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Third Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 4, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Victor Monkman, Joe Carlson, George Thomas and others requesting the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to consider restoring funding of the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance Program to the level it was at in 1990-91.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 55,000 children depend upon the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS the Children's Dental Program has been in effect for 17 years and has been recognized as extremely cost-effective and critical for many families in isolated communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government did not consult the users of the program or the providers before announcing plans to eliminate 44 of the 49 dentists, nurses and assistants providing this service; and

WHEREAS preventative health care is an essential component of health care reform.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be

pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Clif Evans). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 55,000 children depend upon the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS the Children's Dental Program has been in effect for 17 years and has been recognized as extremely cost-effective and critical for many families in isolated communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government did not consult the users of the program or the providers before announcing plans to eliminate 44 of the 49 dentists, nurses and assistants providing this service; and

WHEREAS preventative health care is an essential component of health care reform.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Leonard Evans). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 55,000 children depend upon the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS the Children's Dental Program has been in effect for 17 years and has been recognized as extremely cost-effective and critical for many families in isolated communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government did not consult the users of the program or the providers before announcing plans to eliminate 44 of the 49 dentists, nurses and assistants providing this service; and

WHEREAS preventative health care is an essential component of health care reform.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 55,000 children depend upon the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

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dentists, nurses and assistants providing this service; and

WHEREAS preventative health care is an essential component of health care reform.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Martindale). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 55,000 children depend upon the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS the Children's Dental Program has been in effect for 17 years and has been recognized as extremely cost-effective and critical for many families in isolated communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government did not consult the users of the program or the providers before announcing plans to eliminate 44 of the 49 dentists, nurses and assistants providing this service; and

WHEREAS preventative health care is an essential component of health care reform.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

* (1335)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of

Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the 1991-92 Annual Report of the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board and the 1991-92 Annual Report of the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the River West Park School thirty-nine Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Tammy Rak and Mr. Martin Allan. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Assiniboine River Diversion Postponement

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

Mr. Speaker, communities in Brandon have been opposed to the proposed Assiniboine diversion project. Data came out last week dealing with the City of Winnipeg's concerns about the lack of proper data dealing with the proposed Assiniboine diversion project.

Yesterday, we were surprised to see that the MLA for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) has also been quoted as not supporting the Pembina Valley water diversion project on MTN at 5:30. I am glad the member has joined the former member for Portage la Prairie on this project. On CFMY, Mr. Speaker, at three o'clock yesterday, again, it is reported that the member for Portage has come out against the Pembina Valley water diversion project. He is quoted as saying: I feel the amount of water that they are talking about is dramatically overstated. I feel that, for several reasons, the legitimate needs

of that region may well be far less than what the task force is requesting.

I would like to ask the Premier now, Mr. Speaker, will he join the thousands of Manitobans in various communities upstream at the point of diversion and downstream in calling for a halt to this project? The data is wrong, the project is wrong, and it does not make much sense for Manitobans.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question, particularly his incoherent preamble in which he referred to data coming out from the City of Winnipeg complaining that there was not any data.

The fact of the matter is, this is a project that is being reviewed thoroughly and completely, allowing people to have the input that they ought to. Unlike the New Democrats, who when they were in office constructed the largest project in the history of this province, the Limestone generating station with no public hearings, no complete environmental assessment and review, this is a project that will have a complete and thorough review.

There will be public hearings. There will be opportunities for people to put facts on the record, to examine the data that is being provided by the proponents, and there will be an opportunity for that review. We as a government will not take the position that the opposition is; that is, without knowing any of the facts, they are opposed to the project.

Mr. Speaker, we will have the full and complete environmental assessment and review. All of those who have concerns will be able to go to that public hearing process, will be able to put their information on the record in front of a third party objective review and then, based on expert advice, expert evidence, a decision and a recommendation will be made by the commission.

That is the way the process should work, and I stand behind the project—the process—I stand behind the process 100 percent.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I think the Freudian slip of the Premier is the most appropriate answer we have had in this House so far—I stand behind the project. That is what we felt all along, that this Premier has not only stood behind the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Filmon: On a point of order, I made a point of ensuring that my words were clear. I stand behind the process, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition not to be dishonest in this House and misrepresent what I have said.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, The Environment Act that was passed in 1987 has been referred to by the Premier as one of the finest environment acts in the country. It was proclaimed in 1988. One of the key parts of that act is that data would be credible, data would be accurate and data would be available for the hearing process in a fair and reasonable way.

The member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) has now joined many other people in saying that, first of all, the project has changed. The data is the same. The project has changed, so the data is therefore wrong. The City of Winnipeg pointed that out last week in their report. I hope the Premier has read that report. They have clearly stated that all the assumptions in the Pembina Valley project are wrong in terms of data because the project has changed, even since it was first proposed.

I would like to ask the Premier if he will now stop this project from being proposed with the inaccurate data, the wrong data, the data base from the former project, and ensure that the material available to the public hearing process, the environmental hearing process, will include all the proper information and will be credible with communities upstream like Brandon and downstream like Winnipeg and where the diversion will take place, in Portage, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, it just shows how foolish the Leader of the Opposition is when he says, would I now stop this project from being proposed.

The project is being proposed by the Pembina Valley Water Co-operative. I cannot stop them or anybody else from proposing a project. What I can do is ensure that a process is in place that provides for a fair, balanced and complete review of the project, that it requires the proponents to demonstrate all of the effects of their proposal and to demonstrate that their proposal can in fact be done in a manner that does not destroy and create

negative effects either upstream or downstream or on the environment. That is the process that is in place.

The Leader of the Opposition, with all of his so-called experts, can come before the commission and try and demonstrate his vast knowledge on this project in front of an expert panel.

Mr. Doer: Well, the member for Brandon should understand that his community is also opposed to the project, and maybe he will start standing up for the people in his own community instead of yapping from his seat, Mr. Speaker.

Round Table on the Economy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy which is chaired by the Premier has been criticized by a number of groups and people before for being merely a public relations exercise.

In light of the fact that this is the largest environmental project now proposed in Manitoba, has the Premier had this matter of the Assiniboine diversion before the Manitoba round table in light of the criteria for the round table to identify, promote and encourage specific projects demonstrating harmony between economic development and environmental protection?

In light of the conflict that is now taking place all across Manitoba, has this matter been seized by the round table that the Premier chairs, and can the Premier tell us what their recommendation is on this matter?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, for the information of the round table, a presentation was made almost two years ago, because they are not those who do the environmental assessment and review. They do not make a decision on that.

The decision will be made by the Clean Environment Commission as our Environment Act calls for. I remind the member opposite that this is the Environment Act that was drafted and passed by his government. So we are following it to the letter, Mr. Speaker.

* (1345)

Emergency Room Physicians Negotiations

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, the government has a consultant working on remuneration and others matters relating to doctors in the emergency rooms. The doctors think they have an agreement in December. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) says they are close to an agreement.

A strike occurs. It takes over a week for the parties to get back together, I believe at the government's lack of initiative, but it takes over a week. It takes a weekend for them to get together. Then the deputy minister walks in and purportedly cannot negotiate on behalf of the government.

My question to the Premier is: Are they serious about the strike? When are they going to get serious, and when are they going to get down to negotiations to settle and solve this situation?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as my honourable friend poses his rhetoric-filled, inaccurate, preambled question, negotiations are ongoing.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, only in the minister's mind.

Fee-for-Service Costs

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, can the minister give us a cost-benefit analysis? Can he provide us with a cost-benefit analysis of how much it is costing the province to pay fee-for-service physicians at Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface at increased volumes versus paying the salaried doctors now who are on strike?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, maybe that is the crass approach to such a situation my honourable friend the New Democrat might take, but we have not even thought of such an analysis because that is not a part of any of the discussions, negotiations and hoped-for settlement that we would like to achieve.

Mediation

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): My final supplementary to the minister or the Premier, whoever can get this government to act on this matter, rather than sending deputy ministers to say they cannot negotiate: Will the government now get serious and will they appoint a mediator, someone like Wally Fox-Decent, to step in at this point in time

to ensure that this strike does not continue over the weekend?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again my honourable friend the New Democrat, steeped in a history of philosophical attachment to labour, to labour unions, to negotiations, now wants us to interfere in a bargaining process, a negotiating process, that is ongoing as we speak.

Surely my honourable friend would not want government to intervene in such an untoward fashion when the two groups are at the table attempting to achieve an agreement. Surely my honourable friend should revisit the history that has driven New Democratic Parties and not try to intervene in bargaining as he so suggested.

Assiniboine River Diversion Basin-Wide Environmental Review

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, I think members of this party want to applaud the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) for coming to the conclusions that he did yesterday on this project and seeing the wisdom of the need to stand up for his constituents as the former member had. I think it harkens back to some of the errors this government made with respect to Rafferty-Alameda and with Conawapa as they were dealing with these issues, and one hopes that they are learning as time goes on.

My question for the Minister of Environment: Will he now, given the concerns of two successive members of the Legislature from the Portage la Prairie region, acknowledge that it is necessary in fact to do a full basin study as part of this review, something that the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) has previously said was unnecessary and previously the member for Portage la Prairie indicated was a delaying tactic?

Will they now recognize that a full basin study is required in order to get the right answer before construction starts?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, there are two parts to the member's question. He realizes as well as anyone in this room that the federal authorities have a decision to make whether or not they are required to be part of this review.

We have, as I said before, been in contact with them, and they are watching our process, and they

will be responsible for making their decision in that area. If the new Environment act federally and the regulations that were associated with it were in place, that decision might be more clear. Nevertheless, it is their decision.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the member talks about wanting additional studies and additional information. I think that he overlooks the fact that the Clean Environment Commission, in hearing the presentations, will very likely hear arguments like that. They will also hear the presentation of information that has been gathered, and they will review the guidelines. It seems to me that, in the end, all of the questions will either have to be answered or the commission will decide appropriately.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the minister, that is the lesson of Rafferty-Alameda and Conawapa—do not get started before you know what you are doing and where you are going.

* (1350)

Jurisdiction

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): My question for the minister is—I am glad to hear that the federal government has been contacted. I want to ask the minister if he has expressed an opinion to his federal counterparts that in fact rivers do flow through jurisdictions, not just within jurisdictions, and that this river basin starts in one province and ends in another and goes through this province, Mr. Speaker.

Has he made that known to the federal Minister of Environment and asked the federal Minister of Environment to participate as they did with Conawapa in a joint review?—which makes sense.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the member forgets one key item when he references Rafferty-Alameda, and that is that construction proceeded before proper decision-making processes had been completed. Surely he does not think I am that stupid.

The fact is the provincial process will be properly carried through, and we will make sure that in the federal process, all the questions are answered so that they could be dealt with and properly handled in each area of responsibility, which is the very item that this minister and this government has been fighting on the national level to try and bring some clarity to. I need not get any lessons from him about areas of jurisdictional responsibility.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I think this government does.

Basin-Wide Environmental Review

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): My final question to the minister: In view of the decision of the Conawapa review commission which was to include a discussion of the whole basin, in view of that leadership of that commission, is it not time that this minister took the initiative and spoke out in favour of an overall basin review to discuss and look at all of the ramifications of this project before we get down the road, like we did with Rafferty-Alameda?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would not want to suggest that the member is not listening, but it seems to me that he is overlooking the fact that we have said very clearly, the very questions that he is posing, if they cannot be properly answered in front of the commission, the commission will pass a recommendation that reflects that, or they will recommend further work if that is what is seen to be needed, if there are holes in the review.

The authorities have been working on making sure the information is provided. The proponent has been responding to the guidelines that were placed in front of them, and they have now responded to the point where they believe it should be aired in front of a commission. That is a very clear process, a very open process, and I invite the member to participate.

Solvent Abuse Youth Treatment Programs

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice tabled legislation in this House to replace the legislation we all agreed to in this Chamber three years ago to try and curb the sale of solvents to minors.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, we were very disappointed, but it is not our disappointment that counts as much as the disappointment of all those who have worked so hard in the community for years and years to make some inroads in this area. The bill is watered down and it attacks the victims.

We would like to know from the Minister of Justice today why he included a provision in this bill to penalize the users, to treat the victims as criminals, when there is no place to send those young people

now, no treatment available for those who are addicted to solvents.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I, frankly, am sorry the honourable member is disappointed because when we embarked on this back in 1990 when the honourable member brought in the bill, everyone I believe was on the same side—that we should do what we reasonably can and what would be effective to try to curb this behaviour that goes on in our society.

I am sorry the honourable member is disappointed, but she would be more disappointed if we had gone ahead with her bill, and the first time it was challenged in the court it would have been struck down, and we would have been left with nothing.

So I hope the honourable member will take the time to consider that aspect of it and that she and her colleagues will work with us to give this bill speedy passage, so there is no further delay in bringing help to those who need it. We just simply disagree with the honourable member that we have watered it down. The bill is stronger than the one that she had brought forward and for good reasons.

As far as penalizing users, that is not the intention here. The young offenders regime that we have in this country is there to assist young people. It is not there strictly to punish young people but also to help rehabilitate. If we can get young people before the courts to help make things happen for these people, that would be better than doing nothing with them at all.

* (1355)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, this minister's idea of treatment is to lock up kids without providing any help.

I want to ask him—since he has added a new provision to the legislation we all agreed to three years ago that has nothing to do with whether or not it will stand up before the courts, and that is the question of penalizing the victim—will he agree to at least withdraw that provision until there are adequate treatment programs in place and until he has looked at the fact that in Manitoba, there are only two treatment programs, one at St. Norbert which has a waiting list of over 80, taking three to six months to even get treatment?

Mr. McCrae: I think there will be adequate time to debate this bill further at a later time, but when it

comes to locking up kids without providing help, Mr. Speaker, that is just not on.

The honourable member has this thing totally backward. There is one thing—the Young Offenders Act is often criticized for things, but there are also some good parts in that act. One of them is that when you are brought into the young offender system, which we could not do with the honourable member's bill but can with this one, you can bring into play the community, the Youth Justice Committees which exist in 61 of our communities here in Manitoba, all of them there to help healing in communities.

While I do not quarrel with the honourable member about trying to make this thing work and trying to make it work right, we have something here we can work with. We believe it will be found to be suitable when it comes to any challenges in the courts. We are asking honourable members on all sides of this House to get on board, support this thing and do it quickly.

Bill 29 Enforcement

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, there is now a hole so big in this legislation you can drive—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns, with her question.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I want to ask the Minister of Justice why he has watered down the legislation we all agreed to three years ago to the point where someone accused of selling solvents to minors can simply argue that he or she understood the substance would not be used as an intoxicant. Does he expect to get a single conviction out of this legislation?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, how can you make that argument when you have a young person coming in to buy an intoxicating substance who smells of glue, gasoline, et cetera, when it is late at night? How can you make that argument when that is the kind of transaction that is happening?

For example, what is the markup on the products that we are talking about? Was the child showing signs of intoxication at the time of the sale? There are a lot of circumstances that come into this that place an onus on the vendors of this type of product to take notice.

What the honourable member was saying before is the part that would not have withstood a court challenge. Why would we want to go ahead with that knowingly and have the bill struck down and we are left with nothing? We have indeed strengthened this bill, not weakened it, as the honourable member suggests.

Solvent Abuse Northern Treatment Programs

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question in regard to the growing problem of solvent abuse.

Last week, there were two deaths in my own community, two adults who died from solvent abuse. There are many cases in my own community and throughout the North of continuing solvent abuse. In fact, I received a call from a parent just a month ago. One of her children who is now a young adult has been addicted to solvents for many years. There are no treatment programs. There are no treatment programs available to northerners.

I would like to ask if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will undertake to try and get the kind of national attention that was placed on Davis Inlet, another northern community, in this case in Labrador, which has been suffering similar problems and try and get the same kind of national attention on the many northern communities where exactly the same thing is happening, where whole generations of northern residents are suffering from solvent abuse. Will he aim, Mr. Speaker, to work with the federal government to get some treatment in place for these people?

* (1400)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend correctly identifies an issue in which a number of northern communities, MKO, et cetera, have very much attempted, over the last number of years, to have the federal government place in one of those northern communities a treatment centre.

To date, as I understand it, there has not been progress, which would lead one to believe that this will become a reality. I think this legislation that is being proposed in the House is a very positive step in terms of curtailing the practice from a vendor standpoint and certainly would signal this province's commitment to try and legitimately come to the root of the problem and attempt to provide solutions.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, quite apart from any merits or problems with the bill, I ask again in regard to treatment because it is a serious problem, and I can take members to my own community where it is ongoing on a regular basis and it destroys people.

I would like to ask again if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) can raise this since MKO has been trying since 1986 to get funding from the federal government. Will he undertake to get our problems in Manitoba with solvent abuse on the national agenda in the same way that the people at Davis Inlet, through a very similar set of almost tragic circumstances, were able to do?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, maybe my honourable friend's pleas are well intentioned and legitimate, but surely my honourable friend would want to consult with his M.P. who has an opportunity, day in and day out as the federal Parliament sits, to draw attention to that issue.

Surely my honourable friend could simply contact a former colleague of his own who is now running as a candidate for the Liberal Party in the next federal election to raise this issue to the national scene.

Solvent Abuse Northern Treatment Programs

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, Rod Murphy has raised the issue.

I raise this to the Premier again because it does not just affect the federal government. It is not just people under federal jurisdiction. There are many people—and quite frankly, I do not really care whose jurisdiction we are talking about here. You have people who have a major problem. It is destroying people and people are dying.

I am just asking again to the Premier if he will undertake at his next meeting with the other Premiers and with the Prime Minister, whether he will try and get this on the national agenda and try and end this human tragedy, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, these are indeed areas of human tragedy that affect people in many areas of our province, and there is no question that they are in some of the communities of the North.

Mr. Speaker, the matter does obviously fall within federal jurisdiction, and I would be interested to know whether or not the federal Member of Parliament for that area did ask a question in

Parliament, whether he has put that on the agenda of Parliament, whether or not this is an issue in which the federal government has said no or whether simply the member has not pursued the issue.

I certainly—[interjection] Well, I think there is a great tendency on the part of opposition members, who were in government themselves for most of the last two decades and who obviously did not address this issue when they were in government, to now raise the issue as a political issue with this government because they feel it is worthy of a question in Question Period.

Mr. Speaker, I am obviously, as all members are in the House, sympathetic and concerned about the issue. I will certainly look into it to see what commitments have been made by the federal government, what initiatives have been taken by federal members to try and address the issue and see whether or not more can be done.

Video Lottery Terminals Social Costs

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, whether it has been in Thompson, Dauphin, Russell, Brandon, one of the major issues that consistently comes out of rural Manitoba is the one of VLTs and gambling, electronic gambling.

Mr. Speaker, what this government does is, it looks at VLTs as a source of revenue and has been doing nothing to address the social cost, the negative social cost, of having these VLTs scattered throughout the province.

My question to the minister responsible for lotteries is: What is this government doing to ensure that the negative impact on gambling is being minimized? What programs does this government have in place to minimize it?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Foundation Act): As I announced a few months ago, we have hired a consultant, a Dr. Rachel Volberg, who is indeed determining at the present time what the incidence is of problem gaming in the province of Manitoba, so that we can develop our policies and our procedures accordingly.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, part of developing those policies is to ensure that you are making the decisions on information that is credible. I would suggest for the minister, and the question is, no

further VLT machines should be going into rural Manitoba or in fact into the province until the government has a better understanding of the negative consequences of VLT gambling.

My question to the minister: Would she not agree that it is better to know the social costs of gambling before you continue to put in these machines?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Indeed, I think I answered a very similar question from the member for Inkster not too long ago where we have the Liberal Party that has different policies on both sides of the issue.

We have the present Leader of the Liberal Party who has written to me requesting that we expand VLTs into veterans' clubs and legions throughout rural Manitoba, and we have the member for Inkster who says we should stop the implementation of video lottery terminals. It is amazing—in opposition, you can be on both sides of the issue and have it both ways.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the minister can skate around the issue if she so chooses. The question I asked the minister was quite direct: How can this government justify the continual promotion and installation of VLTs throughout the province not knowing what the negative social impact is in the province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, we have implemented video lottery terminals in a very responsible way where we have put them in age-controlled, licensed facilities throughout rural Manitoba, and that is our plan for the city of Winnipeg also.

