June, and the earlier letter on April 6 was not indicated as copied. So it may be that we weren't copied before. However, we are happy to have the copy now. I'll correct that last statement then. We're very interested in looking at it, though, and we will follow up in the consultation.

Back to the registry or the dilemma of how can we deal with child abuse, protect the child and at the same time not abuse the rights of the alleged abuser, the answer is there's no easy answer. The basic reason that there is no easy answer is that when abuse occurs there's rarely a witness. If there is a witness, it's not always a witness who would not have undivided loyalties. Therefore, we're also dealing with a case where the victim is usually not able to speak or be considered a reliable witness.

Some changes in the federal law, and eventually the Manitoba law, I guess, to parallel it, may make it easier to get evidence from a child in that they are talking of using — well, we have an experiment here of using video in the first interview, so you get an immediate observation of a child's behaviour.

There are some techniques that have been developed to try to deduce what has happened to a child, anatomically correct dolls and so on, and observing reactions when different people are brought near the child. But by the nature of that type of evidence and observation, there could be many reasons why a child would react in a certain way. So it's got all the problems of a normal court case, with attendant ones as well.

Now, the question of abusers being on a registry, we have explained several times that that's often why numbers of abuse cases differ. The numbers on the registry differ from the numbers of cases reported in the field because there are actually three different levels. There's allegation; allegation that isn't substantiated; there's allegation that isn't substantiated but where there seems to be evidence that makes people nervous

and suspect that maybe something has gone wrong. Then there's allegations that have been proven in court. The registry has all of the top group and some of the next group listed.

Now, the procedure to be followed, like the use of the registry and then the procedure to be followed either to have a name deleted or to have recorded on it another way of looking at it, if a person has taken treatment, so that at least the registry is up to date.

Those are the very issues that we asked a committee to review. They were asked to take on the review 18 months ago and the fact that they haven't yet pulled together their final recommendations I think indicates the very complexity of the problem, because you have the civil rights people on one side, and you have the child protection people on the other. Our bias is in favour of the child, I think quite rightly, but if we can fine tune and give the abuser due protection, I think that that's important as well.

To date, they tell me that they're arriving at a preference risk system which would allow names to be deleted on an agreed basis. We do have a legal problem. All child abuse allegations are protection cases under Part 3 of the act. The files maintained under this section would be exempt from the Freedom of Information section in The Child and Family Services Act, because their file is maintained to enforce the law.

If clients were allowed to challenge their names being recorded on a central registry available only to the police and the agencies, all protection records would be vulnerable to legal challenge. Because of that issue, we've taken steps to assure clients that they're notified of a registration. All parents who are investigated are to be informed that they're registered on the registry. In anticipation of this requirement — again, these are recommendations for how we are to operate — agencies and their lawyers have been more reluctant to register cases where there was not proofable allegation or remaining serious suspicion. Information of protection cases is still accessible between agencies under Section 76 (3).

I've talked about the difference in the total cases investigated and those where there's confidence that abuse has occurred. Some are recorded where there's not sufficient evidence to prove neglect or abuse.

One of the main groups that causes us great difficulty is with persons who believe that physical discipline — well, the group that thinks physical discipline is desirable and permissible, and the group that thinks any physical discipline is really abuse. We are required to investigate these cases, particularly if the persons were registered, if we found their name on the registry to begin with.

However, there'd be a great cry from the community and maybe from all members of the Legislature, unless the discipline could be described as cruel, so we're into judgment calls in the discipline area.

MR. G. MERCIER: I wonder if the Minister could indicate whether her department has any information about the number of clearly false allegations that have been made. Is there any statistical information on that?

HON. M. SMITH: We are just passing out some information on the Provincial Child Abuse Registry.

In the annual report, Section 4, Table 15, the second page of it, at the bottom, the Disposition of Children,

of a total of 646 abuse cases, 223 ended in investigation only. Now, that may mean that there was inconclusive evidence. It doesn't necessarily mean that the report was false. It would take a non-existent angel to deduce how many of those were false.

One potential problem with greater — I don't know whether you'd call it sophistication of children, or popularization of the term sex abuse, there may be streetwise youngsters who learn how to use that term. But I guess when we're dealing with it, even if there is a mischievous allegation, there may be a problem of a sort, too. So at this stage of our knowledge and understanding of the problem, we have no choice but to pursue some kind of investigation and just realize that we're at the beginning of trying to differentiate.

I don't know how we're going to get closer to being accurate. We're certainly willing to take any suggestions.

MR. G. MERCIER: One last question. Does the Minister have an answer to that question about the number of Native children adopted by non-Native parents?

HON. M. SMITH: We'd like just to look into our records and double-check, so we'll have that available tomorrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time is ten o'clock. What's your wish?
Committee rise.

SUPPLY — MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

MR. CHAIRMAN, C. Santos: Committee, please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply has been considering the Estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs. We are now on Item No. 2.(a) Municipal Board, Salaries; 2.(b) Other Expenditures.

The Member for La Verendrye.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Mr. Chairman, I still want to be at 1.(e)(2), if I may.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 1.(b)(2) has been passed unless the Minister wants to . . .

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Mr. Minister, would you allow me another question under 1.(e)(2), please? Mr. Chairman, is that in order at this time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: With the consent of the Minister, it will be all right.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: The question I have is Other Expenditures, and I think the Minister indicated that took care of quite a few studies, if I'm right. I think you indicated it was part of a policing study done. Is that right, Mr. Minister?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: That reference I made to, I think, that \$5,000 figure, that was a question by the Member for Brandon West related to a study done by a consultant. It had to do with policing costs. Oh, I

had indicated previously it was on policing costs. It was assessment taxation related.

The policing cost study was done by the department and I didn't promise that I would provide reports. I do have a copy for the critic, the report of the advisory committee on emergency responses and the report on the advisory committee of policing. I'd like to table these with the critic.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Thank you. Under which number then would the municipal policing then fall under?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I believe the matter of Police Services Grant is what the member is referring to. Is that the question — the Police Services Grant?

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Yes.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Now, that's a little later on. It would fall under Section 3.(f).

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Oh, very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I'll ask my questions under that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
2.(a) — the Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Somewhere in the last little while I've seen a reference to boards of revisions dealing with tax appeals, assessment appeals. Where did I see that, Mr. Minister? Can you save me hunting through all this stuff to find it?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, a Court of Revision will come under section 4 of the Municipal Assessment appropriation.

MR. J. ERNST: Okay, but presently, then, Mr. Minister it's now coming under the Municipal Board, appeals on your assessment? Is that correct?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, that is correct. Appeals from the Court of Revision go to the Municipal Board.

MR. J. ERNST: So the appeals from the Court of Revision go to the Municipal Board as opposed to being stopped at the Board of Revision. Is that correct?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, that's correct. The Municipal Board is a final authority on that.

MR. J. ERNST: I see. With respect to the Municipal Board, it's my understanding, as it relates now to the City of Winnipeg and not necessarily the rest of Manitoba, that the Board of Revision is the end. Is the Minister aware? Or perhaps the Deputy could answer it.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I don't believe that is correct. Last year, Bill 83 was passed in this House which, I believe, provides for uniform procedures for both Winnipeg and the rest of the province and appeals to the Court of Revision in the City of Winnipeg now are to the Municipal Board.

MR. J. ERNST: A further question then with respect to the Municipal Board. Can the Minister inform the members of the committee whether the Municipal Board at the present time is still the final planning authority for appeals of district plans from the City of Winnipeg?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, it is.