I have indicated that we have a study ongoing, Mr. Speaker. When we have the results of that study, we will then be in a position to determine the kind of treatment options that might be available to those who have problems.

No-Fault Auto Insurance Introduction

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister responsible for MPIC. Last week, the minister refused to answer questions on his position on a no-fault system for Autopac, and in previous legislative committee meetings, the minister has denied an interest in bringing in a no-fault system.

Can the minister today now tell the House whether a decision has been made on the introduction of a no-fault auto insurance system as

recommended by the Kopstein report and supported by the Tillinghast report? Has a decision been made, and when will it be announced?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I have said on previous occasions that in reviewing the various options for cost containment for MPIC, I felt there were ways of obtaining cost containment without going to any kind of restriction on tort.

But, as I have indicated, I am increasingly concerned about the costs we have experienced recently and that we see on the horizon, and I have clearly indicated that we are looking at all options, including some restriction of course.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, I wish the minister would answer the question as to when he will announce a decision.

Tillinghast Report Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table, for the benefit of the Liberal Party which does not seem to be aware that MPIC commissioned the Tillinghast report on no-fault insurance three years ago and for the minister who does not seem to have read it, a copy of the report released by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) in 1990.

My question: Why has the minister of Autopac sat so long on the Tillinghast report which identified savings of \$63.5 million for 1990, and specifically, has he had a response from the Public Utilities Board on that report?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, as with any good actuarial review, they start with some assumptions, and the Tillinghast Review started with a certain set of assumptions.

Any potential changes that the corporation may be considering and any recommendations they would make to us might well start with a different set of assumptions. The member should not, nor should any of us assume that an actuarial review can go beyond the assumptions upon which it is built, and the Tillinghast review was an important review based on certain assumptions which I have reviewed very carefully, contrary to his opinion.

* (1410)

No-Fault Auto Insurance Introduction

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, the people of Manitoba are very anxious to learn when this minister will make a decision on a no-fault system.

He has been meeting with the MSOS, the Society of Seniors and the Bar Association. I presume he has been meeting with other groups he might like to tell us about, but when will we expect a decision on this very important recommendation of the Kopstein report?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for not inviting the member for Brandon East, but the fact is, we have been meeting with the groups he named plus a number of others to review what their thoughts and their concerns might be on any type of a format that would provide an alternative settlement basis for bodily injury.

I think it is only fair and reasonable that we tell those groups what the range of options are and get their feedback so that we can adequately assess our position.

Provincial Court Judge Justice Department Review

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, in the past year, well after the Pedlar report and the province's zero tolerance on domestic abuse were introduced, a provincial court judge has made statements and rulings in at least four cases ranging from domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault and harassments, statements which, according to the Minister of Justice, do not reflect what society believes is right.

On Thursday, the Minister of Justice stated he would have options available for dealing with these issues by Monday. What options has he been provided with and what choices has he made?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Immediately, Mr. Speaker, upon my direction that recommendations be brought forward Monday, my department in doing its work has come across allegations, further allegations, if you like, in this matter.

Those allegations are being reviewed very carefully by my officials so that we might properly

prepare ourselves for whatever next steps need to be taken.

Judicial Council Review

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, given that the Crown lost an appeal of the childhood abuse case last July involving this same judge, why has the Justice minister not taken the option that he has had since that appeal was lost and made a request to the Judicial Council asking for an immediate review of this judge's actions and behaviours?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Unlike the honourable member, because of my job, I am not able to prejudge whatever findings might come about as a result of a full review of these matters. I am not able to make decisions on these things without the benefit of looking at all of the evidence.

As I have said previously, what I do know has caused me to ask my department to review and to do so thoroughly. I think it is important that we not stampede into things and thereby make mistakes and then miss the point of what we are trying to do in the first place.

So I would think the honourable member for Wellington would be the first person to suggest that we do it right.

Ms. Barrett: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, we would suggest that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate. The honourable member for Wellington, with her question.

Ms. Barrett: Why, given the fact that he has a more than adequate amount of information on the childhood abuse case that was lost in appeal by his Crown, has he not asked the Judicial Council to review this judge's ability to deal with these kinds of issues leading from that particular case, cases before that? Why do we have—

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

Mr. McCrae: As I said before, Mr. Speaker, I am not able to make the decision about the appropriateness or lack thereof without having the matter properly canvassed through the appropriate tribunal.

As I told the honourable member and others recently, my department is working to advise me on options my office might have. I expect before the

end of the next week to have a report for the honourable member.

Antiracism Strategy Education System

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question again is for the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

We have had an incident over the weekend on Thursday which happened at a local SuperValu store, and I do not want to talk about that specific incident. What I want to ask the minister about is— [interjection] That specific incident, for the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer), if he does not believe it is a serious issue—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Inkster that questions should come through the Chair. The honourable member for Inkster, with your question now, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the report from the Manitoba Intercultural Council on combating racism said that one of the things that was necessary was to incorporate some form of education through the curriculum.

I am asking the minister: Can she indicate to this Chamber what progress has been made on that particular recommendation?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday in some answers, the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), my colleague, introduced last year a multicultural education policy that has been setting out some parameters within the school divisions on how we treat each other in a more respectful way. I believe that there are more positive things happening in our school system today than when I went to school for instance.

I think it is incumbent on each and every Manitoban, all of us here in this Legislature and everyone throughout the community, to work very much toward respecting each other, respecting our backgrounds, our cultures, our traditions, and coming to a way to deal in a more positive way with our differences.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would move,

seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

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

* (1420)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

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

This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates of Family Services.

When the committee last sat it had been considering item 5.(a)(1) on page 59 of the Estimates book.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): During our discussions yesterday on Community Living and Voc Rehab I offered to provide copies of the Board Development Guide and I am now pleased to table these documents.

The second item that I would table in response to a request from my honourable friend from Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is a list of staff development and training provided by the Community Living and Voc Rehab program.

Thirdly, again in response to a request from my honourable friend from Burrows, I am pleased to table a copy of The Child Day Care Standards Act.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I want to get into the whole issue of foster parenting and the per diems which have been granted and the per diems which have been cut by some 2 percent and, of course, the funding to the Manitoba Foster Family Association. We know that the Foster Family Association had its funding cut this year, and we assume that it is because it was primarily an

advocacy organization, since that seems to have been the criteria for much of what they did.

Can the minister tell us what has been the reaction of foster parents to the fact that their association is virtually in danger of no longer existing?

Mr. Gillehammer: Yes, the changes that have been announced have led to some discussion within the community. I had the opportunity to meet with the new executive of the Foster Family Association just last week. There appears to be a desire on the part of the group that I met with that the organization continue to represent the interests of foster families.

They are looking at ways to ensure that they will be self-sustaining, and we have offered in the department any assistance that we could give to help them achieve that.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me what his department felt was the function of the Manitoba Foster Parent Association and what the association hopes to continue to have as its primary functions?

Mr. Gillehammer: Prior to the change in funding there were a variety of functions. One was to represent the foster families who were members of that organization. When they, in fact, felt a need to call for support they could call the Foster Family Association. Secondly, they were responsible for the training part of the program that was offered to foster families. Thirdly, they were involved with both the insurance aspect and the acquisition of legal services on the part of clients who felt they needed that support.

Mrs. Carstairs: Why did the government determine that the kind of support these parents were receiving from the Manitoba Foster Family Association was no longer of value or at least not of sufficient value to be supported by government funding?

Mr. Gillehammer: The honourable member is raising the issue of the grants that we offered to certain groups and difficult decisions that were made regarding funding. A number of the components of the work that the Foster Family Association were doing will continue to be offered through the agencies.

I can tell the member that the Child and Family Services agencies will be directed to allocate over \$500,000 from per diems to provide for foster parent education. I have said before that the agencies are responsible for the recruitment of foster families and

the licensing. I think they can also assist with the training of those families.

As well, the department will continue to fund a liability insurance policy for foster families and will continue to pay the actual cost for the legal aid assistance program. The department will continue to support the foster parent intentional damage compensation plan. This then covers off the responsibilities that the Foster Family Association had carried before. The foster families are indicating to me that they wish to maintain an organization and are currently meeting with their membership and exploring ways in which the organization can become self-sustaining.

Mrs. Carstairs: If I understood the minister correctly, he said that the agencies are now going to be given \$500,000 in training monies. If that is the case, what is the increase? Is that from zero to \$500,000?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have indicated that within the funding that is directed towards the agencies is some discretionary funding to achieve from within that amount an amount that can be directed for foster parent education.

* (1430)

Mrs. Carstairs: So this is no new money for funding of foster parents. This is going to have to be taken from budgets which were already stretched to the limits.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The agency received, as a direct transfer from government, a sum of money of \$2.83 a day which was called an agency allowance. We are asking that they identify money from within that amount to direct that towards the training of foster parents.

Mrs. Carstairs: What was the indication from the agencies that that \$2.83 of discretionary money was not already being spent?

Mr. Gilleshammer: As I have indicated before, prebudget, I had an opportunity to meet with the chairs of the three agencies and the directors of the three agencies, and indicated that we wanted to have them use part of that agency allowance for the training purposes that we have identified for foster parents. The understanding that we had with them is that that is a manageable way to deal with the issue.

Mrs. Carstairs: Was there any surplus in this \$2.83 per day in last year's budget?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is funding that remains with the various agencies to have them determine where they want to allocate that. You would have to go to the financial statement of each of the agencies, and I can tell you that of the three southern agencies, their circumstances are different.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell us if he is aware of any budgetary surplus in any of the agencies for the fiscal year 1992-93?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I am told that in the Central Manitoba agency and the Western Manitoba agency that there was a surplus.

Mrs. Carstairs: What were those surplus amounts approximately?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We do not have their audited statements at this time. I am sure that in due course that information will be available as they prepare for their annual meetings.

Mrs. Carstairs: I am assuming since you did not give me the information for the Winnipeg agencies that they did not have a surplus.

Mr. Gilleshammer: We are not aware that they finished the year with a surplus.

Mrs. Carstairs: If they did not have a surplus, and they have more children coming into care, just where are they supposed to find their share of this \$500,000?

Mr. Gilleshammer: As I have indicated that there is an amount on a daily basis that the agency retains as an agency allowance that is used for some of their discretionary spending. We have asked them to direct some of that to foster parent education.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, let us not get into a problem with semantics here—discretionary and surplus are not identical words in the English language. The fact that they have discretionary monies does not mean that they have surplus monies or additional monies. So what programs is the minister recommending be cut from the discretionary funding that are presently in existence in order to come up with the \$500,000?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I would certainly agree that by any definition the words discretionary and surplus do not have the same meaning and will not want to debate that further as we are in total agreement.

In the funding that flows to the agency and then flows to foster parents on a daily basis, the agency

allowance is \$2.83. It is a sum of money that accumulates within the agency as part of the amount that comes from government for specific foster children whereby they can make some determination within the agency whether that is spent on special occasions, whether it is spent on activities, or whether it is spent on education for foster parents.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is the minister saying that the means or the ways in which the \$2.83 was spent last year was not reasonable and an important, significant way to spend that money?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have made no such judgment of the manner in which the agencies have allocated those funds.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, if the minister makes no judgment, then presumably he believes that the money was well spent, but he is now saying that you are going to have \$500,000 less to spend. What kind of services does he think are going to be denied to these youngsters as a result of the decision to force them or to demand from them that they spend \$500,000 in the training which used to be done by the Manitoba Foster Family Association for \$365,000 a year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: As part of that funding that flows with the foster child, \$2.83 remains within the agency, and there is discretion within the agency as to how they are going to allot that funding for activities that the agency is involved in. We are asking them in this budgetary year to use 50 cents of that on a daily basis to accumulate, to put that money into foster parent training and education.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me the figure now that will be paid, not to a special needs foster child, but to a regular foster child in care or the parent of that foster child in care? What is the per diem?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The per diem for children 10 years of age and younger south of the 53rd parallel will be \$16.23; for children who are 11 years and older who come under the care of an agency, the sum is \$20.15.

Mrs. Carstairs: In terms of the child that is 10 years and younger, that \$16.23 a day, which includes all of the costs of that child and the care of that child, how does that compare with the support which the government deems necessary for child care?

Mr. Gilleshammer: My understanding of the question is, what is the equivalent cost for daycare?

Mrs. Carstairs: It is my understanding that the government, if they are fully subsidizing a space in a child care centre, pays about \$16.40 plus the maintenance grant which is given to a child care plus what other grants might be available, which brings the cost of support of that child for eight hours of care to well into the range of \$20 to \$24 per day. Yet we consider that it is reasonable for a foster parent who has 24-hours-a-day care, has to purchase the child's clothing, has to provide any funds for activities for that child, including school supplies, for \$16.23 a day.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, there will be a difference in the cost of purchasing daycare services with salaried personnel in a daycare as compared to funding that flows for foster parents. I do not think at any time that we have attempted to equate daycare with foster care.

* (1440)

Mrs. Carstairs: I hope we would not because they both are extremely valuable services, but I think indeed the amount of money paid to foster children is woefully inadequate even when we compare it to what it costs the province to keep a child in a child care centre for a minimum of eight hours a day.

I question why the government would choose foster parents to cut \$2 a day from the support when it should be well recognized that the care of a child for 24 hours a day, including all of the expenses of that child, is substantially more than \$16.23 a day. We recognize that because we do not even try to operate child care centres for less than that.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think the distinction that the member is making between the cost of daycare and the cost of foster care has so many differences that it is not an accurate comparison. For instance, on the daycare side we recognize that people are purchasing a service where salaried, trained staff have to be accommodated within a salary schedule. On the foster side, the amount of money that flows with a foster child is broken down into many components, and salary is not one of them.

But getting back to the original question, one of the determinants that we looked at in making a decision was the allowances for foster care in other jurisdictions, as I have said on a number of occasions, and the comparison that I will use at this point is the care of a 12-year-old child. Under the new fee in Manitoba, a foster parent will be paid \$20.15. In Saskatchewan it is a little over \$17; in

Alberta it is \$18; and in British Columbia it is fairly similar, \$20.80.

We also looked at the other provinces, and we felt that Manitoba's foster care payments were more generous than other provinces. I say to you that was one of our determinants, but to determine what the correct amount is is difficult. Then, of course, we also get into the special needs foster children where there is considerably more funding flowing with those children.

Again, by comparison, we felt that our system was one area that we could make some adjustments and still compare relatively well with other jurisdictions.

Mrs. Carstairs: Surely those comparisons were equally valid two years ago. I mean it was under this government's administration that there was a recognition that foster parents were underpaid, and they increased the fees. What has changed in the philosophy of the department that now says that somehow or other they are overpaid and can do it with \$2 a day less?

Mr. Gilleshammer: You are right. The fees back in 1988 were quite substantially lower than they are now. In fact, for the younger children, the zero to age four, the fee was \$8.93. So now a number of years later, it is virtually doubled to \$16. Similarly, for 11-year-olds the fee was \$11. Now, even under the new structured system, it is \$20.15. So the increases that foster families achieved through a Memorandum of Understanding in 1988-89 did substantially increase the fees to the point that they were amongst the highest in the country. We know that the cost of living in Manitoba is very moderate compared to some other jurisdictions. Looking at what other jurisdictions were paying, we felt this was an area where we could achieve some savings.

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

Mrs. Carstairs: Is the minister saying that when they made the decision to increase the fees in 1988-89, they were not aware at that time that they would be among the highest paid in the country?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I was not part of the discussions at that time, but there was a recognition the foster family rates at that time were too low. A dramatic increase has taken place surpassing almost all other provinces, and again, in terms of comparison, our rates appeared to have been higher. In talking to many foster families, while they are disappointed and not happy about the decision,

they have indicated that they can continue to offer their services at the new rate.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, I am sure many of them will continue to offer their services because the very fact that they are foster parents for the most part makes them very dedicated individuals and with a great respect and caring for children. But whether they can do it at that rate, I am really interested here in the fairness issue.

If the government thought the rates they gave last year were fair, why all of a sudden have they become unfair or lavish?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The words the honourable member is using are her words and not my words. I am simply saying, in terms of comparison, the rates in Manitoba compared more than favourably with other jurisdictions. In a year, when governments across this country are attempting to achieve some savings, attempting to expend less to deal with a deficit and a debt, by comparison, it was felt this was an area that we could reduce the funding.

Mrs. Carstairs: I mean, I am obviously going to get no further on this, but the reality is that I find it quite appalling that they would choose to cut funding from an area that they themselves recognized was woefully inadequate, in a very short period of time would cut funding from people who are not paid for the service that they provide.

They are given money to purchase things that are required for that child. By the minister's own statement they are not salaried personnel, they receive no salary. I think that the benefit structure that had been worked out in terms of help and support to them was reasonable when it was worked out in '88-89. I think the government has done a backward step here.

In terms of the relationship with other provinces, and the minister has used this in the House and also in Estimates, he compares the foster care rates in Manitoba with the foster care rates in other provinces. Can the minister tell us today what the ratio of children in foster care here is vis-à-vis other provinces?

It is my understanding that Manitoba has been a model in terms of having moved more and more children out of group homes and into foster care and out of institutional care. In some cases, they have been moved from institution to groups and then groups into the foster model system. Is that true?

Do we have more youngsters in percentage terms, obviously, in foster care than in other provinces?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, it is my understanding that we do have more children in foster care on a per capita basis than other jurisdictions. I would say to you that I recently met with staff and colleagues from Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. and we did spend some time discussing this. In some jurisdictions 17- and 18-year-olds, for instance, are part of that province's mental health system. In other jurisdictions where there is no service given on reserve, they acknowledge that particularly in Saskatchewan, where they are in dialogue with the native leaders in that province, they recognize that there is no service being provided on reserve at this time.

* (1450)

I am given to understand that there are negotiations going on which may create native agencies. Alberta and B.C. are also, while they do not have the native population on reserve and in total as a percentage that we do in Manitoba, acknowledging that they have to move in the direction of providing some more appropriate service there. So, I am saying to the member, the answer is, yes, we have a large number of children in care. One of the reasons for that is the coverage of the entire province that a number of agencies give to provide service that in some instances did not exist before the mid-1980s and that does not exist in other jurisdictions.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is it also true that if children had to be removed from foster care and put in either group or institutional care that the per diem rates for those children would rise dramatically?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I am told that is correct.

Mrs. Carstairs: Does this minister not have some concern, therefore, that if as a result of cuts to per diems and as a result of cuts to the Foster Family Association that those who have been serving in this field will decide not to and this will result in much more expensive care for these children?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have talked to many foster parents over the last six weeks, some who have dedicated themselves to fostering and will continue to foster and would have continued to foster in 1988 irrespective of the rates because of the thoughts and feelings they have about the service they provide to the greater society. I have also met with a few foster parents, or received letters from them, that say that

they are re-evaluating whether they want to continue as foster parents after the graduation of the children that they are currently looking after. At the same time, we have also new foster parents coming on line.

So it is a little early to make a determination that the change in the foster rates and the change in the relationship with the Foster Family Association is going to lead to a shortage of foster home placements.

The statistics that we have at the present time do not indicate that, but I think it is fair to say, we will need to look at this over a longer period of time.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can I have the assurance from the minister that he will indeed monitor this and when foster parents leave or make the decision that they will leave foster parenting that the department will do some analysis to discover why they have lost foster parenting?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, as part of the normal business between the agency and foster parents, they do what is called an exit interview, and do a tabulation of the comments and statistics around foster parents who, for a variety of reasons, are leaving the system. I have no problems saying to my staff that we must be in contact with the agencies to be aware of those circumstances.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I have some questions as well on the foster family changes, and I have a couple of items. First of all, I have a petition that I would like to table with the minister, actually a number of petitions, and these are not in the proper form to table in the Chamber, so I would like to—

Point of Order

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I do not recall having seen the committee process used for the purpose of tabling petitions. I think there is a process of what may be done in the Legislature, but I think it is out of order to accept the petitions in the committee stage. It is for questioning the Estimates of the Department of Family Services or whatever department, but I have never, certainly, seen it, nor would I think it would be appropriate to set a precedent of having this as a petition-presenting forum.

Mrs. Carstairs: On the same point of order, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, it is quite in order for this

Chamber to be used to pass information from one individual member to another individual member in the way that we have been tabling documents over the last few days. This is simply a document.

The member who says that he wished to table it indicated that it was not a petition in the formal sense of the word. It cannot be tabled as a petition in the Legislature because the wording is not correct, but it certainly can be done here, Mr. Minister, as you well know, because it is not being tabled as a petition. It is being tabled as a document of signatures of individuals who want to give the minister a message, and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is simply the conduit for that message.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Reimer): I will not rule on the point of order at this moment. I will take it under advisement.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) in my attempt to table a document. Perhaps I will wait until the Chair's ruling on this before I hand it in, so we will expect to hear back from the Chair with his ruling in due course.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: I have been in receipt of some excellent letters, and I have one copy of a letter addressed to the minister from a Westman Foster Family Association. This letter is signed by the executive of the Westman Foster Family Association. It has quite a list of signatures.

The question for the minister is, why has the category for family recreation been removed from our chart of accounts? I think foster families were quite surprised when originally they heard that the per diem rate was being reduced, and then they were even more surprised when they heard it was a particular item that was being removed. They have been asking us as critics and asking this minister, where are they supposed to take the money for recreation? Are they supposed to take it out of clothes? Are they supposed to take it out of food? What alternatives do families have to make up for this particular shortfall since family recreation has been removed?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the money that flows to the foster family is a lump sum that for a 12-year-old is around \$600 a month. The decisions that foster families or

foster parents have to make around that funding are decisions that they will make on their own.

Mr. Martindale: So the minister really has not answered the question about where families should take the money. I guess he is saying that they have to take it out of food or clothes or whatever. It is really up to them, but in order to provide them with recreation, that will have to come out of some other part of their budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There is a chart of accounts that has been used by foster families. I can identify the various areas that they look at. There is a household allowance, an allowance for bedding and linen, an allowance for repairs and equipment, an allowance for utilities, an allowance for food, an allowance for health and personal care, an allowance for transportation, respite, replacement clothing, personal allowance, babysitting, child care, damages and deductibles.

So there is a total number of dollars that flow to the parent, and the foster parent has the ability to make decisions around the care of that foster child. I know in talking to foster parents and, in fact, in receiving letters from foster parents—this was a guideline that was drawn up a number of years ago to account for the money that flowed—many foster parents tell me that the expenditures that they make are not related directly to this chart of accounts, but they have the freedom to make their own decisions within the money that has flowed.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

If for a 12-year-old child they get some \$600 a month, the money flows to the foster parent and not to the child, and they have the ability to make decisions within that global amount.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to go on to their second question in this excellent letter and that is, and I quote, when government employees and funded agencies have a 4 percent decrease in salary or wages with 10 days off to compensate, why are foster families expected to accept a 10 percent decrease in maintenance fees with no compensation?

* (1500)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the decisions around the reduction in per diems, the reductions to do with salary, the grants we discussed yesterday—some of the organizations lost 100 percent of their funding, others 10 percent—we looked at the rates that foster parents in other

jurisdictions received, we looked at the rate in Manitoba, and we felt that this was one area that we could move in to find some savings.

I know that, as I indicated to the dozens of foster parents that met on the steps here, they are disappointed, and I know that they are not happy with the decision, but again we go back and the original purpose in this whole process of budgeting was to find some cost savings within government.

I note in stories coming out of Ontario today that the government of Ontario is doing the same thing in that province, that less funding is going to flow to agencies that look after children who come from dysfunctional families. Again, these are difficult decisions, as your Leader has frequently referenced, and part of the decision was to take a look at the rates in other provinces and make decisions regarding these rates in Manitoba.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to paraphrase their third question. Basically, I think what they are saying in their third question is, who is going to speak up for the interests of foster families if the Foster Family Association is unable to continue, or if they are a much smaller organization and unable to provide all of the services that they have in the past to foster families, who will advocate with government? Who will defend the interests of foster families? One of their concerns is that there may be cuts to rates next year or the year after, and who will speak up for those parents?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would like to tell my honourable friend that there are very strong local chapters that exist in the Westman region, in the central Manitoba region, and certainly the ability to have a local chapter in Winnipeg is there so that they can speak on behalf of foster parents.

The foster parents that I met with last week tell me that they are determined to have their umbrella organization continue, and certainly if it is the will of the local chapters to have an umbrella organization, I am sure that they will find the means to in fact be self-sufficient.

There are others in the system who speak for foster children and who speak for children in care. There are others in the system who have the same aims and goals to see that there are stable foster placements within the province. That is a goal of the department; that is a goal of the agency as well as the Foster Family Association. As well, there are other individuals who monitor the system who I am

sure will not be hesitant to speak up for children in care and for the care providers that we rely on.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to go back to the Child and Family Services Agency of Winnipeg and continue with some more questions on a topic that we began last night.

Does the government plan to continue to appoint a majority to the board of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services Agency?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We will abide by the current legislation.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister foresee in the future changing the legislation to allow for more elected representatives from the community?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We are in the first full year of the full board, and I think in the discussions that I have had with the chairperson and some of the new board members that it is working well. Certainly, we will monitor the experience that they have in the coming years and that will be a decision that will be made sometime in the future.

Mr. Martindale: Do the government-appointed board members get a per diem for attending board meetings? If so, how much?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that the per diem is \$243 for the chairperson and \$139 for the other board members.

Mr. Martindale: Do elected board members receive a per diem as well?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: According to the Estimates, the Child and Family Services budget line is down by \$4,566,000. I am looking at 5.(b) in the Estimates. The total subappropriation has gone down from \$96,922,500 to \$92,356,200.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Just for clarification, you are on page 59 back in the book?

Mr. Martindale: Page 78 in the Supplementary.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: While the honourable minister is looking that up, if I could ask the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for a copy of that petition so I could review it to assist me in the reviewing of the point of order previously? You will see that I get a copy after it is photocopied? Thank you.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The line I think the member is referring to is the Maintenance of Children and External Agencies that is down from \$91 million to

\$88 million. This is a result of some of the budgetary decisions that we have made.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister if it would be fair to say that with a budget reduction of \$4,566,300, there are fewer resources for the delivery of Child and Family Services.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would point out to the member that the line is for Maintenance of Children and External Agencies and there are some savings in a number of areas. Part of that is the difference in the per diems for the Foster Family Association and, certainly, there were other budget decisions, including the changes to the agencies as far as the workweek reduction is concerned.

Mr. Martindale: I can see from the Estimates what the minister means. We are certainly familiar with the reduction of grants to agencies, and the reduction in per diems.

I would say that if you look at all of the reductions, and I will give you just a few examples: the changes to child care; the reduction in child care centres; the reduction in their budgets; the increases in fees to parents; the elimination of grants to Indian and Metis friendship centres; the end of funding for SKY, Street Kids and Youth; the elimination of the grant to MAPO. The result cumulatively or collectively of all of these decisions is that organizations in the community which help children in various ways have all been affected by this budget, and all of them will be delivering fewer services or services to fewer children.

* (1510)

Many of these are preventative in nature, for example, the recreation programs being run by Indian and Metis friendship centres or in the case of Winnipeg, the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg. I believe that the result of this is that more children are going to be at risk.

I believe that what this government is doing is cutting resources at the front end which are really preventative and that that may have the result that at the back end that more children will be apprehended. I believe that that will be more expensive and also much less desirable.

I would like to ask the minister if he agrees with that assessment.

Mr. Gilleshammer: First, I would point out to the member one of the organizations that he referenced, the Street Kids and Youth, is not an

organization that this department funded. I feel that it is important that he knows that.

The member is saying that he would have different priorities in the manner in which he would spend the \$700 million that this department accesses. I am not sure he has indicated yet what those priorities would be to stay within that budget. The argument that—and I am hoping that he will, because I feel he has been on the verge of it lately, and I am sure that he will tell where we could find those savings in other areas in order to achieve some of the objectives he thinks should be more prominent in the budget.

This argument that spending more money on certain issues and certain programs saves money in other areas is an interesting argument that is very difficult to show that savings later on. I can say that there are programs that were initiated in the '70s and '80s with that premise that if you just spend money in those areas, you will save money later on. I do not think that any study has been done which would show that.

We are faced with expenditures today. We are faced with containing expenditures today because of the tremendous level of spending that the government that was in power through most of the '70s and '80s, through the spending habits that they displayed at that time. All governments across Canada, whether they be in Saskatchewan and Ontario or the Maritimes or Manitoba, are very concerned with the deficit. If the member reads the papers, with the recent elections that have taken place, the populace of those provinces support those decisions. The reality is that we cannot be spending the levels of money that exceed our income that we have in the past. As a result, we have to make tough decisions that your Leader has acknowledged. As a result, we have to spend less in certain areas so that we can address some of the issues in other areas.

Mr. Martindale: It seems to me that the minister is saying that he does not believe in prevention and does not believe in spending money on prevention.

Point of Order

Mr. Gilleshammer: The analysis of the member is totally false. Much of the work this department does is prevention work.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: I am glad to see that the minister does believe in prevention, but in spite of that belief his department has cut back on services which clearly are preventative in nature. What people have said to me is that if recreation programs are not available for children, to use that as an example, they are going to be on the street. Some of them are going to be getting into trouble, and that is going to cost government a lot more money in the correction system.

It may not be out of this minister's budget, but it is still going to be out of the budget of this government. I am surprised that this minister cannot see that and is not willing to at least hold the line on items that are preventative in nature rather than reducing them. Does the minister understand what I am getting at? Do you agree with my example?

Mr. Gilleshammer: In a perfect world where we have no concern or care about the amount of money that we spend, we could spend many more dollars in recreation. The theory that children who are involved in recreational pursuit tend to have interests which keep them out of trouble is a valid one, but we have to have a balance in our expenditures. That balance has meant that we can no longer support some of the expenditures that we have had in the past.

In order that we make those corrections now we will avoid the decisions that Roy Romanow was making to close 52 hospitals in Saskatchewan. We will avoid the decisions that Premier Bob Rae is making to lay off 4,500 people who work for Ontario Hydro and 20,000 people who work for the provincial government. We have to make those adjustments and those corrections at this time to avoid those catastrophic decisions that would have to be made down the road if we do not bring our budget into line.

Yes, these are budgetary decisions that impact on services in some areas, on advocacy in other areas, but the small adjustments that we are making now are going to help us preserve the services provided by the Departments of Health, Education and Family Services and still leave some resources for the many other departments who are competing for those other dollars.

You have critics who every day in the House say that more should be spent in the justice area on programs. I am not sure who brought that up today but somebody in a very, I think, concerted effort made the point that we need to spend more there. We have critics of the environment who are saying that more dollars need to be expended for environmental reasons. We have critics in Agriculture who are saying, spend more on the safety net programs that are in place for the farm community. We do not want to withdraw that money like Saskatchewan did. So there are competing demands for those dollars amongst all departments and, to be sure that we have the resources in the future, we have to make some changes now.

Clyde Wells is doing that. The people supported him and re-elected him yesterday. Premier Bob Rae is doing that and it is causing dissension within the ranks, but he has to make those decisions. So, yes, we have made some of those decisions in Manitoba.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister if there was a workload study done regarding the staff of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services Agency.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Not this past year.

Mr. Martindale: When was a workload study done?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told there was one done the previous year.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what recommendations came out of that report?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is information we do not have at the table today.

* (1520)

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister provide it to me in the future?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I will make some inquiries about it and if that is available we will get the member some information.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask a couple of questions about the child-abuse registry. Could the minister tell us if the registry is being reviewed and, specifically, does the review include who goes on the abuse registry or who does not get their name on the abuse registry?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We are moving in the direction of a review of The Child and Family Services Act,

and the review of the child abuse registry would be part of that greater review.

Mr. Martindale: When that review is finished will the minister be making any public comment on it or report to the Legislature or share any of the results with the critics?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The review of that act, which I have indicated would encompass the child-abuse registry, has not yet commenced, so we have some work to do to set the parameters of that review and certainly, as part of that review, a portion of it will be to talk to the public about it and I anticipate that this review will take some time to get up and running and then some time in this duration.

Mr. Martindale: I appreciate that information, but after the review is completed what sort of information will be available to the public resulting from that review or will there be no information forthcoming until amendments are made to legislation or announcements are made about programs? What kind of public information will be available after the review is completed?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would say to the member that we have had, over the last couple of years, a very good process in reviewing The Mental Health Act, Part II that involved groups within the community; it involved agencies within the community; it involved discussions between the working group and the community. I would envisage the same sort of process being set up to review that legislation.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to refer now to the minister's Annual Report for 1991-92, and I am looking at the Report on Alleged Physically and Sexually Abused Children in Manitoba on page 85. This has statistics for three years, '89-90, '90-91 and '91-92, and it is good to see that from '89-90 to '91-92 in all of the sub-totals the numbers are down. This is quite surprising given the kind of media coverage and attention that abuse is getting these days. So I would like to ask a number of questions.

First of all, can the minister tell us if this is a continuing trend, and if so what are the reasons for this trend? If the minister has any analysis of this report, what is going on here? What are we seeing if the numbers are going down in every category?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, certainly the figures that are in front of us reflect the actual cases that have come forward. There was with the new legislation—I am just trying to find the

right word—a backlog of cases that came forward and the leveling off, I think, is a result of more current caseloads, and that the earlier numbers reflect that backlog that came forward as a result of the legislation.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us how many cases of abuse were disclosed where children would not testify and therefore they did not proceed to court? I guess the reason for the question is that children find it very difficult to disclose, and in the first instance they must be telling their story to someone whether it is a Child and Family Service Agency, but of course if they are going to continue and if charges are going to be laid, then at some point they know that they will have to be a witness and testify in court.

Given the trauma of disclosing in the first place and having to repeat that in court, and the trauma that goes along with that, is that a factor that discourages some children and some cases from continuing to court?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the figures that the member is looking for are statistics that we do not have. One of the overriding factors in child welfare is the confidentiality that exists with cases. I guess what the member is asking, are there figures for the potential cases where there is some investigation that does not lead to charges? We do not have that information.

Mr. Martindale: The table says report on alleged physical and sexually abused children in Manitoba. Does that not include cases that do not go to court? I guess that hinges on the meaning of allegation.

Mr. Gilleshammer: These are all cases that are reported to an agency. I was assuming that the member was talking about some disclosures that occurred that do not get to the agency level. These are cases that come to the attention of the agency.

Mr. Martindale: Let us just talk about cases that do come to the attention of agencies then. Are there some that are disclosed to agencies which do not go to court, and if so, are any numbers kept on how many do not go to court?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am informed that is information that we do not have within the directorate, that information would be with the agency.

Mr. Martindale: So I guess I should be asking Winnipeg Child and Family Services or other agencies for those statistics. Is that correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, that is an issue that can be addressed by the agency.

One other point I would mention, that I have talked about the Service Information System on a number of occasions, and I think there will be a number of areas of statistical data that we will be in such a much better position to gather once we have that automated system up and running in all of our agencies.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in terms of the automated system, what kind of money has been spent to date on the computer program? I know it has a particular name—IS something or other—SIS, okay.

* (1530)

Mr. Gilleshammer: While the staff are getting those figures, it is called a Service Information System and I can tell you prior to my coming into the ministry that there had been some work done and I think even some equipment purchased that had never been used. We started on this process two or three years ago to adopt a program that met the needs of the agencies and that the agencies were to some degree involved in. So part of our budget over the last number of years has included some sums for automation. I think we have some figures here. In the 1991-92 budget year, we spent \$1.6 million on that, and last year \$1.9 million was budgeted for this project.

Mrs. Carstairs: How much is budgeted for this year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have approximately half a million dollars allocated this year.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is this all being integrated with the equipment that was previously purchased by Child and Family Services agencies, particularly in Winnipeg when there were the five of them?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that primarily, no, that only a portion of that equipment is being used, but that the remainder of that equipment is being used for other purposes.

Mrs. Carstairs: Why was it determined to go to this new system which to date has cost \$3 million—and I may be out \$100,000, but it looks like pretty close to \$3 million—when there were already this kind of system information available in the Child and Family Services agencies?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told what existed throughout the agencies was a variety of programs,

a variety of equipment, and to move ahead with a province-wide system, some new decisions had to be made. I can tell you from the manner in which cases were moving from one agency to another and one part of the province to another, there were great advantages to having a standardized system in place.

Mrs. Carstairs: What is happening with all of the equipment that was previously housed in all of these agencies?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The equipment that was part of the agencies is being used in the agencies for other purposes. Some of the equipment that was purchased by the department a number of years ago has now gone to be used in other departments.

Mrs. Carstairs: I have a letter here dated the 13th of May 1992 written to a Mrs. Margaret Patterson and signed by Deloitte and Touche Management Consultants with respect to a vendor selection for Winnipeg Child and Family Services in financial accounting systems. According to this there were two particular accounting systems that were shortlisted, Entity and SFG. Can the minister tell me what decision was finally made?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That again was a decision made by the Winnipeg agency. We are not sure here which of the systems they chose, but that information would be available from the agency.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me how much money was given to the agency for the purchase of this equipment?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There has been no specific dollars given by the department dedicated for decisions surrounding that.

Mrs. Carstairs: So this is not part of the Service Information System?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that it is an internal system that deals with their payroll and other internal accounting practices.

Mrs. Carstairs: It is my understanding that each one of the Child and Family Services agencies had exactly the same kind of financial accounting system. They were required to have it. Why was it determined that we went to a brand new agency, made up of the other agencies, and yet again additional equipment had to be purchased?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told there were common reporting requirements but different systems.

Mrs. Carstairs: I am raising these questions because I become very concerned when a great deal of money is spent on equipment that, in my opinion, should be spent on children if it is at all possible for it to be spent on children.

Now nobody is questioning that you have to have accounting procedures, and you have to have systems put into place and they have to be valid and up to date, but I have to say that I was angry when I got this documentation, because it seemed to me that it was just the repurchase of equipment that was already out there and working in the agencies.

If this was going to become the umbrella organization for those agencies and was now going to handle all of this, why could one of those systems not have been chosen that was already in existence and used by Winnipeg Child and Family Services?

Mr. Gilleshammer: These are decisions made by the agency that we fund and by the board and management of those agencies, and for whatever reasons, they have determined that they, as that document indicates, were looking for additional equipment.

Let me just address the comments about providing the tools for social workers to work with and enable them to do their job. The funding that we are talking about here for a service and information system is for the front line delivery of service to children.

If the member has not had a demonstration of some of that equipment, I would urge her to make arrangements to see some of the equipment and the system that they are putting into place so that the data on various children and families can be collected and appropriately disseminated.

I have said before, and I will say it again, that two of the early reports that I read when I came into this office were tragic cases of children that had moved so frequently from one agency to another, one foster family to another, one area of the province to another.

The recommendations that came from judges and others said, why is the system not co-ordinated? Why is the system not keeping appropriate records? Why are these children not being well served, where in those two cases records were lost, records were extremely sloppily done, records were not forwarded with the children?

* (1540)

The system was crying out for some sort of automated system to provide the known data for those specific cases. As a result, we have made it a priority to move ahead with this service information system that is going to—I met with the director of the Central Manitoba agency, Dennis Schellenberg, who was demonstrating this case, this equipment rather, on some mock cases to show the volume of information that could be called up by the front line social worker.

They expected that they would have on-line computers that would be available in all of their office to all of their staff to enable them to save so much time in bringing forward that information. I certainly do not apologize for these expenditures. I am proud of the fact that we have moved ahead with this, because I think it is just an invaluable tool that the agencies across the province and social workers are going to be able to use.

Mrs. Carstairs: The minister knows I was specifically referring to one that deals with financial and accounting systems and not one that deals on the front line with children. I think we are all aware of the children who have fallen badly through the cracks, and any equipment that can prevent that from happening is obviously a valid purchase.

When one sees that they are purchasing equipment to do financial and accounting work that has been done in the past by other agencies and to our knowledge certainly not inaccurately or the Provincial Auditor has not pointed out, for example, that it has been badly bungled by the computers that used to be in existence, and then when you see that a management consultant has been hired by the agency to compare pieces of equipment, you kind of say: Is this a valid way to spend Child and Family Services dollars, when those equivalent dollars should be spent on children?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I was reacting, I suppose, to the member's comment that she wanted to see dollars spent on children and not on equipment, pointing out that some equipment is vital to the services.