MR. J. ERNST: With respect to that particular item, Mr. Minister, the Minister of Urban Affairs, I believe, has certain statutory authority built into the act with respect to those same kinds of plans. Can you advise whether they're in conflict or, in fact, that they may well be removed from the jurisdiction of the Municipal Board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I think what we're doing is talking about two different issues. When it comes to assessment, the Municipal Board is the final authority; when it comes to planning, under the planning districts, the matters can be appealed to the Municipal Board. Within the City of Winnipeg, though, my understanding is that the appeals would be made to the Environment Committee.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Minister, I'm now referring to not zoning applications or subdivision applications but I'm now referring to district plans or community plans, a broader area of general planning documents within the City of Winnipeg. They are appealable, as I understand it, to the Municipal Board.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Under The Planning Act, which relates to all municipalities outside of Winnipeg, matters involving district plans can be referred to the Municipal Board by the Minister. The board will make recommendations to the Minister and, if the Minister agrees with those recommendations, then he can expedite that plan by using the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council process. In the case of the City of Winnipeg, the matter would be referred to the Minister of Urban Affairs.

MR. J. ERNST: So there will be no appeal to the Municipal Board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: No.

MR. J. ERNST: With respect then to the Municipal Board, do you feel it's a logical and fair and reasonable process that planning matters upon which a decision has been made by a duly-elected form of local government be superseded by a handful of appointed officials, namely, the Municipal Board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: The Municipal Board process is one in which an independent body can hold hearings to hear all sides of the question. They in turn would make a recommendation to the Minister, and it's a Ministerial decision as to what happens. That does not mean that there's any conflict between what a local jurisdiction may determine. It does provide for, I think, a greater public input. The provision of public hearings, I think, is a very important part of this process.

MR. J. ERNST: The fact of the matter is, I haven't researched the numbers, but I suspect that any matters

that have gone before the Municipal Board, 99 percent of which I'm sure would have been approved by the Minister. In effect, those appointed members are making decisions and in fact overruling elected officials in the Province of Manitoba, elected officials of local government.

I've experienced the process, Mr. Minister. I know the kind of frustration that that presents and I don't happen to think it's fair. I'm asking your opinion. Do you think it's fair? I'd like to see legislation tabled to do away with that provision.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Well, I must admit that my experience with the Municipal Board has been rather limited, having been in this ministry for only two months, but I'm also aware that the Municipal Board has been around for a good number of years. As the member indicates, there's some dissatisfaction with that. It certainly has not been reflected to me in the past, let's say, six meetings that I've attended with the Union of Manitoba Municipalities. No one has raised the question as to whether the Municipal Board process is a fair process or not. I have to assume that it is working satisfactorily.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, on the same subject. Just because somebody hasn't brought it up at a UMM meeting doesn't mean that everybody thinks it's a fair process. I think up to this point, many of them have given up virtually on the fact that those kinds of things can change, that this procedure has been in place for many years, I agree. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's correct. It doesn't necessarily mean that what was applicable 15 or 20 years ago is applicable today.

I think today that the quality of elected officials in local governments, both in terms of experience and in terms of dedication, in terms of staff support and a variety of other areas, has given them a much greater understanding and a much greater expertise than perhaps was evident when the Municipal Board was first started.

Would the Minister undertake to perhaps canvass the UMM to see if they are satisfied with that procedure, and perhaps he could talk to the Manitoba Urban Association at the same time to see if they're still satisfied with that proposal or should it be reviewed?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, just in response to that. I should indicate that I consider the Union of Manitoba Municipalities to be an association that is reflective of the thinking of its membership. As the member knows, each year they do submit to Cabinet a number of resolutions that they pass at their convention. I'm not aware, at any time in the past number of years or probably for even the last 10 years, that there's been any request by the association to dispense with the Municipal Board; therefore I'd have to conclude that they are quite satisfied with the process.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister then saying that he's not prepared to talk to them about this, to elicit their opinion, with respect to any review of the affairs of the Municipal Board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I think that there is a fairly open relationship between the department and the

associations. I know we will be meeting on numerous occasions and certainly I will, I'm sure, have the opportunity to ask what they think of the process. I'm also quite confident they will indicate to me that they are fairly satisfied with that process.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: After the board has made their decision, is there any appeal system still available to any jurisdiction?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, in fact, there are two situations where a matter can be reviewed and that is in a situation where there is new evidence that is presented or unearthed, and the Municipal Board can be asked to reconsider that or review that decision in view of the new evidence.

Secondly, the matter can be reviewed at the courts, where it appears that the board erred in jurisdiction, Mr. Chairman.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, the Municipal Board is the overseeing body, as indicated in the attachment that we have received, or the additional circulations we received dealing with the decisions of the borrowing of municipalities.

Are there any outstanding or any specific major difficulties that have occurred this year that have been rejected by the board because of municipalities being in financial difficulties? Do we have any municipalities in the province that have demonstrated inability to borrow monies for one or another reason?

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A point of order is being raised. State your point of order.

The Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: Would you ask the honourable members opposite to quiet down? I can't hear the question of the honourable member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. There are ways of maintaining order here, and people who want to converse may stay outside the door.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes. In answer to the question of the Member for Arthur, none that I am aware of are in that situation.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Will the Minister check it out? He says none that he is aware of, I'm just wondering if there are any municipal authorities or jurisdictions that because of certain reasons are in difficult situations.

As well, I would like to know if, for example, there was a proposed boundary change in a municipality, would the municipality or the representative of that municipality have the opportunity to come before the board and appeal that proposed boundary change? Maybe the Minister could through you, Mr. Chairman, indicate if that kind of an appeal mechanism is available, or process is available when that kind of action is proposed.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Just in answer to the previous question, I'm advised that the municipal

adviser in the Financial Services branch of the department monitors the financial situation of all municipalities and to the best of our knowledge, there are no municipalities in the situation or the position where they cannot borrow, the situation such as described by the Member for Arthur.

In response to the second question about, is there a body to which that type of matter can be appealed, and it is the Municipal Board. The Municipal Board will then make a recommendation to the Minister.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Have there been any such cases before the board in the last year, or are there any intending to come before the board where there are proposed municipal boundary changes, where there is opposition from those people who are now representing the municipalities involved?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm advised that most of the hearings that have been held in the recent past have been those where there's been joint consent by the municipal bodies that are involved.

MR. J. DOWNEY: It's been brought to my attention that there's a proposal, and I haven't got the file with me — but we'll let the Member for Minnedosa who's maybe more familiar with the particular case — just at this particular time but I'll get the opportunity later on probably to deal with it. I know there is some extreme opposition, and I support the municipal councillors who have put their case forward, that they do not feel they should have their boundary changed because of the dictation of a small village at one end of the municipality, and remove some of the control from those individuals who are representing a larger area.

I would ask the Minister's comments in this particular regard, if he has any particular policy on it or if he has any idea of allowing boundary changes which, in fact, could inhibit what I would consider responsible and good area representation as well as population representation.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I think what the member is talking about is ward boundaries rather than municipal boundaries. I presume that the reference is to the Rural Municipality of Harrison. The background being is that, as indicated, residents of Ward 5 in 1981 petitioned for a change. The Municipal Board ordered the R.M. to alter the ward boundaries to reflect population quotients — and I think we understand what that is — you take the population and divide it by the number of councillors, and you're allowed 25 percent leeway either way.

The order was restated in 1983. It was taken to the Court of Appeal by the R.M., and was overruled by the Court of Appeal. In 1984, the Municipal Board ordered abolition of wards in the R.M.

Now there are, I'm sure, a number of rural municipalities in Manitoba that do not have ward boundaries where the councillors are elected at large. I suppose that's the term we would use.

MR. J. DOWNEY: I apologize for not using the terminology, ward boundaries.

The concern that I raised earlier in my opening comments and raise again, particularly dealing with

municipal politics in rural Manitoba, it's more of a responsibility in the majority of cases to look after the physical aspects of a municipality rather than those direct people responsibilities. I know the concern has been that because of the influence and the petition which the Minister talks about was brought forward, it had an influence on the changes of those ward boundaries which, in fact, took away some of the area responsibility from individuals — or would take away from areas — which they felt was in the best interests of the total municipality to look after.