I accept that she was referring to accounting systems. What the agency was faced with were five or six different systems that had to be amalgamated. There was certainly a feeling that even though the needs that the department had in calling for that information were the same with those agencies, the systems were all different. So a management

decision is made within the agency by the board and the management to make those changes in the short run to improve their processes in the long run. I leave that decision with the board and with the management.

Mrs. Carstairs: In response to the question from the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), the minister indicated that the chair of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services Agency gets a per diem of \$243—I think that is the figure—and that the individual board members get \$139 per day.

Can the minister tell us what reductions have been made to the chair's remuneration and that of the board members for the fiscal year 1993-94?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I believe part of the Minister of Finance's announcement on grants indicated a 4 percent reduction to the members of boards and commissions across the province.

Mrs. Carstairs: I ask that question because I wanted to point out to the minister and I did not want to use these figures if these were not the accurate figures for '93-94, that at \$139, that is 8.6 children per day in foster care. For \$243 for the chair, that is the per diem for 15 children in foster care.

I find it somewhat interesting that the government would consider a chair of a board dealing with children worth 15 children.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would make the following comment, that we do need boards and commissions. I suppose Hydro rates could decline if we did not need a board chairman and board of Manitoba Hydro. School boards could either increase teachers' salaries or reduce property taxes if we did not have to give per diems to the chairman and board members.

It is a common practice across the province, across Canada, to call on the community to form governance boards in a wide variety of areas to perform those services and to offer them either a per diem or some form of remuneration.

Now I do agree that there appears to be a wide spectrum of remuneration for various boards across the province, and when I look at, from time to time, that various boards and participants get different amounts, there is a need for rationalization in that area. But I do believe that it is important to have community involvement and that there be some stipend for these people who are involved in that form of governance.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is it not true that the boards of the agencies which were combined to form this particular agency received no per diems?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Mrs. Carstairs: So is the minister saying that the same kind of volunteerism that the Premier has been calling for in a number of initiatives, saying that people can look to volunteers, that there was nobody that was prepared to volunteer to serve on this particular board so that all the money could go to children instead of paying per diems?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That I do not think is a fair analogy. We made a decision when we brought forward the legislation to call on the community to provide a governance for a major board to look after child welfare in the city of Winnipeg, that there should be some remuneration for the chair and the board members who sat on that.

It was a judgment that we made at that time when we brought that legislation forward and we have not changed our mind on it.

Mrs. Carstairs: How many days on average would these individuals serve in the course of a year?

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that they have a monthly board meeting, that there is a lesser rate for meetings, and that there may be one committee meeting per month. There is a lesser rate for those part-day meetings.

Mrs. Carstairs: You know, the minister has been asking for suggestions for ways in which we can cut back money. I do not happen to think that this particular department is one of those where you can find much money to cut back on. I think there are other departments, and my replies to the Speech from the Throne and the budget both indicated the departments I thought could have been cut back on.

In terms of anything within this department, it seems to me that if we are asking foster parents to take children into their care and to be paid nothing, it is quite unacceptable to ask people to sit on a board that meets one day a month, an occasional meeting a month, and we pay the chair of that meeting \$243 and we pay the board members \$139.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I appreciate that the activities of this department are very sensitive, and to make adjustments is a very difficult exercise to go through. I will read the member's speech to see what

direction she gave to government in her reply to the budget speech, but again I say that boards the length and breadth of this province that are in a governance role where millions of dollars are being expended, the normal procedure is to offer some per diems for the work that those board members do.

* (1550)

Mrs. Carstairs: Then I would just remind the minister that although there are millions of dollars being spent, it is hardly like a corporate board even of Manitoba Hydro where there is absolutely no legal liability on the part of the directors. There is indeed legal liability on the part of the directors of corporations. They can be sued, and that is one of the reasons why remuneration is paid. That is one of the reasons why, too, they can in fact be held accountable for bad judgment decisions of that corporation and can be taken to court on the basis of the shareholders' losses. There is no shareholder loss involved here. They could potentially be sued because a case was mishandled. In that case, they could be sued, and I would assume that this agency has insurance for the board of directors against that kind of suit.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Most board members serving are indemnified and not subject to suit. I would not simply compare the board of a Child and Family Services agency with corporate boards. I acknowledge I did use Manitoba Hydro as an example, but we have hundreds and hundreds of individuals serving on boards within this department, and I am sure that all departments of government have boards where there are chairpersons and board members who are making decisions on behalf of government. I acknowledge that there are a number of them, particularly in health, where they are serving as advisory boards to the minister where there is no remuneration.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I have a document here called The Neighbourhood Parenting Support Project which was done by the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba and released in May of 1992. Can the minister indicate what analysis of this report has been done by his department and if in fact any of the recommendations have been accepted and any movement taken on those recommendations?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am advised that at the staff level there have been meetings with the author of the report and continuing discussions, and I believe

those discussions have also included the Winnipeg agency.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me if there has been any progress as a result of those discussions?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we are not aware that the Winnipeg agency has implemented any of the recommendations at this time, but it certainly goes with the concept of prevention that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was speaking about before, and I am told department officials along with the Winnipeg agency are still actively considering portions of the report.

Mrs. Carstairs: In reading the Annual Report, 1992—I do not have the 1993 one as yet—of Macdonald Youth Services, I was struck by the comment by the executive director, let me just quote from it: With seven more program closures during '91-92, the remaining Macdonald Youth Services programs have been relegated to providing care and treatment for only the most dysfunctional and troubled children.

Can the minister indicate if that is essentially the direction of the department, that they will use organizations like Macdonald Youth Services for only the treatment of the most dysfunctional and troubled children?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that is the primary function of the four major treatment centres, Children's Home, Knowles, Marymount and Macdonald Youth, and the agencies continue to access them for that primary function.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, that has become their primary function, although in the past they have had a much broader function and they have had programs like aboriginal wilderness programs and projects, all of which have disappeared in the last few years. I just wanted to know if that was essentially the new thrust of the department, that they would be using organizations like Macdonald Youth Services primarily for highly dysfunctional children?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would say it is not a new direction. That has been the direction of the department. Certainly, organizations like that continue to offer programming in other areas. I am probably most familiar with the programming for Children's Home. They continue to have a relationship with a number of groups in the

community to offer some diversified programming, but the ability to create new programs and perhaps sustain some old ones is limited by the grants that they are able to access and, in many cases, the fundraising activities and other income that they have received from collateral agencies.

By and large, those four organizations are continuing with their primary function of working with the treatment of youth that are in crisis.

Mrs. Carstairs: Yes, I raised these questions in Vital Statistics. The minister recommended that we wait till we get this area, so I stopped at that particular point.

I want to talk about the whole concept of adoption and the ability to access adoption records on the part of both the birth parent and the natural child. What is the present policy with regard to accessibility of a child who wants to get in touch with the birth parent?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We had a good discussion of this last evening around the Post Adoption Registry. This, of course, is an extremely sensitive area in the providing of information surrounding an adoption, which must be, in many instances, one of the most difficult decisions and choices that individuals have to make.

We continue to respect the confidentiality that surrounded the original decision-making process. The Post Adoption Registry, which came into existence a number of years ago, has been able to have two additional staff, I believe, housed within that particular unit, and we have seen in the last decade the reunion of more individuals who wish to move in that direction. We still have a backlog there, and the work is extremely slow because of the need to respect that confidentiality.

Mrs. Carstairs: When the minister says, they respect the confidentiality, that is really what I was getting at. What specifically are the rules right now?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I can give the member some information that I have here that the Post Adoption Registry accepts registrations from adopted adults, adoptive parents on behalf of a child, birth parents and adult biological siblings of an adoptee.

Legislation permits a search on behalf of registered adopted adults for their birth parents and/or adult biological siblings who were not placed for adoption. Legislation does not permit a search on behalf of birth parents, adoptive parents or adult biological siblings. Legislation does not permit the

release of names of individuals without their consent. Searches are performed according to the date the adopted adult registered with the Post Adoption Registry. The Post Adoption Registry is currently performing searches on behalf of adopted adults who registered in the mid-'80s. Since April 1 of '86, more than 1,000 searches have been completed on behalf of 700 registered adopted adults.

* (1600)

Mrs. Carstairs: Why has there been no change in the legislation with regard to siblings not placed for adoption?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that this would require a legislative change and it will be part of the review of The Child and Family Services Act that I referenced earlier.

Mrs. Carstairs: As the minister well knows, Judge Kimelman referred to the adoption of aboriginal children out of the province, and in fact in some cases right out of the country, as a form of cultural genocide. Can the minister tell us what progress has been made to reunite those families?

I have been told, and I do not know whether it is correct or not, that there is no attempt to do any searches until the individual has reached adulthood, because the legislation says that until they are adults, no search will be undertaken. Yet, once they have turned adult, there is no responsibility on the part of the government to reunite that particular individual, whereas if the search had taken place prior to their turning 18, there would be a responsibility on the part of government. Is this correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: What the member has indicated is correct. I might just make a couple more comments. It is a difficult area to deal with. Again, there has been in these cases an agreement or a contract amongst the principals to the adoption. It is an issue on which I have had a number of discussions with members of the Assembly and members of the agencies. Some of the agencies have become more active in this area of repatriation and federal funding has been dedicated to some degree to provide for some of these searches, and I believe it is adults they are searching for and reuniting.

I know in a visit I had to the DOTC office in Brandon, they had dedicated one staff and some resources to the repatriation issue, and they were

feeling some very positive success rate. Some of the other agencies have not made that the same priority, but, as you can appreciate, it is an ongoing issue of monumental importance that becomes, I suppose, part of the greater issue of the future of First Nations' members in Manitoba, of the relationship with senior governments, and certainly a priority that I think is going to continue to make its way to the forefront. We have worked within our legislation to provide information that we are allowed to provide.

Mrs. Carstairs: My concern is for those adoptions that have been unsuccessful, quite frankly, and there has been a real breakdown in the family unit of the adopted child.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would just comment that, in those cases, then we do become involved in providing information where there has been a breakdown of that placement.

Mrs. Carstairs: Is there a fee charged for research or a search?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told the answer is no.

Mrs. Carstairs: I have been contacted by a number of people who think that such a fee would be, quite frankly, quite legitimate, and that it might be able not only to result in additional staff to be hired for this particular purpose, but obviously the resulting speed. If we are still dealing with those requests from the mid-'80s, we are working at seven or eight years behind the times. I understand that there are fees that have been charged in other provinces, and that has resulted in increases in the availability of staffing and therefore in the searching done. I just ask the minister to take that under advisement.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, thank you. It is an area that I am interested in, and if we can do some cost recovery—I think it is an area that we have talked about within this particular branch of the department. Ironically, we do a little cost recovery on vital statistics and on marriage certificates, but there are services that are being demanded by people that have the ability to pay for those services, and we have been working within the department on some initiatives in this area of cost recovery.

Mrs. Carstairs: I make that recommendation because, as the minister well knows, there are some adoptees who have no desire whatsoever to find their birth parents. There are others who would very much like to and have simply not been able to track

them down through their own resources, and they need a more sophisticated tracking system in order to make that possible. I became particularly interested in this when I discovered that Michel Chrétien had found his birth mother, not perhaps in an ideal situation; when he was charged, his picture was in *The Globe and Mail*. It turned out that his appearance is identical to his natural uncle's, and he was found by his birth mother through a picture in *The Globe and Mail*. They have since been reunited in the Northwest Territories, which is where Michel is now living at the present time. But that seems not necessarily the way we would like to bring those reunifications about.

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is an issue and a concern that I think is coming into more prominence; 20 and 30 years ago, this was not an issue. Of course, with the ability now to track, with the ability to locate people, I do believe we have some need to look at our legislation here and to examine some revenue generation. I would expect that, as we move into the middle portion of the 1990s, there will be changes in this area.

Mrs. Carstairs: As the minister is certainly aware, there is a First Nations Child and Family Task Force going on at the present time, and they have been having hearings throughout the province. One was held on April 20, 1993, in The Pas, because I was there, and I happened to know that it was going on at that particular point in time.

Can the minister tell us when they are slated to make their report?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Their final report we are looking forward to receiving sometime this fall.

Mrs. Carstairs: As the minister knows, the Cree Nation child and family caring agency, which has been established, is presently working under the legal mandate of the Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba.

Until such time as the minister signs the agreement for the agency to exist, is there any decision that is imminent on that particular agreement?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There have been ongoing discussions, and we are reasonably close to concluding those. I am particularly interested in their position on the governance, and their preparedness to separate the governance of bands and tribal councils from the governance of the agency, and to adopt standard conflict of interest

guidelines. I think this is a major, major step forward.

Mrs. Carstairs: I am in full agreement. I have seen some of their preliminary documentation—obviously, not all of it—but I think it is very much a step in the right direction.

I do have a copy, and maybe the minister does not have a copy, but this is their brief to the First Nations Child and Family Task Force. I only have it because there were copies "running around" and I just picked one up. In terms of the concerns they raise, however, I think they are legitimate concerns across all aboriginal issues. I would just like to deal with a couple of them.

One of the concerns they raised is the notification of apprehension of an aboriginal child by another agency. Then it says the following: While the act requires notice to be given, the requirement is quite often ignored by non-native agencies. It is vital to the children that our agency be involved in planning and placement from the early stages of the case. Our agency is sometimes notified months after an apprehension and just prior to the court date. We are given no opportunity to provide advice or to participate in planning. Until the act is amended to require immediate notification and involvement of native agencies, this problem will continue.

Is that the sense of the department, that this kind of information is not being given to the aboriginal agencies?

* (1610)

Mr. Gillehammer: It raises the issue of the relationship that has existed in the past between agencies, and the relationship that must exist in the future to have agencies work co-operatively and collaboratively to provide the best service possible.

Again, one of the benefits of the service information system, when we get it up and running, will be that immediate acknowledgment of the history of the child, of the family, and the ability to share that between agencies.

That is, I guess, the theory and the ideal. There are issues of jurisdiction which continue to be, I think, a factor in terms of quality of service. I think with the new Winnipeg agency and the relationship that has been developed between the agency, AMC, and tribal councils, we are moving in the right direction there. But, unfortunately, there are still times where political issues, for whatever reason, enter the fray of child welfare.

I have said before that we are not going to resolve child welfare issues in isolation of all of the other issues that exist. When I see on television a sign that says: No RCMP allowed on our land. That, to me, has an impact on the delivery of child welfare services in some cases. We have to be so careful that we do not say all agencies are created equal, and that they all provide the same level of service, and they all have the same issues that they have to deal with, because that is not true.

We look forward to the report coming from this task force. We think there is an opportunity to correct some of the issues that are in the system. I am not under the illusion that we are going to correct all of the issues that are entangled with issues of poverty, unemployment, housing, health, justice and education.

In meeting with my western colleagues, there was sure an acknowledgment that Manitoba has been the experiment in doing native child welfare, from which a lot of good things have happened. But there have been growing pains, and other provinces will gain from our experience, and we have to gain from our experience, too.

We are optimistic about some of the recommendations that may flow from this task force.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Carstairs: The minister does not have to convince me of the need to protect individual rights whether people live on reserves or not. I was on the right side of the referendum.

In terms of the current system of funding, it goes on to talk about services to families: The current system of funding services to families views such funding as discretionary rather than essential. Such funds are now given to agencies on a grant basis. The amount of monies available is totally inadequate to provide the preventative services which we need.

Then it goes on to say something which really quite shocked me: The funds allocated to the Awasis Agency for services to families of the 1992-93 fiscal year were completely spent by October 1992. Thus, no homemaker or parent-aid services were available for the second half of the fiscal year.

Mr. Gillehammer: The member is referencing another issue that we have communicated to the federal government, and that is the whole issue of

accountability of funds. I think that the same issue is relative in Education.

I know of an example where the money dedicated by the feds flowed and was spent on other priorities, and then the school system breaks down. So we have an issue here where we must continue to work with the federal government to have some accountability, that funds that are flowed for a particular purpose are truly dedicated to that purpose. That crosses all departments as well, but it is an issue in child welfare.

Chairperson's Ruling

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Earlier today I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Downey) respecting a document which the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) attempted to table.

The document is in the form of a petition. I would like to thank the honourable members for their advice on this point of order raised. The rules and practices of this House and its committees are relaxed with respect to the tabling of documents by private members.

I note that a document in the form of a petition was tabled in this section of the Committee of Supply during the last section without question.

I am, therefore, ruling that the document of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) may be received by this section of the Committee of Supply as a tabled paper.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, for your ruling. I am pleased to table a petition to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon), and I would just like to read the one sentence at the top of the petition.

It says: "We, the undersigned, are absolutely opposed to the provincial government's withdrawal of funding from the Manitoba Foster Family Association. We believe that for the sake of the foster children of Manitoba this funding must be reinstated! We recognize that foster families provide a service for children, that cannot be duplicated—the care of a loving family."

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I thank the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for that document.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and thank you for your ruling.

The funds, however, that seem to have been spent by October 1992, was the department aware of this, or would this be totally an internal decision of the agency?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am advised that we are aware that there is a funding issue around family support dollars in that agency. I am aware that they are in the process of addressing that with the federal government.

Mrs. Carstairs: Does the minister have any information as to whether the grant monies that were provided for this purpose had all been spent on that service, or if they had used the monies for other things? Or is that just a moot question since they have some autonomy in and of themselves?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have not done that internal investigation at this point in time and the hope is that this will be addressed between the agency and the federal government.

* (1620)

Mrs. Carstairs: There is also a recommendation, because of the necessity of children receiving appropriate services, that the children are often moved out of the northern part of the province and sent South for specialized foster home or for group placements. They, of course, are calling for another group home or a regional group home set up in the North. They are aware, of course, that there is one already in Pukatawagan. Is there a movement in the department to establish additional regional group homes?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that last year through Macdonald Youth Services we established two four-bed units in Thompson. As the new agency that has provided that brief gets established, we will be working with them to see what services we can provide. This was a question raised in the House today as well in terms of a treatment facility, and I believe that issue was raised by one of the members and was addressed in an answer.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, I was at a funeral during Question Period, so I was not there. I did not hear that particular incident.

The final one really has to do with Justice, but since it is interrelated with your department, I think it is important to raise it. They are concerned about the scheduling of child welfare trials. Let me read you what they have to say.

The scheduling of child welfare trials seems to take a backseat to criminal matters despite repeated rulings from the court. The child welfare matters take precedence and are to be heard in a timely fashion. Judges sent to hear child welfare matters in the North are usually from Winnipeg and usually have little, if any, experience in child welfare cases. Just this past month, a pretrial conference in The Pas was adjourned because the judge advised our counsel that he would not hear the matters because he did not do family cases. If the practice of sending southern judges up North is to continue, it is vital that the judges receive training in the area of child welfare law and training with regard to aboriginal families' lifestyle and culture.

The digest recommends to the minister that perhaps he have a discussion, or his departmental officials have some discussion with individuals in the Justice department to inform them that child welfare cases, which I think should be handled with despatch if at all possible, are not being handled in that way, and that those that sometimes are being sent there are not equipped to deal with the cases upon which they will have to make a judgment.

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have had this discussion with Judge Kimelman who has raised similar issues, and if there are recommendations from the task force that should be presented to other departments, we will do that, but we have also had ongoing discussions on this issue and look forward to some progress.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I just have one or two questions on aboriginal child welfare. I had the privilege of meeting people from the community of Hollow Water and hearing of their story of what they are doing in their community, which, I believe, was a very positive story.

I am wondering if the kind of services that they are providing is being provided in other communities or if at least their experience is being shared with other communities—the Hollow Water Healing Circle—so that the experience they have gained can be shared with others and that other communities can learn and benefit from their experience.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Hollow Water Healing Circle is, I take it, a model that the Justice department feels is reasonably successful, and we look forward to any information that could be applied to child welfare.

Mr. Martindale: Under Child and Family Support, one of the Expected Results is the "implementation of recommendations of the Independent Review of Reporting Procedures in Children's Residential Care Facilities, the Desjarlais Inquest Report, and the Ombudsman's Report on the Seven Oaks Centre."