I ask the Minister what his feeling about it is. Does he feel that the act as it is now, that the tolerance level there is equitable? Or in fact, would he propose to see it changed to protect what the municipality now feels in their best interest?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Well, again, in my short tenure, I've not been faced with that question. However, I do know that a number of R.M.'s have been operating without a defined ward boundaries and have been operating quite successfully, so I don't understand why there need necessarily be this tremendous problem that is going to make municipal government unworkable in the R.M. of Harrison.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Well, Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Minister then if he would be prepared to meet directly with those people who have indicated the major concern to myself and to my colleague; would he be prepared to meet with, in the near future, to discuss their concerns so that they can directly lay them out to him? I think it's a reasonable request that he meet with them and they be given the opportunity to fully explain their concerns, and I would appreciate the Minister's acceptance of such a meeting.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I'm always willing to meet with Manitobans who feel they have a problem that needs addressing. However, that doesn't indicate a position that I'm willing to take their side on, but certainly, I'm quite prepared to sit down with them at an appropriate time and to hear their side of the story.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Minnedosa.

MR. D. BLAKE: Yes, I might just add one or two comments, Mr. Chairman. I'm well aware of the situation that the Member for Arthur refers to and I've indicated to the council and to the other interested citizens who have brought forward their appeal to have the ward boundaries changed, that I wouldn't be about to get between them in a fight that they have going in the local community, but if the Minister is willing to meet with them, I suggested at one time that was what I would do for them. If they wanted to present their case and if the other side wants to prepare their case, which they had done to the previous Minister, which brought about the municipal hearing and the municipal rulings. It's a difficult case.

I think their main argument now is that there are many other municipalities in the same situation. If they're going to do it for one, they might as well have a government policy that's going to do it on a wider scope, not just single out the one municipality which

they feel they've been singled out to have boundary changes, there are school board boundaries involved, and various other things, and they feel that there should be an overall policy so they know exactly where they're going and what the future holds for them. If the Minister has agreed to meet with that municipal council, I think that's very commendable and I'll take that back to them.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister indicate what the composition of the board is, give us the board members? I don't have the report before me, who they are. Are there any vacancies on the board? I, as well, note that the expenditures that are being asked for this particular year are up, not a great amount of money, but there is an increase when there is a reduction in some of the other areas, so I'd ask the Minister to indicate who the board members are, and who they're made up of, and the reason for an increase in the expenditures?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, the reason that the expenses have gone up, I'm advised, is basically because the Board does hold its hearings out in the location where the problem exists and, as you'll note on Page 21 of your Supplementary Book, that travel costs have increased as have vehicle costs. The increase is basically because of of travel costs.

With respect to the composition of the board, the chairperson is Leifur Hallgrimson and members of the board are Bill Hicks, Joyce Lawson, Mr. Walterson, George Bates, Jany Keenan, Gunnar Helgason, Ray Howard, Everett Leader, Myer Serfaty — Mr. Roger Smith passed away last spring, I believe, or last fall and he's been replaced by — Aime Gauthier, Garth Berry, and Catherine Auld, and the former director of the Assessment Branch, I think, Mr. Jake Reimer, was appointed to the board this spring.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask a question to the Minister in regard to the borrowing. What ratio is used in order for a municipality to know what amount of money a municipality can borrow? It's a percentage of the assessment, would you be able to tell me what that would be?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I'm advised that each situation is judged on its merits, but the guideline is 30 percent of equalized assessment, maximum.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Mr. Minister, was that the maximum did you say?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 2.(a) — the Member for Ste. Rose.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: I'd like to ask for a little clarification regarding the authority of the Municipal Board and the opportunities for appeal. Did you state a few minutes ago that the appeals, where there had been a refusal of appeal, that they could be reopened on the basis of new evidence or of a lack of jurisdiction, or what was the jurisdictional reference that was included there?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I'd indicated that there were two situations where a decision may be reviewed or heard again, or that is where new evidence can be presented; and, secondly, where the Board has erred in jurisdiction; there were decisions made in an area for which it really had no responsibility outside of its jurisdiction.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: Further to that, could you tell me, on the appointments to this Board, are they renewed annually or are those appointments semi-permanent or are they at the pleasure of the Minister or how are they handled?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, the appointments to the Municipal Board are reviewed annually and they're made by Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: It would seem that this board has a very large amount of authority in the affairs of the municipalities in reference to the assessment appeals. Is there any thought in the department of reviewing or changing this method of handling appeals that come forward from the municipalities and the taxpayers?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: But, I should remind the member that, in fact, in the — and I made reference to this earlier — that last year this House passed Bill 83 which reaffirmed the jurisdiction of the Municipal Board in hearing these sorts of matters. So, certainly, in that short period of time, the government would not have changed its feelings about the usefulness of this board.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: I think the Minister probably knows my feelings regarding the board's position in the appeals that come before it. Can he tell me what professional staff is available to it, other than a clerical staff, when they are making decisions? It would appear to me to be equal to a judicial board, that their findings appear to be quite final. Is there no recourse, and I apologize for not being more knowledgeable in this area, is there no recourse, for example, to the court system on appeals in this area?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, Mr. Chairman, there is, as I indicated. One can appeal to the Queen's Bench and I believe that is referenced in Bill 83. I don't have it here.

But the other part of the question as to what sort of expertise is available to the board, I would think they could call on whoever they felt was knowledgeable in that particular area.

I noticed that in the particular case that the member has a concern about — I just got this in the last day or so and I'm certainly prepared to sit down and review this with you and with our staff — that in fact there was a number of staff from the provincial Municipal Assessor's Office that were there to assist.

The chief of the Soil and Water Management Branch, Department of Agriculture, was present; and I'm sure that in other hearings the Municipal Board would call on equally qualified persons — it could be from other departments — but certainly they, I would think, have

access to whatever expertise is required to make a responsible decision.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, one of the problems, as I indicated earlier in my opening comments, is the lack of regulations and guidelines for the Surface Rights Board.

Can the Minister indicate this to some degree, a parallel as far as decision-making and as far as disputes are concerned, dealing with the approving of zoning appeals and that type of thing, would it be fair to draw a parallel between the work of the two bodies, to some degree, on both Surface Rights and municipal disputes on allowance of property development, or zoning development, changes in zones, or use of properties under The Planning Act? Would that be a fair comment to make, that there could be a parallel drawn between this board dealing with city development or expansion of city boundaries, or that type of thing, as well as the Surface Rights Board deals with disputes on use of surface rights? Would that be a fair parallel?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: It's an interesting viewpoint but I must admit I certainly have not thought of that parallel. However, during the next number of months, as the member is aware, I have given my commitment to hear the views of landowners and those involved in the industry, to see if there are some ways in which we can create or bring about less unhappiness out there. So that will be something I would be willing to take a look at over the next number of months.

MR. J. DOWNEY: The reason I raise it — I'm trying to be positive in my comments to suggest that maybe there may be some regulations — that this board and the guidelines that the Municipal Board have to adhere to, would in fact work in the best interests of the surface rights owners dealing with the oil companies in some of the disputes.

I would urge the Minister to take a look at the point that I'm making, that there may be some regulations and guidelines drawn for the use by the Municipal Board, for the direction of the Municipal Board, that may well resolve some of the difficulties that are created and him getting regulations prepared for the Surface Rights Board.

His comment from his seat, or his acknowledgement, is he prepared to do that? And are there similar regulations that may well be used in the Surface Rights Board, from the Municipal Board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: The reason I didn't respond, I didn't realize that there was a question. I thought you were just offering a suggestion. I was going to certainly take that under consideration.

As I indicated, over the next number of months we'll be looking at many aspects of the concerns that have been expressed to us by land owners and the industry; and all views, all opinions are welcome and we'll review your suggestions that have been made.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: I want to ask the Minister, the Municipal Board members which basically, let's face it — I mean they're appointees — what qualifications must they have in order to be able to be on the board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: That's a fairly large question to answer. Certainly, I think one of the reasons that these individuals have been appointed to the board is the government's belief that they are persons of good judgment, or persons that can understand, that can appreciate the situation.