I wonder if we could deal with those one at a time—if the minister could tell us if his department is making progress in implementing the recommendations, first of all, of the Independent Review of Reporting Procedures in Children's Residential Care Facilities.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I think I can give you some extensive information on the Suche report and the recommendations that have come forward. In April of 1992, the working committee was appointed to oversee the implementation of those recommendations. The committee has met on 11 occasions during the period June 4, 1992, to January 28 of this year. The committee has had an opportunity to consider all the recommendations and to provide feedback and direction on the majority of these. Sixteen of the recommendations were delegated to three subcommittees for the development of action plans. These 17 recommendations requiring legislative amendments to the act have been reviewed with the assistance of the Policy and Planning branch with a view to prioritizing for legislative amendments.

Funding is being provided to Winnipeg Child and Family Services to develop a specialized team to investigate allegations of abuse against residential care staff. A standard is being developed that will require all facilities to orient staff in safe practices and procedures for investigating allegations of abuse. The Office of the Children's Advocate has been established.

The development of pamphlets which outline and clarify the rights of children has been implemented. A pamphlet related to the Seven Oaks Centre has been completed. A joint funding committee comprised of the Manitoba Association of Residential Treatment Resources and the branch have examined and are prioritizing funding issues.

The curriculum development subcommittee has developed an outline for core courses for youth care workers and supervisors. With the support of the branch, MARTR and the Child and Youth Care Workers Association of Manitoba Inc. have submitted a proposal to the Red River Community College for a full-time training program. Minimum standards, in regard to screening and hiring practices, will be implemented in the 1993-94 year.

Nonviolent crisis intervention training is available to all staff members of the organizations of MARTR. Staff of child care institutions may now access the training through MARTR. Responsibility for the licensing and funding of children's facilities will be amalgamated with the Child and Family Support branch. Quality-assurance reviews of residential care facilities will be initiated during 1993-94. Recommendations related to youth correctional facilities have been delegated to a subcommittee comprised of the Department of Justice and the branch.

Seven Oaks Centre, the committee has supported the implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations. Mental health supports are now being provided through ongoing consultation with the acute treatment consultation team. Developmental issues will be considered within the context of provincial strategy regarding resource development.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the Desjarlais Inquest Report?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The answer to that, I think, can be developed in three areas. First and foremost, we have the task force that the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) was asking about, in which we went into some detail on. That task force is currently partway through its hearings, and, as I have indicated, we anticipate a report from them in the fall of this year.

Secondly, we have further developed the quality-assurance model and have worked with the DOTC agency on quality-assurance issues.

Thirdly, we have developed the Service Appeal Panel which has been put in place to hear any appeals of service that relate to political interference as it relates to specific cases and agencies.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what progress has been made on the Ombudsman's Report on the Seven Oaks Centre, and was there

not a recommendation to close the Seven Oaks Centre?

* (1630)

Mr. Gilleshammer: There were a number of recommendations that came forward from the Ombudsman's report, and I can indicate that a new admissions agency contact and case planning review policy was developed.

The policy formalizes the requirement for case reviews of all children placed at Seven Oaks Centre and ensures appropriate placement and treatment planning, a consultative service with mental health clinicians from the acute treatment and consultation team, was made available on a weekly basis to staff at Seven Oaks to strengthen their treatment of high needs children placed at the centre.

Under the area of medical, all the medical policies, practices and procedures followed at the centre were reviewed by an independent medical resource person from the Department of Justice. Findings and recommendations from this medical review are in the process of implementation, and there are some other ongoing areas of change as well.

Mr. Martindale: Was there ever a recommendation to close the Seven Oaks Centre?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There have been recommendations, I think, within the system and from critics that the Seven Oaks Centre should be modified or changed and, some say, closed. There has been a reasonable amount of reform that has taken place at the Seven Oaks Centre in terms of downsizing it from, I think, some 60 or 70 placements there a number of years ago to placements of around 20 or 24 at the present time.

One of the key issues that I think government has to deal with, or the system has to deal with, in terms of simply shutting a place down is to have appropriate placement for children who really could be classified as children that need a children's mental health facility. This is a subject of ongoing discussions within the department, and certainly an issue of interest to me that we have to steer the system in the direction where we have appropriate services for youth, for children that require a mental health facility.

We have had discussions within the department and interdepartmentally, and while there is no solution in the short term, I would hope in the longer term that we provide what would be termed the most

appropriate service for children requiring that sort of treatment.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, just to make your job a little easier, the Liberal Family Services critic would like to stay on line 5.(c) the Seven Oaks Centre, but perhaps we can pass 5.(a) and 5.(b) and stay on (c)? No?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We are on 5.(a)(1) Salaries \$354,500.

Mrs. Carstairs: I just have one area of questioning that I want to ask and then we can certainly move on. That is not the problem.

I was dismayed to see the reduction of funding to the Child Protection Centre. This is not a 4 percent. This is not even a 10 percent. This is, according to my information, from last year to this year, \$807,000 down to \$575,000.

Mr. Gilleshammer: There is an adjustment in the print as the member references, and we are asking that agency to use an accumulated surplus which they have at their disposal to continue to provide the same level of service.

Mrs. Carstairs: Just for complete clarification, it is not intended that the Child Protection Centre would spend less than the budgeted reduction for any other particular agency this year.

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 5.(a) Administration (1) Salaries \$354,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$59,600—pass.

(b) Child and Family Support (1) Salaries \$2,041,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,211,300—pass; (3) Maintenance of Children and External Agencies \$88,103,700—pass.

(c) Seven Oaks Centre (1) Salaries \$1,552,700.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am on the record as saying I want Seven Oaks to close. The minister, of course, argues that the children there require a specific type of mental treatment. But, as Colleen Suche pointed out so eloquently, they do not get treatment in the Seven Oaks Centre. It is not a treatment facility.

How many of these children could, in fact, be moved to Marymount or Children's Home or Macdonald Youth Services programs if there were spaces in those programs, and how many would be left then at Seven Oaks?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one of the difficulties that we have is to have those agencies develop appropriate treatment resources for those individuals, and often the short-term clients at Seven Oaks can be moved on to the facilities that the member references, but they also will not accept them in some cases until their condition has stabilized.

We have attempted to make some program and medical changes that I read into the record a few minutes ago, to assist the Seven Oaks Centre in stabilizing them until someone else will accept them. I readily admit that we have a program gap here, in what I call children's mental health services, and we have some ongoing discussions about that, we have some ideas about that, that we hope in the next year will lead to a different sort of facility.

Because often the children who are conveyed to Seven Oaks either by the police or by Child and Family Services workers bring them to Seven Oaks because Marymount and Children's Home and others will not accept them. They do not have what they deem to be an appropriate setting for them, and that gap, as I have indicated, I think, is a children's mental health facility. Until we have that developed, Seven Oaks is the place where we will house these individuals.

We have made some changes, based on the Ombudsman's report, to move in a direction of more appropriate service there, but we have not achieved at this time that other facility that I think we require within the system to look at this continuum of care.

* (1640)

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell the committee: What is the average length of stay of a young person at Seven Oaks, and what is the length of stay for the longest resident at the present time at Seven Oaks?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that the average length of stay is just over 21 days, and the information I have on recent cases, the longest length of stay is about three-quarters of a year.

Mrs. Carstairs: In terms of the new processes put in place, how long does it take before a child at Seven Oaks is now getting some kind of psychological evaluation and some form of treatment?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The type of service that the member is referencing does not occur at Seven Oaks. It will occur at one of the treatment centres

or the Child Protection Centre and that will depend again on those other service providers accepting that child. Given that the average length of stay is now around 20 days, the majority of those clients will be provided with that service within that time frame.

Mrs. Carstairs: When the minister talks about additional supports, just what are those additional supports these children are now receiving? If they are not getting psychological assessment, and they are not getting any psychological support, and they have been identified by the minister as, in many cases, he says, requiring some kind of mental health care, what support are they getting?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The changes we have made, in response to the Ombudsman's report, is to provide training for the staff at Seven Oaks to better be able to accommodate and work with these children during that roughly three-week span of time that they stay there. Some of the changes are with the program that they offer, some is with the medical practices there.

The training we have provided for the staff deals with issues surrounding difficult client behaviours, increasing knowledge of the effects of child abuse, critical incident debriefing for staff and nonviolent crisis intervention programming for the current staff.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, just a comment, but it still appears that although there has been additional training for staff and maybe some beefing up of medical personnel, there is still no direct help for these youngsters, many of whom have severe mental disorders.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I acknowledge that Seven Oaks is not the place that is designed or equipped to give them that long-term psychological help. It is there to help to stabilize the individual until other institutions and support within the community can be accessed.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 5.(c) Seven Oaks Centre (1) Salaries \$1,552,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$276,800—pass.

(d) Family Conciliation (1) Salaries \$631,500.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister has been challenging me through the entire Estimates to find a place to save money in his department, and I may have found a place, but I need to ask some questions first.

I read with interest the different functions under Family Conciliation in the—

An Honourable Member: Put it on your salary line.

Mr. Martindale: I had not thought of that. It sounds like a good idea. Always happy to accept suggestions from government members on the committee. However, we have to wait until we get to the Minister's Salary line.

An Honourable Member: You are with your friends now.

Mr. Martindale: I think the minister has the numbers, so he does not have to worry.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I just wanted to say, with the praise that I received from the member last night, I know that he is such a man of consistency that he would find it difficult to have a change of heart overnight.

Mr. Martindale: The minister is again putting words in my mouth. My praise was quite limited. He was damned by faint praise. I commended him for having the ability to answer any questions on any line at any time. It was very small praise indeed.

Back to Family Conciliation, I wonder if the minister can tell us how many staff are involved in some of the functions here, first of all, with mediation?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Eleven.

Mr. Martindale: How many staff are involved with court-ordered assessment reports?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Eleven.

Mr. Martindale: Are those the same 11 or different staff?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct, they are the same 11.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and the Access Assistance Program, how many staff are there?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that prior to budget decisions there were two, and now there are two less.

Mr. Martindale: Then there are no staff assigned to the Access Assistance Program anymore?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us, since this three-year demonstration project has come to an end, who will be taking over these functions?

Mr. Gillieshammer: I am told they will be referred for mediation, and some of them will be dealt with through the private bar.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us if the 11 staff who were involved with the mediation and court-ordered assessment reports use volunteers in any of the functions that they carry out?

Mr. Gillieshammer: No.

Mr. Martindale: I have a suggestion involving volunteers that I think can be delivered at very low cost, and I think the minister will appreciate anything which may save the department money, since he has been asking me repeatedly for suggestions.

It has to do with a very interesting experience that I had in the summer of 1974 when I was assistant chaplain at family court in Toronto. One of the very helpful things, I believe, that the chaplain's office did was to negotiate access for children between estranged parents. This was the small number of people who could not amiably work out their own access arrangements.

It was a very interesting and complicated process because, first of all, you had to ask one parent how many hours of access they would like, and then ask the other parent how many hours they would agree to, and then talk to their lawyers—which was the most difficult part—and get the lawyers to agree to the access that I had arranged.

Mrs. Carstairs: That is harder than talking to the parents.

* (1650)

Mr. Gillieshammer: The member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) points out: That is harder than talking to the parents. It certainly was.

After an agreement was reached, I would write it up, and we would all go into court. Since all the parties had agreed beforehand, the judge would make it a court order.

The main feature of this was that we were using volunteers in about 70 churches in metropolitan Toronto as supervisors of access in neutral locations, namely, churches. The result was that people who could not previously get together had a neutral place to have visits with children and exchange children.

They usually started off with a lot of mistrust and fear and hostility. After a number of weeks, a trust level built up. It proved to be very helpful when it came to maintenance payments, because

frequently when someone is denied access, they say, well, if I cannot see my kids, I am not going to make payments—even though the two are unconnected.

Of course, when people do get access, then they are encouraged to make those maintenance payments. So that was helpful to the parent who had custody of the children.

So I am wondering if the minister thinks that there might be merit in this idea, that it may be helpful in arranging access by using volunteers to supervise access, and that it may take some of the burden off the staff and the system. It is an idea that has worked elsewhere and may work here.

Mr. Gillieshammer: I thank the member for his suggestions, and I know that he will recognize that the world has changed since 1974. Sometimes the changes require skilled practitioners who are knowledgeable in family development, child development and family dynamics.

I suppose the case could be made that the clergymen that the member speaks of do have training in that area. I certainly think, and I have said it before, that the community does have a role to play, that in many areas of the services that are provided by Family Services, we need to empower the community to become more and more involved in the delivery of services. I think there was a time when government did indicate to the community that government in fact could do everything. I would welcome the idea that volunteers can more and more be used.

We must be aware that in some areas there is a concern over liability, that where volunteers are giving advice that presumably might be followed by members of the public, there can be a liability issue. Certainly volunteers could be helpful in monitoring and supervising access as an adjunct to mediation.

So we will take the member's suggestion seriously, that we look at the concept of using volunteers in this area and perhaps other areas as well, but I do see some issues and some problems. I know that other governments are also looking at ways by which services can be provided. I am anxious to look at what Premier Rae talks about as a social contract. I know that he is speaking in relation to services delivered by the government employees in the province of Ontario.

Again, if there are civil servants that the member wants to replace by the use of volunteers, perhaps

we could identify some of the other areas of the department, and maybe even across other departments within government where the member feels that the volunteer component could in fact save government large sums of money.

I think of departments such as Natural Resources and Highways and some of the departments away from the three that deliver the human services, and we could maybe have the member bring forward some more ideas where volunteers perhaps could provide these services. [interjection]

I am sorry I am not able to hear the member. Do you want to pass these lines today?

An Honourable Member: There is a question on 5.(d), but I think we can pass—

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, anyway, we will take it under advisement.

Mrs. Carstairs: I just want to know if, in the minister's meetings across the country, if anybody anywhere is evaluating whether the divorce court is the appropriate place to deal with marital breakdown, and if there is any pilot project going on anywhere that we could make and bring about a more civilized way for families to part ways with a certain more degree of civility than by having two lawyers haranguing at one another in a court room.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that we are not aware of any pilots in any other jurisdictions, but the issue the member raises has been brought forward within other departments. Nobody has furthered their thinking on it yet to find a solution.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 5.(d) Family Conciliation (1) Salaries \$631,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$164,900—pass.

5.(e) Family Dispute Services (1) Salaries \$267,700.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I want to know, as, I am sure, does the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), what was the rationale in this department to eliminating the funding for the Flin Flon Crisis Centre?

I mean, it cannot be geography because if you look around the province, there are other centres equidistant from other shelters and they have survived. What was the rationale for Flin Flon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Given that it is a few minutes before 5, is it the intention to pass these lines today or are we going to continue on Thursday? Thursday. Okay. Thank you.

I think what I would like to do is talk about the backdrop of government involvement in the whole area of Family Dispute Services over the last number of years. We have seen the increased funding support for women's crisis shelters, crisis lines, women's resource centres. We have seen an increase there of some \$3 million.

Now that does not sound like a lot of money in a department like Family Services where we have a \$700 million budget, but we, in fact, have seen an increase of 262 percent in the budget line from 1988 until 1993. That is a result, of course, of higher grants and higher per diems.

As part of this backdrop, I would like to share with you the fact that we here in Winnipeg have funded the first crisis shelter for native women in Winnipeg, and also a new resource centre for Francophone women. We have implemented a new funding formula for wife abuse shelters providing greater financial stability to shelters and permitting shelters to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Now this is a really important change in the funding formula whereby we formerly had shelters that had very great difficulty staying open under that funding formula and other shelters that were accumulating a surplus. So, within the funding for these shelters, we have been able to redirect that by changing the level of the grants and putting more of the money in the form of per diems so that the funding accurately reflected the traffic that these shelters had.

In addition, in April of 1992, we announced the family violence initiative, which increased funding to wife abuse services and women's resource services by an additional 10.4 percent as we put \$500,000 into those services and we have—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): It is quite obvious that the minister missed the question. Could we ask the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) to restate the question?

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

AGRICULTURE

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come

to order. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture.

We will begin with an opening statement from the honourable Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Chairperson, it is indeed an opportunity for me to talk about agriculture in Manitoba I guess as I see it now, and I will hear from my critics in terms of their opening statements and the questions they will raise in the course of the Estimates.

Clearly I will say that agriculture, in my mind, is the most important industry in the province of Manitoba. It started about 125, 135 years ago, and the first shipment of Red Fife wheat from along the Red River over to Britain occurred in 1876. Some 876 bushels were shipped at that time. Over the last 125 years, we have evolved to shipping 60 crops to over 60 countries in the world. We export many livestock commodities.

* (1420)

I think it is fair to say there are a lot of success stories in agriculture in Manitoba over the years. We have expanded what we have done. We have changed what we have done. We have adapted to the marketplace. We have adapted to opportunity. We have had the courage to face challenges both on the farm, off the farm, inside the country, outside the country. We have adapted very, very well.

We have a record of producing the best quality of agricultural products. I do not care what it is, whether it is cereal crops or oilseeds, whether it is special crops or whether it is livestock commodities, we have a record and a reputation that is enviable in every country of the world. On the basis of that reputation, we sell to all these countries in the world, and we have competed very, very effectively.

Certainly, events of a global nature have affected agriculture throughout our history. In the last few years, some of those global events have been rather disturbing for us—the grain trade war which has impacted us very severely, something that has not gone away, and the solution through GATT that we all hoped would happen three or four years ago is no closer today than it was when the whole negotiation round started back in 1986.

On the positive side, certainly, the positive trade side, the North American Free Trade Agreement is now close to being in place. The process of the Free Trade Agreement that we had signed between

Canada and United States in '89 has been very positive for agriculture.

We have expanded our sales in the North American continent, particularly in the United States, rather dramatically over the last three or four years. It is very important that we have done that, because it has offset losses of markets elsewhere in the world, most particularly the market in Russia primarily because they can only now buy on credit. They are unable to meet their commitments both in terms of principal and interest to the Canadian Wheat Board and, therefore, to the Canadian taxpayer.

We have expanded our sales in other places like Japan and China, other Pacific Rim countries. I noted last weekend in reading an article with some dismay about the Chinese being a very big market opportunity for us in agriculture in the future, we have not done maybe as good a market intelligence in that part of the world as we have done in other parts. Now it seems that maybe they have surpluses of cereal grains that we did not know they had. Their probability of buying large amounts of cereal grains in the next two or three years is maybe not as high as we had once thought it was.

So that all brings us back to the importance of the U.S. market being very, very critical. The disturbances we have had at the border, whether it is hog countervail, or whether it is questions raised about durum, or questions raised about peas or lentils. It is very important that the industry argue those cases effectively and aggressively in front of the binational panel. Our record of winning those discussions is very, very impressive.

Of course, over the last few years, my department has devoted a lot of its time and effort—and certainly the resources of the department—to safety-net programs to try to offset some of the risk farmers face, both in terms of production costs and market access, and the ability to penetrate those markets at enough return that the farmers can survive.

Crop insurance has been one of those programs that has been around since 1960, tried and true over the course of those 33 years in terms of meeting farmers' needs. Two years ago we built, on top of that, the revenue insurance program which has paid out \$320 million on the 1991 crop in terms of stabilization payments. It will be about \$175 million of stabilization payments on the 1992 crop.

As I mentioned yesterday in the resolution debate, in the course of Estimates I am sure the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) will want to ask about whether revenue insurance is targeted to where hurt is. We have done some studies to indicate clearly that is the case.

Tripartite Stabilization programs are in place for several commodities, five at this point in time. The NISA program is a long-term stabilization program that is in place at this point in time for cereal grains and oilseeds. As we look ahead, and as the member for Swan River well knows, I have been out talking in rural Manitoba about what is the long-term risk—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask the honourable members carrying on conversations in various areas of the Chamber to please carry on the conversations either outside the Chamber or in the loge. A number of members have expressed considerable difficulty in hearing the honourable minister's remarks. Thank you.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, as I said, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) knows that I have been out talking in rural Manitoba about what happens beyond '95 when the revenue insurance program is up for reconsideration in Manitoba, and tripartite programs, particularly in hogs and cattle, come to an end. Those were 10-year agreements, and revenue insurance was a five-year agreement. Is NISA going to be capable of being the whole farm risk protection mechanism for all commodities right across the country?