We have also tried to ensure that representation on the board is representative of the province. You will note from the list that I gave you — I didn't give you the addresses — but I recognize, I think, most of those persons and they represent virtually all of rural Manitoba. Some of those have had municipal experience.

I notice that Bill Hicks, I believe, has been on the council at Lynn Lake, or Leaf Rapids. Mr. Walteson has been involved with municipal politics at Beausejour. Gunnar Helgason is the current reeve, I believe, of Bifrost. So one can go down that list. Garth Berry, I believe, is involved in the council at the R.M. of Roblin, or the Village of Cartright, one or the other. So these people do have a certain amount of municipal experience. Judgment, geographical distribution, and municipal experience are some of the qualities we look at.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: I'd like to follow up on the last question because that's the area that still concerns me. I find it very disturbing when agricultural properties are up for review for assessment, that the people involved in the boards may not necessarily have what I would consider good qualifications to be able to even assess the information that is laid before them.

When the chairman of the board continually refers to the people who are appealing to him, that he doesn't understand what an acre is — and that comment, I understand, is on the record, I stand to be corrected if it is not — it seems to me that in itself either demonstrates a belligerence or a lack of understanding.

I feel that in some of the assessment reviews, where there is some technical information that is required, the Minister stated that — pardon me — where technical information is required it would seem to me that there has to be also an ability and a training, if you will, or experience to be able to understand the information that is being brought forward. When the Minister stated that the assessment officials would be available, I appreciate that they would be, but I suggest that possibly they would be there to defend the position that in fact was being appealed and would be there to offer the reasons for their assessment. So in that case their presentation to the board would be somewhat biased.

The total onus, therefore, falls on the appellant to produce the information, and that is not necessarily wrong if the ability to assess that information lies with the board that has been appointed. If the Municipal Board system has been reaffirmed, and I appreciate what the Minister has said, and I apologize for not having realized that it was reviewed and reaffirmed as recently as it was, but I would encourage the department to consider that fact that as we get into a more technical area, particularly in the agricultural areas where productivity becomes a very important part of assessing the value, there has to be a balance, it seems to me, struck between just straight raw sales and productivity.

The understanding of the people on the board has to be of a very broad base so that they can appreciate the information that's being brought before them.

I would appeal to the Minister to give that very serious consideration in the future appointments on these boards because I do believe that there is cause for concern out there among the people who come before these boards for an appeal, and they do not have confidence in the fact that the experience of the board members necessarily is in the field in which the appeal is being presented to them.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: It's just been pointed out to me that one of the board appointees, and that's Mr. Jake Reimer, had a long experience in assessment. He's a certified appraiser, I believe, and he has an agricultural background, so I think he appreciates all sides of the question.

I should just say to the Member for Ste. Rose that the Municipal Board is basically a tribunal. They certainly don't have to be experts in soils or prices of commodities or whatever to be able to make, I think, a responsible decision based on the information that is provided to them from the various sources.

I again indicate to the member that I actually would appreciate the opportunity to sit down and go through this particular decision. We'll bring in staff from our Assessment Branch. It may be that the member will have a better understanding of why a decision of this nature was made.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: I appreciate the Minister's cooperation. I am not trying to corner him at this particular point because he has given me his intention previously to take a serious look at the one that I am calling into question at this point.

But it's the process that bothers me, and the process as I saw it happen in this particular case that I'm trying to get at, Mr. Minister. You pointed out one individual that, and I would say from what you've said, although I do not know the individual, would appear to have qualifications that are necessary for the job.

But there is a problem that I would also like to elicit an answer from the Minister through his departmental people. Inasmuch as where certain soil types are being presented for assessment, it's my understanding that there is a considerable shortfall possibly in the information that's in the departmental scope, if you will, in different soil types. I guess I have to be specific in order to enable you to answer my question properly.

But in the stockton soil types, there is a wide range of soil types and there's a wide range of productivity and a wide range of value in those soil types. While I do not have the information to lay before you at this time, it is my understanding that there is some shortfall in the basis that's used in reference to these various soil types and, in fact, goes back to — and I presume your information is all based from your computer bank — perhaps that is where the basis of the problem may lie if in fact there is a problem out there as I perceive it.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Indeed, there's a very specific reference to the matter of soil types in the report from the Municipal Board. I think again, we'll

sit down and take a look at that and bring in some of our staff to review that.

I must say that I can appreciate that it is a difficult area. None of us, at least that I'm aware of, are agrologists or soil specialists. The evidence that is presented is very, very technical and it does require some considerable thought to appreciate the decision that the board made. We'll review that.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: I appreciate the Minister's commitment again to review those concerns if I could very briefly pinpoint the area in which I hope he will take a look.

A perfect example is that if there are areas of wellwood loams mixed in with the stocktons, if there is a stockton overtill, it's my understanding that the department doesn't have a category for stockton overtill. I'm not trying to get this into a technical discussion; I'm not a soil specialist myself.

But it seems to me that I'm on good grounds to ask the department to review some of these variations of soil types because there is great possibility for an unequal assessment on some of the lands where the soil types change rapidly and where the two departments, as I pointed out before, do not necessarily coincide on their judgment of the soil types. I believe that there are grounds for review.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Just to follow on with that, Mr. Chairman, I would certainly hope that the Minister would be a little more sensitive than he is as far as those individuals who are directly knowledgeable and on the board, dealing with concerns that have major dollar-and-cents costs to those people who are paying the taxes and who are depending on individuals who they may go before with an appeal, that they have a good background and a good understanding and knowledge of their problem.

The case in point that I am aware of in an area in the province, particularly, there appears to have been a lack of the kind of understanding by one particular member of the board at that time. I'm sure the individual the Minister referred to does not go to every hearing. With a board that size, I imagine that there are hearings at different locations throughout the province. Let's look at what the problem is.

Following 1973, when the inflationary factor was a major part of the increases in land values, land went up and continued to go up until about 1980. Seeing some major increases in land prices, people weren't necessarily buying it either for the assessed values or any relationship to the assessed values, they were buying it on an inflationary factor and land prices went up. The assessors came through and have continually increased the assessments.

Now what has happened in the last five years with commodity prices dropping and land values dropping, the farmers, particularly in some of the areas where some of this major escalation took place, now feel that they are being unfairly assessed. The point has to be made with the Minister that someone who sits on the board in judgment has to have an appreciation for what has happened.

I know what the situation is dealing with this particular government and this Minister, Mr. Chairman. He and

his colleagues and their NDP philosophy haven't given a darn about the way they've spent the money. So they in fact are going after the people that they can go after for those funds to spend that money irresponsibly. Yes, Mr. Chairman, that's the bottom line.

In fact, I would ask the Minister if he has, in any way, shape or form, influenced them to make sure that there aren't any lowering of assessments, that they make sure that base is maintained to continue to generate the money, because the ability to generate the tax money on that high assessment isn't there, Mr. Chairman. And we'd like a little bit of consideration, if not from the Minister, at least in his appointing of people on those boards to make sure that there is a fair hearing where people go to an appeal process.

That's the point that we want to raise. There are land values increased up until 1980. Assessments came along and yes, the assessments went up. Now we've seen a depressed agriculture community, lowering of land values, and what happened? They haven't been lowering the assessments.

Now maybe we should make some kind of a recommendation so that we use the Minister of Agriculture's assessors, when they're going out to assess for MACC loans, to go through the Municipal Affairs Department and now start making some assessments. We may in fact get a more realistic approach to land values, you see, because their job is to appraise it for the lending of money, and if things are a little bit tough, they're going to be tough appraisers. It may just lower those assessments to some degree.

The story goes like this — the value of the farmer's land is somewhat in relationship as to whether the assessor is there or whether in fact it's the appraiser for sale value — and I think the government is doing the same thing. The assessors, through the Municipal Branch, are maintaining the assessment not necessarily because the land value and the ability to produce is there but because the government needs the money, Mr. Chairman.

So I don't expect much compassion from the individual who's the Minister; we didn't get much from the Minister before. But he's gone and I would expect that this Minister will be gone before too long in the future as well because of their lack of compassion and understanding and sensitive approach to what is a very difficult situation for the farm community.