I will say one thing positive about NISA. It is the same across the country, by and large. Revenue insurance is different in every province. Clearly, we want, in the long term, to have a level playing field—at least in western Canada if nowhere else—so farmers can respond to the marketplace and produce what they think they can sell, and try to produce and sell those commodities that they can return an adequate income from the marketplace.

In the course of looking at what we are doing and where we are going, if you look back over the last 20 or 30 years, we have done an awful lot of diversifying of what we produce in Manitoba: special crops, oilseeds and livestock. That rate of change of what we produce is not going to lessen in the future.

I have said on many occasions in the last few months that, if you look down the road four or five

years from the farm gate, and you look back two or three years, what you see, as a farmer, is a number of questions: Can government continue to give me the level of support that I have had in the last few years through ad hoc programs or safety net programs?

If you look at the election in Newfoundland yesterday, and you hear the talk that goes on across this country about debts and deficits, you would have to think that maybe government, no matter who they are or how well intentioned they might be, may not have as many dollars for stabilizing me in the future as they have had in the past.

I think that is fairly well understood by the farm community. Then if you look at things that way, you say, well, what can I do to improve my viability on my piece of land or with what I do with my expertise and my production base, whether it is acres, cows, hogs, mares or whatever it is? What can I do to improve my ability to live with a marketplace that is domestic and international? What are the obstacles to my changing what I do so I can survive? What do I need to do to upgrade my level of education, knowledge, technology? Looking at change, how does it affect my family? Am I a one-generation farm, two-generation farm or a three-generation farm?

* (1430)

Certainly, if you are a two- or three-generation farm, you have the benefit of some enthusiasm in the younger generation and some caution in the hands of the older generation, and that is a pretty good mix. There is a lot of continuity there, there is a lot of experience. Farming comes down to family farms, stability of members of a family to enjoy a lifestyle that creates an income and an opportunity.

We all know it varies in different regions of the province with what you can do. Some areas have some of the best soil in Canada and the best climate. They can produce a wide variety of special crops. A lot of those crops have very high value, and certainly I am very pleased to have seen last night that sugar beet growers approved the stabilization plan that we have negotiated with them over the last few months, and there is a very high-value industry that creates a lot of on-farm and off-farm jobs. It is going to run very well again this year. I certainly hope that our desire for 28,000 acres is achieved, whereas the industry average over the last few years has been 25,000 to 26,000 acres.

But as these farmers and their families look at where they are at in their life cycle, in their career, there are some challenging opportunities and some challenging decisions that have to be made. Some of them will not be that easy. Some of them are economically difficult. Farmers are very concerned about extending themselves in debt to do new things, and although some farmers have a heavy debt burden, particularly younger farmers or farmers who have expanded fairly aggressively in the last 10 or 15 years, there are an awful lot of farms out there that are in very good shape financially with 80 percent of their assets owned, in other words, 80 percent equity.

That is a very enviable position for most industries to look at. That leaves a lot of strength in agriculture. I see a lot of desire. I have talked with many farmers across Manitoba, and they have cautious optimism about the future. The fear that they experienced two and three years ago and maybe just as recently as 18 months ago in the fall of 1991 seems to have subsided some fair bit. It has been replaced by what I would call cautious optimism and a greater realization that their future is in their hands, and they have a lot of responsibility to work with their friends and neighbours, within their family, with their various farm organizations and commodity groups to try to strengthen their capacity and ability to deal with the realities of the future.

In that broad context, my department put out a Vision for the 1990s. It has been a process of working with stakeholders, over a hundred of them, over the course of several months—this was put out a little over a year ago, and it identified what we think are the important things to look at in the future as an industry.

This was done in consultation with farmers and agribusiness, and for members opposite who may not have read the document, let me just give you some of the broad goals and the theme areas that we see as a department. [interjection] Yes, it is a public document.

The broad goals in our Vision for the 1990s is to assist agriculture and the food sector to shift from its past emphasis on commodity production toward a sustainable yet diversified value-added and market-oriented industry.

I want to accentuate the words "value-added and market-oriented industry." It goes back to what I was saying earlier.

We also want to strengthen producer-risk reduction assistance to cushion farmers against price and yield fluctuations, and thirdly, to strengthen Manitoba agriculture's client-orientation commitment to our clients who are our customers. They are No. 1, and serving them is the primary reason why we, our department, exists.

I want to congratulate the department and all the stakeholders who put this document together. I have had many people who have read it say very complimentary things about the focus the department is trying to put on the future to try to help agriculture in Manitoba, in a partnership arrangement, move on into the '90s and to what is going to happen over the next 10 or 20 years. That partnership is not only government with farmers, but it is government with the agribusiness community, the processors, the consumers, and anybody else who is interested in agriculture.

I see agriculture as from the farmer all the way to the consumer and back again. There has to be a communication, a line of understanding all the way between all those partners. If we do not work together, we will produce the wrong commodities for the marketplace. The marketplace will not be happy with what we produce, and we will not know why they are not happy. We live in a global economy more than any other industry as far as I am concerned; what happens in Tokyo affects what happens on the farms in Manitoba.

The theme areas the department is working on have various implementation teams, and these theme areas are well known in the agribusiness and farming community. We are going to improve our market orientation and improve our activities and diversification in value-added industries. Our risk-reduction measures will be advocated more and more in the future. Sustainable agriculture will be promoted to a very aggressive extent, and we want to enhance our productivity and our competitiveness both domestically and globally. We want to improve our human resources and improve our industry promotion and consumer awareness.

As I go back to what I said earlier about agriculture from the farm gate to the consumer, it is very, very important that the public at large understands what agriculture is, why we do things, and the economic benefit we create for the province of Manitoba and the country of Canada.

We bring back a lot of foreign currency into this country through export grain sales. That is not very well understood by many people. We are the 3 percent of the population, or less than 3 percent of the population on farms, but we create about 14 percent of the jobs in this province because of all the goods and services we buy on the farm and all the activities past the farm gate in terms of transportation, processing and the value-added industries.

So, Madam Chairperson, that is how we are focusing our department and why we are focusing the industry. I constantly meet with many farm organizations, commodity groups, agribusiness, associations, as we look at the issues and try to adapt to the challenges of today to create opportunities for the future.

There is no end of opportunities out there, but I will also admit there are a lot of challenges. Some of those opportunities are not as economically viable as you might like them to be. Certainly, as I said, one of our approaches in the department is to reduce somewhat our intention to commodity production and improve our activity in the marketing side. If you produce something that is not marketable, or cannot return enough value for the marketplace for the farmer to survive, in the long term, it is not going to be a viable industry.

Certainly, the agrifood review that was held in about 1990 focused on four main areas: we must as an industry increase our market responsiveness, create for farmers a greater level of self-reliance, right across Canada recognize regional diversity and be more environmentally sustainable in the way we operate agriculture.

I think those four focuses of the 1990 agrifood review have been very well identified in our seven team areas and the activities of the department. Certainly the soil accord is working aggressively in environmental sustainability. Regional diversity means that you can do different things in different regions of the country to put accent on your positives.

Greater self-reliance is what safety nets are trying to do. We put in safety nets in the second line of defence. The first line of defence is the farmer's responsibility, and the members opposite have talked about the third line of defence, which is still ad hoc programs that can be put in place to deal with

emergencies that happen in the industry here and there.

Yes, we would like the federal government to respond more in third line of defence activity, but their bottom line is they say they do not have the dollars. The election in Newfoundland and the events in Ontario and Saskatchewan clearly focus on the fact that it is not just here, it is not just the government of Canada, it is all over that we have these economic problems.

There has been some third line of defence response by the federal government in FSAM I and FSAM II in 1991 and '92 but, certainly, some regions of the country would like to have seen more response, particularly Saskatchewan, with regard to the frost, the late harvest and the loss of crop that they experienced last year.

In the course of our discussions on first, second and third line of defence, I can tell the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), the one thing we did accomplish was that the federal government acknowledged it was their financial responsibility to respond in the third line of defence. I am sure she well realizes that provincial governments do not have the resources to respond to those kind of emergencies.

Another issue that clearly is important to us is our ability to respond competitively to what is happening in the world. We have developed an industry that has done an excellent job, as I said earlier, in producing various commodities and exporting them to the world. In the area where we have our greatest dependence on cereal grains like wheat and barley, which is about 40 percent of our production in Manitoba, certainly those are basic commodities. We export the raw commodity in most cases with those two crops; with our oilseeds and our special crops we do a lot more processing, so for them we are doing more of the right thing.

* (1440)

You produce, you value-add and sell a higher-value product to the world.

When you come down to the cereal grains, as I look ahead, I have had to meet people from different parts of the world and hear them talk about how they are going to develop their countries, and I am talking to third-world countries, countries that have a much lower standard of living than we do, much lower wages. What they want to do is improve their

standard of living, improve the economy of their country by growing food.

One of the first things they can do, of course, is grow cereal grains, so there is no question that we will have more competition in the future, particularly in East Bloc countries and Russia, as they expand and improve their agricultural production.

Countries like the European Community, United States, Canada, we do send experts over there to help them respond and produce and as they do that they will become competitors to us in the world with cereal grains.

I think it is important that we must, say, like in a hockey game when you get to the playoffs, raise the level of intensity of your game and do a better job of what you can do best. I think that applies to cereal grains, it applies to agriculture in general here. This is going to be a challenge to society as a whole, whether they are going to accept the ability of researchers to produce a better canola variety, a better tomato, a better potato, a better french fry by the use of biotechnology.

We have developed an awful lot of what we do in agriculture through research by provincial government, federal government, institutions, by universities and also research back on the farm. This new level of research that is available to us is called biotechnology. It is going to be criticized in some aspects in society saying that we are doing the gene manipulation. I think it is important that we explain to the public, broadly based, why we have to do it, why it is a new level of research that is going to be needed to keep us competitive in doing a better job, for the farmer being able to compete in the world.

There are a number of things that are happening that lead to opportunities in that direction, whether it is with canola or potatoes or tomatoes, whatever it is. Biotechnology, if we do not use it in Canada and North America, it is going to be used elsewhere in the world, and we are going to be beaten at it. I just say to the members opposite, it is going to be an area of keen interest publicly, and certainly a tremendous opportunity for agriculture and for food production.

It goes beyond food production because one of the areas in agriculture that I am sure we will be incredibly successful at is producing products that can be used in the industrial market and the pharmaceutical market, nonfood commodities

produced from the land or from livestock. Some examples of success in that direction: certainly ethanol is an example; PMU operations is an example of producing estrogen for the pharmaceutical market; erucic acid rapeseed, an example of an industrial oil, instead of a vegetable oil. Through genetic engineering we can find more of those kinds of replacement commodities for synthetics like plastic. Can we grow a plant that produces plastics? Instead of producing the plastic synthetically, we produce it naturally. I think there is a great opportunity there.

There are some challenges there, as I said earlier. Is it going to be economic? Will the public accept us doing that sort of thing? What are the processes of regulation and control that the public should have in place?

So I think it is fair to say that I am very optimistic about industry, the kind of people that exist in the industry, the leaders throughout the industry. They have developed it to where we are over 125 years plus. I know that the challenge of the next 10 years is going to be every bit as intense as the last 20. A lot of change is going to have to happen in the industry. It is an ongoing process. I think it is important that anything that comes along in terms of new opportunities or challenge or change that we analyze it aggressively, responsibly, and not just say the way it was is the way it should be because it was okay back then. We will not survive that way. We have not survived that way in the past, and today is a test of our ability to adapt and change.

I know that the farm community continues to shrink in terms of percentage. Yesterday members opposite mentioned a lot of farmers have off-farm income. That is very true. The percentage continues to grow, and whether that is good or bad remains to be seen. Another aspect of farming is that you have more and more people that go through a career and retire in the early 50s, mid-50s, and then they take up farming. They come into the farming community with a pension. Is that fair competition for the farmers trying to earn a living? Yet throughout North America they will be more and more the producers of the future. Whether it is acceptable or not, it is a reality.

It is our doctors, our lawyers, our teachers, our politicians, they retire—[interjection]—Miners, yes. It is many walks of life. They see the quality of life that people have in the rural areas, and they like to be active, so they want to produce some things and that

is agricultural production. So it is a way of the future whether we like it or not, and the farm community is absorbing them. They have become good citizens in rural Manitoba, as I have seen so far.

Other issues: certainly intergenerational transfers of land, that is the basis of a farm. As I look back over the last 20 or 30 years, I would say one of the biggest troubles we have had in agriculture is the fact we have overvalued land. Farmers have spent 20 and 30 years of their life and sometimes longer trying to pay for that land, and as land transfers from generation to generation, I am of the opinion land is not as much of an asset as it used to be. In fact, in many cases, it is a liability.

Fathers and grandfathers are going to have to do a better job of being able to help their sons and grandsons get started in the industry by transferring the land at much lower cost in the future than they have in the past.

When they say, well, the marketplace should do that or government should supply money at an appropriate interest rate to help that, yes, we can do some of that, but still, that family unit, that family farm, has got to participate in the process of helping the new generations get started and started in the fashion of not burdened with debt, like what happened in the high land value years of the early 1980s.

I have seen far too many farms not succeed because they paid way too much for land, and as the values of commodities decreased throughout the latter '80s, they got into serious trouble.

So, Madam Chairperson, with those few remarks, I would like to open the Estimates debate and hope that in the course of our debate, we can talk about the issues of where the industry is going, how are we going to address the opportunities and the challenges, how are we going to adapt, how are we going to have a sufficiently open mind to adapt to change and not be hysterical in our objection to change. It is critical that we do that.

Industry is developed that way. Industry is full of leaders who want to work in a very positive sense. The industry has always been built on optimism, and I look forward to an optimistic process in these Estimates. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Does the critic for the official opposition the honourable member for Swan River wish to make opening remarks?

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Yes, I do. I am very pleased to be starting the Agriculture Estimates at this time. I think it is very timely seeing that farmers are getting onto the land beginning their spring planting. I think it is a time for us to be discussing the whole agricultural Estimates.

I think we have to recognize the fact that farmers are still facing great difficulties. The return that they are getting for their product is not adequate. I had hoped that there would have been some way that this would have been addressed. This has been going on for several years now. We hear about the GATT negotiations, and we had hoped that that would be settled and we would see a fairer return for farmers, but since that has not happened farmers are facing difficulties.

They are facing additional difficulties by some of the actions that this federal government is taking, adding pressure and uncertainty to the farming community. It is the responsibility of the provincial government to speak out for these farmers and raise the concerns. We have raised them in Question Period, and we will continue to raise those and get into a more detailed discussion on them as we get into the Estimates.

The minister indicated in his opening comments that agriculture is a very important industry in Manitoba, and I have to agree with him. There is a tremendous amount of spin-off that is generated from the agricultural industry that many times is not recognized by those people who live in urban centres and those people who are not connected to the agricultural industry.

That is increasing because 10, 20 years ago just about everybody had someone who lived on the farm or they went back home to visit their grandparents or parents on the farm. That is not there now. Many people are a generation away from the farm and do not realize the impacts of the industry and the value of it.

* (1450)

The key to the survival of rural Manitoba—agriculture goes down and the revenues from the agricultural industry go down, we see that our rural communities are suffering. Less and less services are available for rural people. The key to agriculture, I believe, is the family farm and the small communities.

It is the family farm operations that are the most vital ones, and those are the ones that we have to

target our supports at. As the minister has said, there were many people making a living from agriculture. The farmers used to make a much better living off the land than they do now. When you look at farmers' incomes, there were some statistics that we talked about yesterday where in many cases more than half the income that a family farm has right now comes from off-farm jobs.

That is unfortunate, that you can have all this money invested in a business, in an industry, and not get a fair return from it. You have to go outside the farming business to get an income to supply the basic needs of your family, because many people cannot do it from the farming operation right now.

Agriculture is an important part of Canada in relation to world trade. Canada has gained a fair part of that market because of the high standards that we have and high quality of product that we export. I think it is very important that we maintain those standards, and by maintaining those high standards, we will be able to keep our share of the market.

I note there are other people, as the minister has indicated, competing for that market. But it is Canada's high standards, particularly quality of wheat, that have gained us those markets. We have to be prepared to maintain that high standard.

That is where I have some concerns not only with wheat, but when we look at other products, such as in the beef grading systems and some of those areas, where we are lowering our standards to harmonize with the American standards. When we do that, we run the risk of ruining Canada's high reputation as an exporter, and run the risk of losing the markets. I believe it is very important we maintain those high standards that we have right now.

Some of the difficulties that the farmers are facing are the difficulties of carrying high debt load, getting the money they need and transferring land from one generation to another. I think that that is something that has to be addressed: how we can ensure that young farmers can stay on the land, can take over that family operation and still have some income for that older generation that is getting out of farming. Those are the things that we have to look at. How can we get the next generation to stay in farming, but still have something for those who are stepping out of it to have income?

That has been very difficult with the low commodity prices that we have been seeing over the last few years. Hopefully, that is going to turn around, but if the marketplace is not going to turn around, we have to see how we can keep young farmers on the land. One of the programs that we will get into, I am sure, is the Young Farmers Rebate and the change in the amount of rebate for farmers that is now being announced in this budget, which will cause some concern for young farmers who want to maintain the family farm operations or start off an operation of their own. We have to be prepared to support those people.

The minister talked about education, and I believe that it is important that we continue to educate the public on the value of the industry and make people more aware of what it is that the farming community provides for them. We have to make more efforts to assure that Manitoba products are in Manitoba stores and that people are aware that those products come from the producer in this province. I think it is very important that we educate people. Government also has to be prepared to provide the farmers with the services that they need and the information that they need and the supports that they need to adapt to changes in the crop requirements or market requirements. Government has a responsibility on that.

What I think is also very important is that we somehow get control back into the farmer's hands. Right now, the farmer produces a product that leaves the farm gate at a very low price. Farmers have very little income in the value-added stages along the way. I believe that somehow we have to work together with communities, with the Department of Agriculture and get the control back to farmers so that they reap some of the benefits of the value-added jobs.

Right now, as I say, too much of the decisions are made outside the farmer's hands on what is happening with their product. He produces it because there is a demand, but not able to get the value added. So I believe that there has to be a way that we can bring back controls to communities that they might have more say in the processing of a product so that jobs can stay in the communities. Maybe there are ways that this can be done. I believe there are, but there is much work that will have to be done for that to happen.

The minister mentioned the sugar beet industry, and I am also pleased that the agreement was

signed. We were concerned that if there was not an agreement, if both sides could not agree on a price that sugar beets would not be planted this year. We were at the risk of losing that industry here in Manitoba. Once you are out of it for one year, it would be difficult to start it up again next year. It is a lot of revenue lost out of this province that we could not afford to lose, so I am pleased with that.

I also think that to address the whole matter, we have to and the minister has to, I believe, look at discussions with the federal government on long-term agreements so that we do not have this ad hocery every year—are we going to plant sugar beets, are we not going to plant sugar beets?—a longer term.

An Honourable Member: If you only knew the history.

Ms. Wowchuk: I know it is a long, ongoing process.

My suggestion, as I listen to people in the industry, there is a need for longer-term agreements. I hope that the minister will look at that so that next year when farmers are getting ready to plant those sugar beets that they will have some stability. I hope that he will discuss with his federal counterparts some of the other concerns that sugar beet producers have raised, and I know that there has been a lot of discussion over the last little while. So I hope that he will take those recommendations seriously and look at what we have to do to expand. If there is room to expand that industry here in Manitoba, do what has to be done.

There are many aspects to the farming industry, and the other one is the cattle industry, and we seem to have lost the value-added jobs in that one. Granted, those that are raising the cattle right now are having good price. There is no doubt, they are having good price, but, again, we are not getting the value-added jobs. We have lost the processing industry here in Manitoba. Can we regain it? I am not sure, but that is something we have to look at. How do we get the processing back into the province to get those value-added jobs? I mean we are in desperate need of jobs in this province. We have high unemployment, so we have to look at every possible way that we can to increase our employment.