What we're asking, Mr. Chairman, is to make sure that on the board of appeal there are people who have a clear understanding of what the problem is. I think the Member for Ste. Rose is more directly involved in the particular area, but I'm sure it holds true throughout the province, that every effort is being put forward by the appraisals and the assessments to hold the value there to generate income for the province.

Mr. Chairman, I think it would only be an appropriate move for the Minister to take, to take a serious look at it, not only take a serious look at it but take some action to lower the assessments.

I ask the Minister if he won't stand and give us a commitment not to meet and discuss but, in cases where that has happened, that he will make a direct move to see that the assessment values are lowered to be fair to those people who are caught in a very tough economic situation?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: The Member for Arthur is, as usual, about 100 percent wrong. The Member for Arthur should be aware that in decisions by the Municipal Board on matters of assessment, their decision is final. The Minister cannot in any way influence that decision. So I don't have that latitude that the member would like me to exercise.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is now saying he's the Minister without authority. He's the Minister of Municipal Affairs is what he is. He's not a Minister without authority; there isn't such a thing as a Minister without authority.

Show me a Minister, Mr. Chairman, who isn't prepared to stand up and defend the people he's supposed to represent and I guess we've got one who just admitted it. He does have the power, Mr. Chairman, he does have the power. I don't say that he would want to go with an Order-in-Council and directly try to change that value, but yes, he has the power to put in place those people who are going to do the administration of that program. He has to make sure that they have a clear understanding of the situation that's out there.

I think, through some of the discussions I've had with farmers, or the comments I've heard come from the Member for Ste. Rose, that there are some specific cases that should be looked at. If he isn't prepared to do it, he should appoint a member of the committee of the board that is sensitive to it. That's the kind of power that he can exercise.

Don't leave those people in place because they're just strictly political friends of his. No, I'm not saying that they all are and I'm sure that they aren't. It would be interesting to do a little check on it, but I'm sure that they all aren't. I'm sure that certain ones lean in his political direction.

But what I'm saying is he can't sit here and say, oh, I don't have any responsibility; that's somebody else's. He does have the responsibility to make sure he looks after the area of responsibility. Yes, Mr. Chairman, he has to bear the responsibility for his department and the actions of every board and commission within that department, and I would ask him if he wouldn't carry out the responsibility and protect those people who he's responsible to.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm certainly glad the Member for Arthur clarified his position. There is a distinct difference between authority and responsibility. I clearly indicated I do not have the authority, under legislation, to interfere with the decision by the Municipal Board when it comes to assessment; nor does the Solicitor-General have any authority to interfere with the decision of a court. That should be fairly obvious.

However, certainly, I do have a responsibility to do my utmost to see that the decisions the board is making are fair and just. By reviewing a decision such as this one, it'll be helpful to me to either confirm to myself that the board has been dealing properly or that perhaps the board should be looking at things in a different light.

I am quite prepared to fulfill my responsibility; however, the authority to change a decision is not there. All these matters require review and, certainly, I'm looking forward to sitting down with departmental staff

and going through this thing because I'm not an expert; I'll be the first one to admit it.

MR. G. CUMMINGS: I would like to make one last clarification to the Minister regarding this one item on which we've been dwelling for the last few moments.

It seems to me that when the people who have been appealing have never referred to Almasippi soils in their appeal, and then the appeal comes back based on stockton soils, there clearly has to be some concern about the understanding of what was in fact being appealed. I guess that has to be the bottom line in our concern about people being involved — and I don't want to renegotiate the settlement here tonight — but I do want it clearly on the record that that sort of a situation cannot be tacked up to a typing error, in my opinion, and it rings to me of the sound of a possible lack of understanding of what was in fact being appealed.

This is why we're very concerned about the knowledge of the people who are put in this very responsible position because, as the Minister has said, it's a quasi judicial hearing with almost no appeal other than to the courts, and I think it's creating a considerable amount of concern in the country.

MR. J. ERNST: With the indulgence of you, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to refer back briefly to one item under the previous section. This is Section 1.(e), and the reference in the additional supplementary information is on Page 20.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreeable to the Minister?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes — the Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, would you convey my heartfelt thanks to the Minister for his generosity?

MR. CHAIRMAN: So conveyed.

MR. J. ERNST: With respect to grants to other sources, the UMM and MAUM, could the Minister advise why no grants are being made in the present fiscal year?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I understand that some two years ago discussions were held with the associations and we advised them that the grants would be phased out over a two-year period. So last year, as you'll note on Page 20, grants in the amount of \$5,000 were made to each of the municipal associations. This year they have been phased out completely. The grant to the Municipal Administrators Association is ongoing for \$1,000 a year.

Perhaps also while I'm on my feet and we're back to Section 1., I would just like to get back to the matter of some of the questions that were raised by the Member for Brandon West, with your indulgence, the communications question.

MR. J. ERNST: Could the Minister then advise how section 9(1)(c) of The Municipal Act relates to this grant situation?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Mr. Chairman, could we ask the member to provide us with the reference again? We seem to have some problem in identifying that section.

MR. J. ERNST: It's The Municipal Affairs Administration Act, Chapter M230, dated August 1985, Page 2.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Mr. Chairman, I fail to see the relationship between the grants that had been made to the two associations and section 9(1) of The Municipal Affairs Administration Act.

The section 9(1) is with reference to requests by the municipalities for the province to levy an amount. I'm advised we haven't received any such requests, but the other one, the \$10,000 was a grant from the province to the associations.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, that was really my question. Of course, obviously, being relatively new to the House, I'm not sure whether it was shown in here as a grant, yet levied under this section. There has never been a request under that section to levy, if I understand the Minister correctly?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I'm advised there have not been any requests.

MR. J. ERNST: Is that a new section that was put into the act in 1985, I believe is the date on the page?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm advised that that particular section has been there for years and years and years and in fact may have been used decades ago, but it's certainly not a newborn section of the act.

MR. J. ERNST: Has there ever been a request, Mr. Minister, under that section?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Not to the best of my Deputy's knowledge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 2.(a)—pass.
2.(b) — the Member for La Verendrye.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the Minister in regard to the Municipal Board final authority, which you were indicating to us these are members that are appointed basically by you or your government. You previously did indicate that there need not necessarily be much expertise on their part when they do make a decision.

In light of that, we have the land use policies where professional people are making decisions and have made decisions, we have Manitoba Hydro where their professional people come on stream and make decisions, also agricultural departments, and here is a body of six people appointed by basically you, Mr. Minister, and they can basically overrule all these departments. Is there a recourse where, Mr. Minister, you can overrule the board's decision?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I should indicate that the Municipal Board, I believe, has about 12 or 13 persons on it, not 6.

As I indicated, certainly, they may not be expert in soils but they've been appointed there because they have a good number — I believe at least two-thirds of the members of the board have had municipal experience. Being a good judge and understanding the situation doesn't necessarily require a university degree. I think it requires an understanding and common sense and I believe that the members of the board do reflect that.

The reference made to persons of that calibre overruling experts from Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Agriculture, I don't believe that Manitoba Hydro or Manitoba Agriculture present decisions to that board for the board to overrule. What they are providing is information and it's the board's responsibility to take that information to assess it in view of the situations they're dealing with and make a decision.

When it comes to assessments, they make decisions and there is no appeal to the Minister on the matters of planning subdivisions or whatever. They make recommendations to the Minister but, generally, the Minister would approve their recommendations because I don't imagine that the Minister would want to find himself in a position too often where he is overruling that recommendation, or else why have a board?

MR. H. PANKRATZ: In that last comment, I would sometimes have to agree with you, Mr. Minister. But seeing we have it, and we have to put up with I guess what you could call, in the one sense, the inequity of it, — and I'm not referring to assessment; I'm referring to zoning in that respect — do you have the power to overrule the board?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: On the matter of subdivision recommendations, the Minister really doesn't have any alternative but to accept the recommendations of the Municipal Board. When it comes to a planning statement or development plan, which the Minister takes to Cabinet for approval by Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council then, in fact, there may be some opportunities for the Minister to review the recommendations and perhaps sit down with the board and ask them to reconsider. So there is some flexibility there. However, in my short tenure of two months or so, I've not had that situation occur.

The question is can the Minister overrule a recommendation. I guess one would have to look at the specific situation. I don't think I could just talk about it on a broad basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 2.(b)—pass.

Resolution 111: Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$327,000 for Municipal Affairs, Municipal Board, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1987—pass.

Item number 3.(a) Municipal Advisory and Financial Services, Salaries.

3.(a) Salaries; 3.(b) Other Expenditures; 3.(c) Grants to Municipalities in Lieu of Taxes — the Member for Riel.

MR. G. DUCHARME: Mr. Chairman, first of all, as a new member, I'll congratulate the department for the thorough illustration of the material provided. The new

members sitting around at the other hearings and Estimates, we didn't get such a thorough illustration and I'd like to have the others take note.

On 3.(c), could the Minister, through the Chair, could the Minister advise us what amount of the \$23 million is the City of Winnipeg?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for Riel for his comments on the Supplementary Review. I'll pass those words of appreciation on to the department.

The question as to the amount of grants in lieu being paid into the City of Winnipeg, it's in excess of \$19.4 million.

MR. G. DUCHARME: Could the Minister advise us what formula is being used? Is this based on up-to-date assessment or is some other formula being used to figure out the grants in lieu of \$19 million?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm advised that it's the assessment as provided to us by the city.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Mr. Chairman, I have some questions in several areas here, and that's one that I am concerned about.

Why would it be that there would be a reduction in the province's responsibility to pay for grants in lieu of taxes throughout the province when, in fact, everyone else's taxes have been increasing? Is the government not keeping up to the increased responsibilities of the needs of the municipalities? Does he not feel it's a responsibility to carry on with the increased costs of operating the municipalities and other jurisdictions, as the individual land owners are called upon to increase their tax costs to do that kind of work? Why is he able to cut back on his responsibility in grants in lieu of taxes, when he calls upon every other citizen who has property to pay an increase?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I presume the member's comments are as a result of looking at the 1985-86 as compared to 1986-87, where there appears to be a reduction.

In fact, the 1986-87 figure line is an increase of, I believe, 1.7, or 3 percent over last year's actual, which was 22.5 million. The 22.5 million, you'll find at the bottom of Page 24 in your Supplementary. In other words, the figure that was used last year was larger than what we anticipated. I'm sorry, it was larger than the actual. The anticipated larger than the actual.

So 23,562,000 represents a slight increase over the 22,552,000 actual. It's about 3 percent, I believe.

MR. J. DOWNEY: The information which the Minister provided is somewhat helpful but it was not printed that clearly, or didn't stand out that clearly in the book which we were working from. I thank the Minister for that information.

Again, dealing with that particular issue, on that subject, can he assure me and the committee, and I'll use this example, where there are wildlife management areas in the province, and the municipalities get a grant in lieu of taxes, has there been an increase on those properties of the grant in lieu, as the rest of the

municipal landowners have had an increase? Has there been an increase granted to those municipalities and, if so, what has been the increase? How do they calculate the increase, as to what is to be paid?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I thank the Member for Arthur for that question. I want to make it very clear that when we talk about grants in lieu, we are talking about a grant being equivalent to the taxes that would be paid on that property, so the province certainly does not find itself in a more advantageous position than, let's say, would an individual who owned that property. The grants in lieu are identical to what the taxes would be on that property.

With respect to the wildlife lands that the member referred to, the grants in lieu are paid on the assessed value of that property, so as the assessments of the farmlands or neighbouring lands increase, so would, in all likelihood, the assessments of the land that was set aside for wildlife and the grants in lieu would increase accordingly.

MR. J. DOWNEY: The Minister raises an interesting point. Are the wildlife management areas in those areas assessed by the department, or does that in fact happen? Do the values of adjoining land determine the increased value in the properties that are held by the Natural Resources Department, does that in fact take place, is that an accurate picture of what really happens, because if it isn't, it should, and I expect the Minister to clearly make that clarification.

Dealing with another area here that we see a substantial increase in, and that's in the Police Services Grant . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We haven't called that yet. Do you want me to call all of them?

MR. J. DOWNEY: Oh no. I'll wait till the Minister answers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(a)—pass. 3.(b) — the Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: The expenditures here, Mr. Chairman, I haven't had a chance to read it in the good booklet that was complimented by my colleague. The criticism I said earlier still holds, it would have been nice to have had it just a day or two prior to having the Estimates tabled.

What are some of the expenditures in this appropriation?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Perhaps I'll first respond to the question about how lands set aside for wildlife are assessed. I'm told they are assessed in the identical manner that any other property would, normal assessment procedures take place.

With respect to the question of the Other Expenditures for the 182,700, I'd like to refer members to Page 22 of the Supplementary, and he will note that figure represents the sum of travel vehicles, telephones, office supplies, office equipment and other.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(b) — the Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: On 3.(c) . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shall we pass 3.(b) now?
3.(b)—pass.
3.(c) — the Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: With respect to the Grants in Lieu of Taxes. First, a comment with respect to the Minister's suggestion that the sum is about a 3 percent increase over last year's actual. The City of Winnipeg municipal taxation alone in 1986 is 4 percent. School divisions range considerably higher than that for the most part. I'm not entirely familiar with the rest of rural Manitoba with respect to their tax increases, but I'm sure that they're facing the same kind of expense increases. How can a 3 percent increase keep up with the kind of taxation increases that have been experienced through both municipal government and school boards throughout Manitoba?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm advised by staff that when the Estimates were being put together, the staff had projected an increase of 3 percent in the municipal taxes and that's the figure that's gone into the budget. If, in fact, the taxes are higher and we find that we require more than \$22,552,000 to pay for the taxes, then that money will have to be found from within or through a supplementary Warrant, a Special Warrant.

MR. J. ERNST: So, in fact then, Mr. Minister, it's the actual — and this amount is an estimated amount only — in that if their actual is higher, you'll find the money from somewhere else within your budget or pass an additional appropriation of some sort?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: That is correct.

MR. J. ERNST: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it's the Bombers 7 and the Lions 7. I just had a note passed to me.

With respect to the whole question of grants in lieu of taxes. The City of Winnipeg advanced the position to the Provincial Government earlier this year dealing with the whole question of grants in lieu of taxes and had suggested that provincial property, provincially-exempt property, property belonging to provincial utilities, and provincially-funded health institutions pay full taxes, or pay taxes based on their full assessment. Then, the province or the city or whatever as the case may be would give grants back to cover off those institutions and facilities that they felt needed that assistance. Is the Minister considering any legislation or any move in that direction in terms of grants in lieu of taxes? Getting away from some getting it, some not, where situations exist where — (Interjection) — well, there are a number of inequities I think, in the whole situation and the best way, in the view of the city, and I happened to be at the city and concurred with that, was that everybody should pay, based upon a proper assessment and then grants could be given back to those institutions and organizations and departments that needed it, so that there was proper treatment on all organizations.

Can the Minister comment on that, please?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, I should make it clear first of all that provincial agencies, enterprise and

utilities, in fact, do pay grants in lieu of taxes. I'm talking about Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Telephone, Liquor Control, MPIC — I know between those four or five agencies that they would pay in the millions in grants in lieu of taxes. When it comes to institutions such as hospitals or schools, I think that if the province had that kind of money to pay for taxes, that the money would be better spent in providing improved or expanded services rather than a tax, because that money has to come from the taxpayers of Manitoba. And I think that the majority of Manitobans would agree that if there are additional funds that they would be better spent in improving or expanding or maintaining services rather than turning it over from one jurisdiction to another for a purpose unrelated to the service, whether it be health or education.

I don't know what the figure would be but I would suspect it's a horrendous figure, probably would run into the tens of millions of dollars in possible taxes.