As the minister has indicated himself, it is the value-added, it is the secondary jobs that come from the prime products that have the increased value

and will certainly improve the economy of this province. In each of those areas, I think we really have to look at how we can get the value-added jobs, but again how can we do it in such a way that it is also the farmer at the farm gate who will benefit and get the best price for his product, and we can raise the whole income of farm families.

* (1500)

I think that there is a tremendous need for research on how we can do this, and I believe that the government does have a responsibility in research. There are certain things that can be researched by people in agribusiness and those types, but I really believe that government has a responsibility to do basic research and provide the information to all people, in the best interest of the farming community, rather than having research conducted only by business. I would not want to see research reduced any further by the provincial government or the federal government. That is basic research that I believe has to be done to improve agricultural products in this country.

But, Madam Chairperson, there are a couple of areas that I want to touch on that are causing a great concern. We have raised them several times in this House, and basically issues that are causing uncertainty for the farming community. The first one, of course, that I will mention is the method of payment. We have raised this issue many, many times—and it looks, and we hear rumours that there could be decisions made very soon—but in the budget that we just heard from the federal government on the 26th of April, Mr. Mazankowski indicated that there is going to be a further reduction in the transportation assistance unless farmers agree to pay the producer package.

It makes me wonder about what the whole consultation process was. We spent, both the provincial government and the federal government, a lot of money over the last winter on consulting with farmers on how they felt the method of payment should be handled. Farmers did say, the majority of them did say that they wanted the method of payment to stay as it was. So you wonder why did we bother going through that whole process; why did the government waste everybody's time on those public hearings, if now, they are just going to accept this package or else we are going to remove it altogether.

There will be advantages to certain farmers by changing the method of payment, there is no doubt, but I think as government, there is a responsibility to look at how it affects everybody—all people.

In the end, I believe there is going to be a negative impact on this, not only in the farming community—we will see a change in the agricultural patterns in this province—but we are also going to see a negative impact in many of the small towns. We will see reduced services. Elevators along some of these branch lines will close. We hear about branch line abandonment. With that, there is loss of jobs in rural communities. There is no doubt about it. When I look at the community of Swan River—no, let us take a smaller town than that, a town like Pine River, where there are a few people who are supplementing their farm income by having jobs on the railway lines.

Now, if these lines are abandoned, the jobs are gone. So the service is reduced for farmers—[interjection] Yes, that is right. The grain will have to be transported somehow, but along with losing jobs, along with losing railways, we are going to have a shift of cost.

Transportation is now going to go onto the highways, and we have to be very careful on who is going to pick up that cost. What is going to happen? Where is the cost? Is the province going to pick up—of course, on the main highways, the province will pick up those costs. When you get onto the grid roads and the municipal roads, the municipalities will pick up that cost. Is all of that going to be addressed?

I think we have to be very, very careful. I disagree with changing the method of payment. The farm communities have been served very well under the present system, and I think the government is moving in the wrong direction by changing it, but the provincial government better be very sure on what extra costs they are going to have to pick up by this.

Farmers are—I mean, since they have to accept this package, they want to know how it is going to be presented to them. I think that it is necessary even though farmers might be disillusioned a little bit with public meetings and the fact that even though they express their views, they are not taken seriously in some cases, in this case that all the information be put on the table so farmers understand what it is they are getting and what the end result is going to be.

Another issue is the barley sales, and I am sure we will get into—there are many questions that I want to ask on that particular issue and what the minister is doing and what his staff is doing to review all the studies that are being put out right now, but again, I do not believe there is any need to rush on this particular matter.

Farmers are now seeding. They are getting their crops in. They do not have time to look very closely at the report. Farmers in Manitoba feel that the Canadian Wheat Board has served them very well and that orderly marketing has served them very well. There are studies that are going completely against what Dr. Carter is saying, and in fact, there is a real feeling that farmers will lose. Again, we have to look at the whole area.

We cannot just look at the people along the border and say, yes, this is going to be for you, good for you, and ignore the other people because in the long—it may be good in the short term, but we have to look at what the United States farmers are going to say when we start dumping a whole bunch of barley in there. If there is going to be all this barley growing, what are the consequences for Canadian farmers?

All of that has to be addressed. So I would hope that we, both federal and provincial governments, would look very carefully at this and think about what they are doing and not move hastily on something like this. If it has worked till now, it can stay in place for another couple of years. There is opportunity to sell barley into the U.S. market right now without changing the mandate of the Wheat Board. It does not have to be changed. So we have to be very careful about rushing into anything. We will have much further discussion on that, I am sure, as we get into the Estimates.

I guess, Madam Chairperson, the real concern is getting farmers the best return for their product. If the family farm is going to survive, and agriculture, I am sure, will survive, but we should not only think about agriculture surviving. We should think about how we can allow farmers to make a fair living, get a fair return for what they produce. They are producing a basic product in this country, a food product. We need that product, but we have to be sure they get a fair return and are able to provide an adequate living for their families but also provide something that is desperately needed for this country.

So, Madam Chairperson, with those comments I will close. Some of the other areas just briefly that I want to touch on are sustainable agriculture, alternate agriculture. What is the government doing in those areas, in soil conservation, in water conservation? We will talk in more detail about that as we get into the Estimates. There are many, many areas on this that have to be discussed, and I look forward to getting into the debate.

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

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Chairperson, I listened to the minister's comments with interest and felt a lot of optimism in his comments there. I wish to express the same optimism, and I hope the other party will do the same because, like we say, the farmers are the backbone of our province, and many times this has been said in the House. I am not a negative person. I like to be positive, and I think the minister knows that.

* (1510)

I would like to say thanks to the minister at this stage also. I think it has been a good relationship with his staff and any time I have gone to his office or have phoned his office I have always had a good relationship there. I wish to continue that with the minister and his staff because, like I say, having come from the farm or having been raised on the farm, I should say, and coming from the Minister of Natural Resources' (Mr. Enns) constituency I guess tends—[interjection] They are Liberals, I understand.

Even in the budget overall, there is a 14.2 percent decrease, but I am saying that positively here. It is in regard only to the crop insurance, the decrease, because when you look at administration costs, it is 10.7 percent down, and as you look at it, there is no more than 5 percent in other areas. When you see administration down and there are no great changes, I think it says something but, like I say, the insurance, I think, as we go through the Estimates, it will be important to ask questions.

We might want to take a different position on the GRIP program at that point when we look at the cuts and the explanation from the minister.

It is hard to argue with that cut in administration and still maintain basically the same level of services for the farmers. Like I say, going through the Estimates, there will be a lot of questions. There have been a lot of concerns that have come from

the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), and we will see, at that point, what the answers from the minister—and I am sure we will look at all the departments with optimism.

We are going into the middle of the '90s already and then we go to the year 2000. Like I say, there have been a lot of changes over the years, changes in technology and different things, like the changes to, as the minister mentioned, the cost of land 15 or 10 years ago and what it is today. It was hard to pass on the farms to the children at that point. There are a lot of things to consider what have gone by. We cannot overlook what went on. We will continue to look, I think, for a brighter future for our families, for our children.

I think we have to realize, and the member for Swan River mentioned about education to express and show the people that what the farming industry does on the global factor, I think, is to be considered in that respect.

I will not prolong. I want to go into the Estimates, like I say, and get the answers from the minister and his staff. I wish him well in the Estimates. We look to co-operation in dealing with the Estimates. Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson: I would remind members of the committee that debate on the Minister's Salary, item 1.(a), page 14 of the Estimates manual is to be deferred until all other items in this department have been passed.

At this time I would invite the minister's staff to take their places in the Chamber.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I would like to introduce my staff: Greg Lacomy, Deputy Minister; Les Baseraba, ADM of Management and Regional Services; Doug Burch, Director of Administration; and Marvin Richter, a Financial Administrator.

Madam Chairperson: 1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries \$432,500.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I just want to ask if we can do the whole section of Executive Support all together, or do you want to do it line by line? [interjection] All together, that is no problem.

I would just like to ask some questions about the role of this Executive Support staff, and who is taking the responsibility for certain projects and how they are being handled. I would like to begin with the whole issue of the Wheat Board and the removal

of the Carter report. The minister has said several times in Question Period that his department is doing an analysis of the Carter report and other aspects, barley sales, moving on to a continental market. Can the minister tell us who on his staff is responsible and what kind of studies are being done at this time?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I would prefer if those discussions were held under Vote 6 under Policy and Economics. That is where the staff involved would be in the Chamber. I think it would be fair to say that all those kinds of issues, that would be the time and the place.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will hold those questions to that point then. I want to ask the minister if this might be an appropriate time to ask some questions about decentralization, staff responsibilities and breakdown of various staff. Is this an appropriate time to ask those questions?

Mr. Findlay: Yes.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister then inform us whether there are any further plans to decentralize any branches of the Department of Agriculture, how the Crown Lands was decentralized last year, where that is at and whether there are any further plans?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, in the Department of Agriculture we have decentralized 94.45 positions. I will just read the different branches and the number of positions and the towns that they are in.

Soils and Crops, 26.45 in Carman in November of '91 and another five positions in Carman in June of '92, so that makes a total of 31.45 SYs in Carman under Soils and Crops. Under Crown Lands there are 15 in Minnedosa, one in Dominion City. Under the Animal Industry Branch, there is one in Stonewall. Under Computer Services there is one in Brandon. Under Soil Conservation there is one position in Shoal Lake, one in Roblin, one in Steinbach, one in Morden, one in Selkirk; a swine specialist in Dugald, one position; the Tripartite Stabilization Group, eight positions in Portage. Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, there are 23 positions in Brandon, two in Morris, two in Teulon, two in Shoal Lake, one in Roblin, one in Melita, making a total of 94.45 positions that have been decentralized through '90, '91 and '92 by the Department of Agriculture in Manitoba.

At this stage there are no additional plans other than a position here or there in terms of further decentralization.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, can the minister tell us whether all of those positions were decentralized out of Winnipeg or was it a reshuffling of positions around the province?

Mr. Findlay: The 31 positions of Soils and Crops in Carman are out of Winnipeg. The Crown Lands in Minnedosa are out of Winnipeg. MACC positions in Brandon and the other locations are out of Winnipeg. The five positions in Soil Conservation are all new positions under the soil accord, soil agreement, the Farming for Tomorrow program. The eight positions in Portage under Tripartite are new positions. They were created and put in Portage in 1990. So there are new positions and many positions decentralized from Winnipeg.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification. The minister says they were new positions, but when you look through the Estimates, you do not see an increase in positions.

Were these positions that were vacant earlier but not filled?—because when you look at the total numbers, there is not an increase in staff.

* (1520)

Mr. Findlay: The new positions I referred to, five in Soil Conservation and eight in Tripartite, were all 1990. So you would not see anything in the Estimates in this year. But the positions at that time were reallocated SYs from other locations in the department, reallocated to those priority areas. So I guess it is fair to say the SYs, in many cases, would have come from a position that would have been in Winnipeg.

Ms. Wowchuk: That was what I was trying to get at. The minister had indicated that they were new positions. I was trying to see whether they were staff years that were somewhere in the department before.

Just a little further on decentralization. I do not know whether this is a responsibility of his department, but whenever we get to decentralization to ask these kind of questions, they tell us to go back to the department. So I want to ask whether or not there has been any analysis done on the decentralization and tracking of costs, whether there has been an increase of costs a decrease in costs, by moving these positions out of the city. Has there been an increase in

transportation? Has there been an increase in telephone costs? What is the minister's view on this? Has there been a net benefit to having those positions out?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the purpose behind decentralization was to put services in rural Manitoba, to put the jobs in rural Manitoba, to bring the services closer to the farm community of Manitoba. I want to tell the member, from that standpoint, the decentralization program in Agriculture has been a phenomenal success story. It has created, in my case, 94 jobs outside the Perimeter in rural Manitoba.

The member talks about depopulation and loss of jobs. This is the reverse, absolutely the reverse. It is putting jobs out there. We put offices in Brandon; a building was built and we are leasing it. In Minnedosa, a building was built and we are leasing it. In Portage, a new building was built for Crop Insurance and Tripartite. That creates construction jobs in rural Manitoba and the services to supply those buildings, whatever those services are; whether they are janitorial or service items for operating the buildings, that comes from that area of the province instead of from the city. So there are a lot of spin-off jobs in addition to the 94 I am talking about that have benefited rural Manitoba.

In terms of costs, I think it is fair to say—we do not have specific figures in front of us, but I know in one particular case, the actual cost per square foot to lease the facility is less than half in the new location as opposed to what it cost in the city of Winnipeg, so substantial savings to government in lease costs.

In terms of moving people, yes, there were some costs in moving people out there, as there always are to move staff from one location to another. The operating costs, whether they are any different, we do not have a record on that, but I think the record that is important to me is the jobs that we put into rural Manitoba.

On this course, we have moved from 50 percent of our staff in the city and 50 percent outside to where 70 percent of the jobs in the Department of Agriculture are now outside the city and 30 percent in. I think that is a very significant improvement since we are serving rural Manitoba with this department.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just want to assure the minister that I am not opposed to the decentralization program. I have always said that if it is handled

fairly and if people are treated fairly then, of course, we should get the services closer to the people.

There is no doubt that there are probably many other services that could be brought closer to the people. I do not object to that at all. I was just trying to get a breakdown. Of course, it will be a benefit to those communities to have some jobs where they are so desperately needed, although I do believe we need much more than decentralization. There is a need to create jobs, as well, in the rural community. The decentralization certainly does help. I do not object to that at all. I was just trying to get an idea.

Of course, when you do anything, you should do an analysis of it when you are working with a budget, whether there is a benefit or an additional cost to it.

Continuing on with decentralization, the minister talked about a new office being built in Portage. Again, maybe that should not come under this section. I want to talk about how the office was built. Was that built through public tender? How were all of those decisions made? It may have to come under Crop Insurance, but I am dealing with it as decentralization right now.

Mr. Findlay: In the Portage example, as in all examples, whether it is Minnedosa, Brandon, Portage or Carman, in all four locations, there were new buildings built by the private sector, and Government Services looks after those activities. It is done by proposal calls to determine who is the successful bidder.

The building is built and then government leases the space back from the owner of the building. In this process, in the Department of Agriculture, we have staff in four new buildings located across rural Manitoba. I am talking about the large ones. There are smaller examples, too, but in the large situations.

Crop insurance is already in Portage, but when we expanded activity of crop insurance, adding these eight positions, larger facilities were needed, so we moved from the provincial building in downtown Portage to a building that was built out on the western side of Portage in that new industrial or shopping development.

Ms. Wowchuk: But it is not a government-owned building. It is a leased building. The minister is indicating that it is a leased building. I am trying to figure out how the tenders were taken. Did you take tenders out? How did the whole process go to make the decision on who got that building?

Mr. Findlay: As I said in my previous answer, Government Services looks after all those details, and that would be the time and the place.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to move on to another section under Executive Support, and it says, the evaluation of department policies, programs.

When I talked about different programs such as barley sales, the minister said they come under a different line. Can the minister tell us then what policies and programs this part of his staff is dealing with now? What are the major policies?

* (1530)

Mr. Findlay: The program analysis referred to in this line, for the member opposite, is basically internal program activities. The Vision document was handled by staff in this area, and there are a number of other activities, programs and services guides, the FOI activities, freedom of information, regional statistics co-ordination, computer disc analysis, diagnostic lab, vet scholarships, sustainable development activity report for sustainable development unit, those kinds of more internal program analyses as opposed to external, which we will talk about in Vote 6.

But I would like to remind the member that that is where the leadership occurred for the Vision for the 1990s document for the department, which is a blueprint for the next 10 years at least for this department.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just wanted to ask the minister about that document briefly. He spoke about it in his presentation, and I believe the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) was asking at that time whether that was presented to members. I have seen the document, but were copies of that available? Can we get copies of that document for those people that do not have it?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, this Vision for the 1990s document was released by myself in January of 1992 and has been available out of my office and out of the Ag reps' offices or wherever else somebody might ask for it in the Department of Agriculture. We had copies available at the Gate to Plate Agri-Forum and now here are a couple of copies for my critics. So it has been freely and broadly available across Manitoba for about 14, 16 months.

Madam Chairperson: Does the honourable Minister of Agriculture have one that can be tabled here with the table officers?

Mr. Findlay: No, two is it. We will get you one.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just want to ask for clarification. I want to move on to Financial and Administrative Services. Is that okay to move on to that?

Madam Chairperson: Does the honourable member for St. Boniface wish to ask questions under 1.(b)?

Mr. Gaudry: No, that is fine.

Madam Chairperson: Item 1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries \$432,500-pass; (b)(2) Other Expenditures \$68,700-pass; (3) Policy Studies \$71,200-pass.

Item 1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, one of the objectives is to co-ordinate the administration of federal-provincial agreements pertaining to agriculture, can the minister give us some indication on what agreements he is working on right now? What are the things that are being considered under federal-provincial agreements at this time?

Mr. Findlay: The agreement that is under consideration and activity by the department right now obviously is sugar beets. There will be a federal-provincial agreement signed on that agreement that was agreed to in the last few days—the Green Plan that is being developed which will be a follow-up to Farming for Tomorrow which is still also under activity there.

Once an agreement is signed, there are always amending components to the agreements later on, and certainly GRIP and NISA amending agreements do occur almost on an annual basis. So those activities are carried out by this section.

Just to sum it up, we have activities in sugar beets, NISA, GRIP, Green Plan and Farming for Tomorrow. Those are federal-provincial agreements and the amendments thereto.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to talk about some detail on some parts of the Green Plan and some of the details on that. Again I want to ask clarification about where that should be asked, under which section.

Mr. Findlay: Yes. I would prefer it was discussed under Vote 7. Canada-Manitoba Soil Conservation Agreement.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification again, that is where we would talk about the Farming for Tomorrow agreements and the soil and water accord contracts and those kinds of things, Section 7?

Mr. Findlay: All detail related thereto could be discussed there.

Mr. Gaudry: You mentioned that the agreement for the sugar beets will be signed tomorrow.

Mr. Findlay: There is agreement in principle on detail between the federal and provincial governments and the producers' association. The process of actually getting the agreement structured and signed will be many weeks or months away, but there is agreement in principle on detail. That is normally what happens to these ongoing negotiations. An agreement is arrived at and everybody knows the detail, and it has to be put in writing by staff, federally and provincially, and eventually an agreement gets signed.

Mr. Gaudry: Is this going to be a one-year agreement again, or will you be looking at a long term? I know you mentioned earlier that there is a long story. I do not know how long it is going to be to tell us this story, maybe it will take the rest of the afternoon, I do not know.

Mr. Findlay: Back in '87 the 10-year National Tripartite Stabilization plan was signed, and because of events that occurred in '87, a substantial deficit occurred in the plan on that very first year.

Over the course of time, the program was in a reasonable degree of balance between premiums and payouts in '88, '89, '90, '91 and '92. As '91 came to an end, the federal government looked at the deficit that had been accrued in '87 that was carried forward for Alberta and Manitoba, which are the sugar beet producing provinces. That total deficit was about \$10.4 million.

The majority of that responsibility for that deficit lies with the federal government. The deficit accrued was about 60 percent in Alberta, the 40 percent in Manitoba. That is kind of the acreage split that occurs in sugar beets between the two provinces.

Around about '91, the federal government said that the plan is in grave difficulty financially. It cannot be sustained. It will never be actuarially sound by the end of the 10-year period. So they struck a special measures committee to analyze the

overall industry, what role it plays, what the problems are.

Clearly, one of the big issues was the fact that no sugar policy exists in Canada. In other words, sugar could be dumped from other countries in the world into Canada at very low prices and really suppress the market price in Canada, and therefore, decrease the value of sugar beets at the farm gate.

We had certainly hoped that the special measures committee would address that because this is the only country in the world that does not have a sugar policy. So we are vulnerable to dump sugar. In GATT principles, dumping is illegal, but the way we operate the sugar industry in Canada, we do not stop it. I wish we would, because then we would have a structural base to a market price that would not require the kind of stabilization dollar input that we have.

* (1540)

As a result of that, the special measures committee said that the offset to low sugar prices in this country has to be government money in the form of stabilization. I certainly argued that the federal government had a higher level of responsibility here, because they are ones that will not put a sugar policy in place to add some reasonable support to the market price. They refused to do that and took a position that they would only put in stabilization money equal to what a province would put in.