MR. J. ERNST: Let's address just a couple of those to see where we're at. It's my understanding reading this book and the statements, the preambles that are made, that these grants pretend to equate to those real property taxes that would accrue if they were in fact taxes on the assessed value of the buildings. Is that correct?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: They don't pretend. I'm told in fact they are the actual, they represent the actual tax that would be paid.

MR. J. ERNST: Perhaps you could comment on some of the following: The book shows at Page 25, Supplementary Information, the grant in lieu of taxes for Government House and the Legislative Building was \$945,657 for last year. The City of Winnipeg reported receiving \$452,532.00. Can you explain the difference and where the additional money went?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm advised that the Province of Manitoba pays as a grant in lieu, 100 percent of the tax that would apply to the land. I believe that amount is \$627,190.96. On the Legislative Building, by statute the province is liable for only \$100,000 a year. In fact, I believe in about 1980 or so there was an agreement between the province and the city that the city would supplement that grant by \$260,000 so in fact the taxes paid on this building are \$360,000.00. So the total of those two then would be 887 — I presume there's also the — I didn't include the taxes on Government House, I presume that's in that 100,000, is it? But based on those two, so the figure that is shown on Page 25 indicates 945,657 and I presume that is what is paid to the City of Winnipeg.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, the Minister just now admitted that there was a sum fixed by statute and another sum fixed by agreement that does not represent the full assessed value and the taxes that would accrue therefrom for the grant in lieu of taxes; so that in fact the statement is, or at least the preamble in the book is misleading somewhat in that respect.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm sorry, I don't note the specific reference in the preamble, but I'm told that in

fact the Legislative Building and Government House is a unique situation. It's the only one where the province is, by statute, limited in the amount of contribution it can make in grants in lieu. By agreement, an additional 260,000 is being provided, so it has moved toward, I guess, what would be the normal tax for the property.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Minister, I don't like to correct the situation there, but I don't believe that's the case.

For instance, the Manitoba Hydro alone has a fixed grant of \$69,000 for all its hydro lines and poles in the City of Winnipeg, which is also a unique situation.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Perhaps I can respond to that. The member will notice that what we are dealing with on Page 25 is essentially buildings and properties owned by the Province of Manitoba. When we're dealing with MPIC, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Telephones, their contributions would be found in their Estimates and those questions could be raised at the time that those departments are being reviewed or those Crowns are being reviewed.

MR. J. ERNST: Then with respect to universities, according to the book on Page 25, the University of Manitoba had paid on its behalf, \$8,699,382 for grants in lieu of taxes. The University of Winnipeg had \$1,220,180 paid on its behalf for grants in lieu of taxes, for a total \$9,919,562.00. Yet the City of Winnipeg reports that grants in lieu of taxes paid to the city on behalf of universities within the City of Winnipeg was \$5,872,000.00. That's 60 percent of what is reported in here as grants having been paid. These are 1985 numbers, which is the comparison against the book.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Certainly I can't be held responsible for the reports that the City of Winnipeg provides but the figures that are shown on Page 25 are in fact the figures that Municipal Affairs staff projected for 1986 and in fact the actuals are slightly higher and the Province of Manitoba will be contributing slightly in excess of \$13 million in grants in lieu for the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Red River Community College, and St. Boniface College. If the city's reporting has only been \$5 or \$6 million then I would suggest that their report is perhaps inaccurate.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, somewhere along the line here something is going a little bit haywire. We're talking about — as my understanding of the information in this book, the numbers on Page 25 represent those sums that were paid out in fiscal '85-'86 for grants in lieu of taxes. Is that correct?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, that would be correct. Those were paid out and not projected. The figures that I just gave the House were the projected, \$13 million for this year.

MR. J. ERNST: \$13 million is projected — I'm talking about \$9.9 million of actual sums paid out on behalf of two universities versus an amount reported, presumably correctly by the City of Winnipeg as audited, etc., of \$5.8 million. Somewhere along the line, somebody is not counting the same way — to be most charitable.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, certainly, staff are prepared to discuss this with the city to find out why there appears to be this difference. The fact is that the Province of Manitoba paid out some \$9.9 million for those two universities to the City of Winnipeg last year and projected expenditures of about 10.7 for this year. — (Interjection) — It may well be, and I sort of thought of that too, it may well be that they are only including the municipal portion and the education portion shows up in the divisional revenues, but the facts are that the province has paid out those sums as indicated on Page 25.

MR. J. ERNST: That may well be the difference in some of the numbers, but it doesn't get away from the principle. When we look at properties under the Manitoba Health Services Commission they paid, municipally or otherwise, in 1985, \$78,000, for all of the hospitals and health care institutions in public ownership in the City of Winnipeg — \$78,000, and that was for Deer Lodge Centre, and I understand that sum of money is no longer going to be paid either, that whereas when it was under the tutorship of the Federal Government, the Federal Government in fact paid full grants in lieu of taxes on that facility that will now no longer be paid because of the provincial government ownership.

In addition to that, with respect to Manitoba Hydro, again, perhaps on a purely municipal basis, they paid in 1985 \$625,000 in grants in lieu of taxes for their entire Hydro plant in the City of Winnipeg, \$625,000.00. The Manitoba Liquor Commission paid \$114,596.00. The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, \$66,000.00. The Manitoba Telephone System, \$1.1 million. The Agricultural Credit Corporation \$1,200 (sic) and so on. But those kinds of tax revenues and — Mr. Chairman, the book indicates, and the Minister indicated earlier that these organizations pay grants in lieu of taxes. Yes, they do. But those grants in lieu of taxes are nowhere near, nowhere near the kind of monies that should be paid for those types of property. And I suspect the same is in place elsewhere in the Province of Manitoba, not just in the City of Winnipeg.

First of all, it's misleading in the book that one would think that significant or full grants in lieu of taxes are being paid when in fact they're not, and secondly then, what's being paid is relatively a pittance considering the municipal services that are provided to all of those facilities throughout Winnipeg and throughout other municipalities in Manitoba. I think, quite frankly, that the whole grant in lieu of tax situation needs to be readdressed and needs to be looked at because of significant loss of revenues to municipalities.

Quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, I think in many cases if full taxes were paid on those properties to municipalities, the government might well look at doing away with and/or significantly reducing grants that they presently pass out under a variety of programs, because I think if municipalities had the kind of revenue that they get or would get out of full property taxes being paid, that they may well not need those grants that are presently doled out under a variety of programs.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I listened with interest to the remarks made by the Member for Charleswood.

Certainly insofar as the grants in lieu that are listed on Page 25, my understanding is that they are identical, with the exception of the Legislative Building and Government House, that the grants in lieu correspond to the taxes that would be paid on the buildings or properties as assessed. I can't speak for Manitoba Hydro or Manitoba Telephone, but from wearing my other hat as MPIC, I believe that we do pay grants in lieu identical to the taxes. As a matter of fact, I'm very positive of it because just in the last number of days I had to deal with the issue of late taxes being received by one of our rural cities, and I noticed that the grants in lieu are identical to the taxes as shown on the tax notices. So it may well be that some of the other Crowns are not paying their full share, I don't know, but these do represent the equivalent to taxes.

MR. J. ERNST: Mr. Chairman, I find that last statement incredible. The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation in 1985 paid \$66,000 in real property taxes. Let's assume for a moment that applies only to the municipal portion of the tax bill — \$66,000 in the entire City of Winnipeg. That would be the tax burden on one claim centre. In fact, that would probably be a lot less than the taxes on one claim centre, let alone all of the property of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation in the City of Winnipeg. Mr. Chairman, something is not correct here.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Mr. Chairman, I'll take that question as notice, and I'll certainly provide all members of this House with an accounting of the grants in lieu paid by the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. There are about five claim centres and there is a salvage compound, so \$66,000 would seem rather low, even if it was the municipal component. I'll provide that information as soon as I can get my hands on it.

MR. J. ERNST: But just in terms of the general Province of Manitoba buildings, now — and we see a list of them here — and I'm certain there are many others. I noticed, just at a glance, I didn't see the Robert Fletcher Building on there; so there's one that might be considered. But, in general speaking, Mr. Chairman, for all of those buildings, in 1985, the Provincial Government paid \$2.26 million in real property taxes. Again, let's assume for a moment that those are only now the municipal portion of the tax bill. But even so, \$2.6 million is a relative pittance in terms of the numbers of buildings and the relative assessment on those, and they would come nowhere near, in my view, the amount that would normally be expected to be paid had those buildings been assessed and taxed on a normal basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(c) — the Member for La Verendrye.

MR. H. PANKRATZ: Mr. Chairman, I think the member has raised some valid concerns. My question to the Minister would be: the total new reassessment, the whole thing, when will it fall into place? Will these inequities then be corrected?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Well, first of all, I will argue that there are no inequities. I maintain that the grants in lieu are equivalent to the taxes that would be levied

against those buildings with the current assessment. Certainly when assessment reform is implemented and we're dealing with new assessments, then the grants in lieu will reflect whatever the taxes would be based on those assessments at that time.

I should indicate to the Member for Charleswood that for whatever reason the Robert Fletcher Building doesn't show up on Page 25, but the taxes for that building are projected to be \$128,040 for this coming year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(c)—pass.

3.(d) Urban Transit Grants — the Member for Brandon West.

MR. J. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister about transit in the Cities of Brandon, Thompson and Flin Flon. I have turned to Page 27 of the Supplementary Information. I'd like to ask the Minister if the Cities of Thompson and Flin Flon have handi-transit service?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm sorry. I missed the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the City of Thompson have a handi-transit service?

MR. J. McCRAE: . . . and Thompson and Flin Flon.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Okay, now if I can get the question. The Municipal Affairs provides financial assistance for the public and handi-transit services only to the City of Brandon. The assistance provided to Flin Flon and Thompson are provided through the Department of Highways and Transportation. So that's why there is no reference to the other handi-transits.

MR. J. McCRAE: Did I understand the Minister, Mr. Chairman, to say that Thompson and Flin Flon transit services are funded, I presume by Thompson and Flin Flon, but also by the Department of Highways; and if so, why are the numbers in this book?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, that can be seen on Page 27. For the regular transit system, the funding to Brandon, Thompson and Flin Flon comes through Municipal Affairs. Handi-transit for Brandon comes through Municipal Affairs, but for Thompson and Flin Flon, if such exists, it probably does in a number of other rural communities, that is provided through Highways and Transportation.

MR. J. McCRAE: That clears that up, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister tell us if funding to the City of Brandon includes funding for the purchase of new buses, or if this is just an operating grant?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, that item can be found on Page 114 of the Main Estimates. You'll notice Line 9.(a)(2) Urban Transit Bus Purchases \$150,000.00.

MR. J. McCRAE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I saw that number earlier. I was trying to find it again and I was looking in the wrong places. One hundred and fifty thousand,

now would that be for the City of Brandon, that \$150,000.00?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I'm told it's exclusively for the City of Brandon.

MR. J. McCRAE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(d) — the Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: I have one question. What's the lowest price you can buy a Flyer Bus for?

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(d) — the Member for Brandon West.

MR. J. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, still on Urban Transit, why would it be that Brandon's handi-transit would be funded by this department and the handi-transit for other communities would be funded by another department?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: That's a good question, because that's one I've asked before too. It's purely for historical reasons. It apparently started within the department and it's just stayed there. The other ones, the handi-transits through the Department of Highways and Transportation, I think, are partially funded by the Federal Government, and there is no federal contribution to handi-transit one for Brandon, whereas there is, I think, 37 percent contribution — no, it's not that much, but there is some contribution by the Federal Government to the other handi-transit budgets.

MR. J. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, some time back, I heard or read that the Federal Government was assisting in a pilot project or an experimental project for handi-transits here in the City of Winnipeg, and as a councillor in the City of Brandon, I look with some envy to Winnipeg and wondered if there was ever anything like that going to be available for the City of Brandon. I wonder if the Minister knows anything about that; and I wonder if he doesn't if he would look into it and perhaps pursue the matter with the Federal Minister of Transport to see if there is any more help forthcoming for cities like Brandon, too.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Yes, we are aware of the project in the city. My understanding is that there is some federal cost-sharing in that project. I can't answer at this time whether or not the City of Brandon would be eligible for a similar type of a project. Up until now, my understanding is that the handi-transit costs are not shared by the Federal Government for the City of Brandon.

MR. J. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, on the handi-transit issue, in the City of Brandon, I believe the amount that passengers on these handi-transit buses pay amounts to about one-twelfth of the cost of the ride, and it's obvious that the province funds a large share of the cost of that type of service in our city.

But Brandon is the kind of city where our population is aging, as it is I suppose everywhere else; but Brandon is a very nice place to retire, and I think there are an

awful lot of people who would like to see an expanded handi-transit service in Brandon. This includes the caregivers, too, because over the last couple of years, I've been asked many times, what can you do to improve our handi-transit service; for instance, what can you do to give us a handi-transit service on Sundays? Many, many hundreds of people, I suspect, would like very much to be able to go to church on Sundays, and they are not able to because of the problems involved with getting them there. A lot of people are capable of being moved around on handi-transit buses with the special lifts, because they can't be assisted into taxicabs and it's just a great difficulty for them.

Now the service run in the City of Brandon is not run on Sundays, and it has always struck me that that should be the day that handi-transit should run. I'm putting it forward to the Minister as a suggestion or as a plea to look into this matter and take it up with local officials in the City of Brandon because this service is wanted. We know it's expensive and the city has trouble justifying any further deficit in our bus system in total and certainly in our handi-transit system in specific.

So, I make that as a representation to the Minister. I believe handi-transit system in the City of Brandon should be improved in view of the fact that our population would like to get around more, especially on Sundays, but other improvements are required as well. I suggest the Minister take that up with the city manager or the Mayor of the City of Brandon and discuss it with a view of trying to improve that service.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Well, I can appreciate the desirability of having a greater service by the handi-transit bus in Brandon. My understanding is that the Province of Manitoba shares in the operating deficit of the operation on a 50-50 basis. So if the City of Brandon is willing to incur a further operating deficit as a result of providing expanded services, I think the province would look quite favourably on a shared basis.

The reference made to the client paying only about one-twelfth of the cost is rather interesting, because in — and this is in my colleague's department — I'm aware that in the rural communities the client pays about one-quarter and the province and the municipal bodies share 37.5 percent each towards the operating costs. So that was an interesting observation.

MR. J. McCRAE: I recall being a member of the Special Transit Committee in the City of Brandon, attempting to reduce deficits and at the same time improve service. I'm happy to say we succeeded in that task, but transit systems I don't believe will ever run at anywhere near a profit or even breaking even. Even so, in order to do that, rates had to be increased, and we went through all kinds of gyrations with the local bus consumers association and to the courts and so on and so forth. In the end, I believe the fare for handi-transit went from \$1 to \$1.25 and you can believe the hue and cry that we heard from the users of the system, most of whom are disabled or they're elderly and they just can't afford it. Whether that's a surprise to the Minister or not, I'm telling you, and I'm telling honourable members that this is the kind of service that our elderly people deserve to have. They do deserve, I agree, they should have

to pay some, but I believe when other normal passengers ride on our regular transits for 80 cents a ride and these people are paying \$1.25 and really all they're doing is getting from Point A to Point B, just like people on buses, I think the Minister should take perhaps a little more charitable view of the situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3.(d)—pass.
What's the pleasure of the committee?
The Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: If the decision is to have committee rise, we could. I thought maybe we might be able to deal with (f) and finish that section. Maybe some of my colleagues have more questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can proceed, yes?
Let's proceed.
What is the will of the committee?

MR. J. DOWNEY: Committee rise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committee rise.
Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, C. Santos: The Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of the Environment, that this House do now adjourn.

MOTION presented and carried.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).