In the process of Tripartite Stabilization, the maximums for for each government has been 3 percent; hogs, cattle, onions, honey, it has been 3 percent. In the beets, a year ago, we would not increase above 3 percent in terms of Tripartite Stabilization contributions. So beets went over to GRIP. In this case, in Agriculture, we have maintained our 3 percent contribution, and Industry, Trade and Tourism has put in an additional 1.5 percent so that the agreement that we have now agreed to with the growers is 4.5 percent of provincial money for stabilization, 4.5 percent from the federal government and 4.5 percent from the producers.

That is a bit of the history of what brought us to where we are at so that the level of dollars going into the industry will be up around \$675,000 of government stabilization for sugar beets in this province from the provincial government in '93 whereas, in my budget last year, we spent about

\$395,000 for the industry—so substantive increase in dollars committed in the form of stabilization.

The support price for the growers, the last couple of years, has been between \$33 and \$34 per tonne. This agreement allows a net stabilization price for the growers per standard tonne of \$36.72. In other words, that is the stabilization price minus the producers contribution, which is close to \$2 a tonne. So that is the history, a little bit more recently.

You asked whether it is a one-year or longer. We would have liked to have an agreement that was longer term, but because of all the other things that are happening in terms of GRIP coming to an end in '95, other NTSP programs coming to an end in '95 and the protracted negotiation process around dollars, pure dollars. It was some time ago we came down to trying to have a one-year agreement to get us through '93. There is structural evidence that there is a stronger market price today than there has been for some time.

The company and the growers negotiated a contract a little over a year ago so that the growers received more of the export value, that is U.S. export value, for the sugar that goes down there, which helps to support the producer price. Strange as it may seem, although we only produce 10 percent of our sugar in Canada, an awful lot of what is produced here is exported to the United States. It is simply a matter of transportation cost and closeness to market. So a lot of events have occurred which give us, you know, a fair bit of optimism and hope that the marketplace will be better in the future. If they can get another year under everybody's belt, it will determine whether that is right or wrong.

I have asked for 28,000 acres, and the company wants 28,000 acres. I hope growers will produce that much. That is over 4,000 acres more than last year. I understand there are growers that want to add acres, there are new growers that want to come in, and that is all good. I hope that is what happens, and if we get up to 28,000 acres, it will help the negotiation process for next year.

The market price strength that is currently there is maintained. Again, the grower will get more from the marketplace and have less call on stabilization, and over the course of the next, hopefully, nine months, we can put in place something of more longer term stabilization for the industry, keeping in mind the other discussions on other commodities

around the year 1995. That is what is on the table and what has been the process of discussion.

I am disappointed that the federal government would not take the level of responsibility that they should take. Their own special measures committee said that they should take more, and they did not. That is obviously a discussion for the future, but I can certainly give the members a sense of confidence that that issue was not just talked about once and forgotten. It was an issue of heated discussion. But in the end, you have to do what you have to do, and we have done what we had to do.

Mr. Gaudry: You mentioned about the dumping of sugar from other areas. Did free trade have any effect on production of sugar in Manitoba?

Mr. Findlay: Not that I am aware of, no.

Mr. Gaudry: Just one last question and I will pass it on to the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). You talk about providing leadership and co-ordinating the implementation of the Vision for the 1990s. Can you tell me what has been implemented as far as your program for the Vision for the 1990s?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, in the process of development, there were over 100 stakeholders in the industry involved in evolving the Vision for the 1990s. Within the department, six umbrella committees have been set up to deliver the Vision approach on a day-to-day basis, activity-to-activity basis. We have a Vision newsletter within the department.

Those six committees draw upon and work with people outside the department, as we try to get the whole industry of agriculture to focus on the seven theme areas that everybody has identified as critical for the future, areas like industry promotion and consumer awareness; the crop identification corridor between Portage and Winnipeg last year was as a result of this process; the Farming for Tomorrow activities, certainly leading to a lot of the other sustainable activities in terms of shelter belts and acres that were seeded in a conservation process, so it is an ongoing activity; the 4-H cleanup campaign that happened last Saturday across all of rural Manitoba. It is good to see the young people contributing in that fashion. They earn a bit of money from Highways. It helps the 4-H program and beautifies the roadsides of Manitoba. There is a lot of activity associated in and around it—the Gate

to Plate forum, again another offshoot of that Vision approach.

I am not saying that we have a magic wand that we can wave to make everything good and perfect in the industry, but we can, through a partnership approach, try to get the industry to understand the challenges and deal with the issues. Collectively, between the government and farmers and agribusiness, we can evolve our industry in a more positive direction and try to get away from the conflicts between those various sectors and have a greater sense of partnership, a commitment.

That is what the Vision is about. That is what the Gate to Plate was about, to try to create partnerships and alliances and understanding and a forward-thinking approach as opposed to a standstill approach in the industry.

Ms. Wowchuk: I wanted to ask a couple of questions. I wanted to go back to sugar beets, but I think I will just go on with this Vision for the 1990s and ask the minister: Is there anywhere in this Vision, or are there any steps that are being taken, to assure that we have a better understanding, a more made-in-Manitoba understanding and any efforts to get more Manitoba food onto Manitoba plates?

As the minister says, we have the ability to grow an awful lot here, but I do not think that people realize that there are many products that have the food value that they need that are in Manitoba. Are there any efforts being made to educate people and to get the Manitoba foods into the Manitoba market and onto Manitoba plates?

* (1550)

Mr. Findlay: Well, certainly consumer awareness to have Manitoba food products consumed in Manitoba is an initiative that is broadly based in the department. It is broadly based amongst various producer groups and marketing boards and commodity groups across Manitoba.

Certainly I will mention a number of the things that are going on, but the member must be aware that the large food chains do bulk buying. They buy a particular food item in a particular region of the country, and in some cases, you win on that, some cases you lose on it. You might have Alberta product on Manitoba shelves. In some cases, you will have Manitoba product on Alberta shelves. Whether that is good or bad, it is difficult to say. We certainly want the food chains to buy locally and put

it on our shelves, but there are a number of things going on that promote Manitobans consuming Manitoba product.

The Manitoba Food Processors Association has been recently formed. I was present at an unveiling of some logos that they are going to be putting out, and that is identifying Manitoba products on the shelves, trying to promote Manitoba product. Peak Vegetable Sales in Winnipeg has a big promotion every year when the fresh produce starts to come on Manitoba shelves. The marketing boards in the malls and at various fairs, particularly Brandon Fair, have significant displays where there are six or seven. There is turkey, there is chicken, there is beef, there is pork, and they have these cooking demonstrations to initiate Manitobans to Manitoba product.

They also promote in the stores and they promote in terms of TV ads, Manitoba product. The Milk Board promotes milk in a variety of ways, through the schools, through sports. Last year, we were involved in a promotion with the Bombers in terms of Manitoba food products, training table, food products.

So there are a lot of activities going on. They are broadly based, and the department is involved in many of them, and the industry as a whole is involved in many of them. So again, it is a partnership trying to maximize for least expense, trying to get the message across to Manitobans about food products in Manitoba.

The process of Manitobans, particularly rural people around Winnipeg, advertising gardens and contracts that you can have to have certain products delivered to your doorstep at different times of the year, again, it is another process to stimulate Manitobans in Winnipeg, the particular large urban centre, to consume products that are produced in market gardens around Winnipeg. It is an uphill battle. I have to tell the member to make sure Manitobans are aware.

I have been involved for some time trying to be sure that beef that is on the retail shelf is identified as to whether it is Canadian, period. We go through a process as beef producers of having our beef graded, that in order to be transported interprovincially it has to be federally inspected and graded. We have a reputation of very high quality beef.

If you go to a retail store—and there is no rule—U.S. beef can come in there ungraded, unidentified as to country of origin, and I am sure many consumers are buying it thinking it is the same as they bought last week which was Canadian produced and graded, but it is not identified. I have been trying to get Consumer and Corporate Affairs federally to accept responsibility that all beef on the shelf has to be identified to country of origin and grade, not just Canadian product.

Ours, as I said, has to be graded and identified if it crosses a provincial border, but U.S. obviously crosses the border, but it does not have to be. The federal government response has been, well, each province should do it. Unfortunately, Ontario has bought that line and they are in the process of setting up provincial regulations. Well, here we go with a patchwork-quilt process across the country where one government could handle the whole country.

So you identify beef—of country of origin and grade—it gives the consumer a greater sense of awareness of what they are buying, and it helps us to market our product. So far, I have not been successful.

Ms. Wowchuk: I hope that the minister will continue to pursue that matter. Along with being identified as Canadian, if there would be a way that we could encourage our own stores to market Manitoba when it is in this province, that would also help us.

There are a lot of public institutions, government-run facilities in this province, and a tremendous amount of food that is consumed. You look at hospitals, you look at jails and those kinds of facilities, I wonder if the minister's staff has done any research or given any consideration to the possibility of using Manitoba-grown or, in particular, locally grown food in those institutions.

I look at possibly, well, let us take a prison, for example, and no one in particular. If we were able to use locally grown food in those facilities, it would be a tremendous boost to the economy in the surrounding area around those.

I wonder if anyone has looked at that, any consideration has been given to anything like that by anyone in the minister's staff. Because if we are looking at the rural economy and trying to look at ways that we might be able to stimulate our communities and get some economic growth into them, Lord knows we do need some economic

growth in some of those smaller communities, this might be a way that we might be able to help them.

I would just like to get the minister's views on that, whether he would consider that a possibility to help small communities stimulate their economy.

I realize, Madam Chairperson, that in the end we might end up paying more for our food in this type of situation. It is a matter of whether or not we are prepared to invest in our rural communities.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, on first blush it is easy to concede to what you have said, that let us promote Manitoba products on Manitoba shelves, but we cannot force people to do those sorts of things.

I mean, if a retailer wants to buy in bulk, you can win and you can lose at that. In some cases you will say, I will put a lot of Manitoba product on Alberta or Ontario or Newfoundland shelves and of course vice-versa, but it is very clearly a double-edged sword.

We have tried hard in our industry to remove interprovincial trade barriers. When I went to my first Ministers of Agriculture meeting in 1988, it was the big issue. It was a big issue for me. We set up a process to identify interprovincial trade barriers, and I believe the number was 169 trade barriers identified.

Now you try to get some of those removed, it is very critical, because everybody is protecting their home turf. Now think of what we are doing in Manitoba. I am talking about this double-edged sword. Yes, it would be nice to have vegetables and potatoes produced in Manitoba on Manitoba shelves and guarantee it and have that all work.

That is very nice, but what about the 70 percent of hogs that we produce in surplus to what we consume here? What about eggs? We produce 11 percent of Canadian consumption of eggs, we have 4 percent of the population. Beef, 60-70 percent of what we produce here has to be exported out of the province, and export means crossing a provincial boundary.

* (1600)

Now, if we put in a barrier that says, you cannot put Saskatchewan or Alberta or Ontario products on our shelves, and they say, well, tit for tat, and then we cannot move our pork east, cannot move our eggs east, we end up losing in that.

In one sense, you help a few people, but you hurt an awful lot of other people, because we have developed agriculture here on significant export, east and west as well as international. My position is, remove trade barriers, not add more trade barriers.

You have to remember the overall picture. I just think that if we get too aggressive in putting in restrictions on who can sell what, you help a few but you hurt a lot. If we are going to expand in agriculture—the member talked about wanting to have more activity in rural Manitoba—that means producing more food products. That means we are going to have to export more, and the biggest market we have is within Canada. That means we have to move eggs east and pork east, which we have done successfully in large, large volumes.

The last thing we want to do is encounter barriers to prevent that. As she well knows, the Egg Board is in serious difficulties because of aggressive anti action coming out of Quebec and Ontario which is contravening a federal-provincial agreement that was signed 20 years ago.

We are very upset with what Ontario and Quebec are doing, and we do not want to be part of that same process. Although I can agree in principle, on the surface, but think about the bigger picture.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister may have misunderstood me. I was not talking about removing all products from Manitoba stores and only selling Manitoba products in Manitoba stores. I said, I look at particular institutes where you do have some control, and I was asking if any consideration had been made to where we might be able to use locally grown food in those types of situations. It may not be feasible, but that is where you have control. It is all government purchasing in a situation like that and it might help a particular area if you could do that. Granted, you cannot put only Manitoba products in the stores. I understand that we have interprovincial trade, and I would not want to put any more barriers up than we have. I would like to see Manitoba food identified as Manitoba food. That does not restrict interprovincial trade.

I talked specifically about an institute where everything is government purchased, and what I was asking is, has that ever been given any consideration where we might be able to use more local food? Would the minister consider doing some research on that, whether that is a possibility?

It may not work, as the minister said, but I want to know whether anybody has done any work on that possibility and whether he thinks it would be feasible to get more locally grown products into provincial facilities? I am not talking about the Legislature here or things; I am talking about things, as I said, maybe where there is a prison or a hospital facility, things like that, communities that are farther away from the city where it would be a real economic benefit to the area.

Mr. Findlay: I think it is fair to say that from a department point of view and agriculture point of view we support what the member is saying. Yes, it is nice to see more and more Manitoba product on the shelves, but for the institutions she is talking about, the institution does the order buying or Government Services does the order buying and I am pretty positive they do it on a tender basis, which is a fair and reasonable way. I think Manitobans can compete very well because, obviously, transportation costs are lower if it is produced in Manitoba, but to specifically order it, it is difficult if you are going to respect the tendering process and try to minimize your costs.

We will promote the best we can the fact that we can compete on the basis of quality and on price, and that is the process that is going to establish who is going to buy what. I think we have been quite successful through the various marketing boards in sort of passing that message around.

When you talk about the large food chains, go back to that, it is a tougher process, because the way they do their order buying you can win and you can lose at it.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I agree with the minister on the larger food chains, that is more difficult. However, on the local ones if there was a way—and I guess we will have to take this to Government Services, but I firmly believe that sometimes you might have to pay a little bit more if you want to support the local economy. It does not always boil down to the lowest common denominator of the dollar. Sometimes you have to be prepared to invest in that local economy, and I think that we will discuss that a little bit further as we get into Government Services. I will remember to take it there.

I want to revert, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) was talking about sugar beets, and I wanted to ask the minister, are there—and he may

have answered it earlier—long term plans for a sugar beet policy? Is there discussion with the federal Minister of Agriculture about how the sugar beet industry should be handled in Manitoba and what is this minister's position? What would he like to see as a sugar beet policy that would meet the needs of producers over a longer period of time?

Mr. Findlay: I have advocated that for at least three years at federal-provincial meetings. The only thing I can say is, it led to a special measures committee approach which, at the end of the day, External Affairs turned thumbs down on a sugar policy for Canada. Any kind of border protection for the industry has been ruled out. The special measures committee eventually did get that in writing from External Affairs. It has been verbally transmitted many times.

We have lost that argument in terms of having a national sugar policy in place that gives the industry a chance to live with the marketplace, so we end up with stabilization programs as having to offset that. I would have liked to have had a longer term program for this year, but it got down to simply a dollars-and-cents discussion process and ended up with a one-year program. We are looking forward to what we can do for '94 and beyond on a more longer term basis.

As I said earlier, it has to be consistent with discussions on what happens to NISA beyond '95, what happens to revenue insurance beyond '95, what happens to the Tripartite Stabilization programs beyond '95. I think, if I am pursuing anything as a minister, and I think this is broadly accepted, it is that we attempt to end up with whole-farm stabilization that is commodity neutral. It does not matter what you produce, you get the same level of safety net support or stabilization, and NISA is probably the program that can deliver that.

Whether sugar beets can fit into that scenario remains to be seen, but that is a discussion for the months down the road.

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

Ms. Wowchuk: Just continuing on in sugar beets, the minister has indicated—if he has not, other people have indicated—that not everybody is happy with the price settlement that is there. There are some producers who have said that they will not grow at this price.

Is the minister confident that at the price that has been settled at, what, \$36.72, there will be enough producers to meet the requirements of the processing plant this fall, or is there a risk that there will not be enough acreage planted and the plant could be in difficulty?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am very confident that we will have more acres in sugar beets this year than we had in the past. At the meeting last night, over 70 percent of the producers voted in favour of the agreement as struck, the 4.5 percent from each participating party. We have had numerous growers call our office saying they want an agreement because they want to expand acres. We have had lots of growers say, we are new, we want to get into it, and at a support price, anything over \$36 a tonne, we will be very happy with.

Alberta's support price is \$37, so we are only pennies different. The new contract agreement between the company and the growers, in terms of sharing the export revenue from sugar exported to the United States and the stronger market price that exists right now, all those things are constructive in my mind to seeing the acres increase from what they have been.

The strong support last night of over 70 percent, I take as a very favourable signal from the growers that they are going to produce sugar beets. Truthfully, if you look at what they can get from the stabilization plus the market for sugar beets versus the wheat, the barley and the canola, I think sugar beets look very attractive in their rotations.

* (1610)

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification, if those producers decide not to grow, those contracts will then be open to other producers to get into it? Those extra acres will be available for other people to pick up, is that correct?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the company told me they want to contract 28,000 acres, so they will be taking more acres from existing contractors and new producers. They have indicated all the way along they want 28,000 acres. That is why I have pushed for it. I think it is constructive to have all the acres we can because of all the value-added processing and all the transportation associated with that industry. I am confident that we will have over 25,000 acres, and I would be very happy if we get the 28,000 and ecstatic if we go beyond that.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister talked about the future and this being a one-year term agreement and not sure of how it was going to be handled. Was there any discussion between the sugar beet growers and the Minister of Agriculture and the federal government to bring sugar beets under GRIP?

Was that a consideration, and, if it was, what were the consequences of that discussion?

Mr. Findlay: Early on in the discussions, and these discussions started about four months ago, and they did not just happen recently as you might tend to believe. It has been going on for months.

We received a letter from the federal government, I would say it was in late February, early March, which laid out two options: enhanced Tripartite or GRIP. I asked the growers which they preferred. In Manitoba, they adamantly said no to GRIP. They did not want to go into GRIP. They wanted the enhanced Tripartite approach. From that point on, we negotiated an enhanced Tripartite.

I called a meeting in Winnipeg on March 15, involving the federal government, the growers of Manitoba, the growers in Alberta, the Alberta government and ourselves to try to come to a resolution on this. Obviously that meeting did not succeed, because we did not get a resolution till the beginning of May. It has been a long ongoing process and, yes, GRIP was an option, but the growers did not want that option.

Really, at the initial stages, the support price offered or probably offered in both NTSP or GRIP would have been about the same. The growers had reasons, known to them, as to why they preferred the NTSP option. In the consultation process, which I believe in, they wanted one particular angle so that is the angle I followed from that point on.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister just explain for clarification for me the difference? Why would they have preferred Tripartite over GRIP? I do not understand that part of it.

Mr. Findlay: I guess in a consultation process, if you believe in it, you have to take the input from the other side and you will have to ask them. This should really be discussed again under Vote 6 or under Vote 8, the Income Insurance Fund and Support Program, if you want further detail. I do not have any of it in front of me, but we did get a letter from the growers after I got the federal letter. I asked the growers, which way do you want to go?

They wrote me a long letter on all the reasons why they said no to GRIP and yes to enhanced Tripartite.

In the consultation process, I have to respect their judgment as a producer organization that is in close contact with all their growers that that is the route they wanted to follow. So from that point on we pursued the enhanced NTSP approach.

Ms. Wowchuk: I apologize. We got off the track on sugar beets and I realize we should be doing that on another line.

Getting back to Financial and Administrative Services, in the Professional/Technical branch we see a reduction of staff of 9.26, and when I read the second part of it, it is the privatization of the foods and residential operation at the Agricultural Extension Centre.

Can the minister tell us why that happened, what the reasoning was, and also what has happened to those people who were in those positions?

Mr. Findlay: What we have here is nine people involved in lodging and meal services at the Brandon Extension Centre building on Queens Avenue in Brandon. That facility has been used for a number of years. The process has been used with government employees, has been losing money year after year. There is only one year in the last six that it made just a very small positive bottom line.

There is one person who is full time and the other eight are part-time on demand, or as needed, sort of term positions. We felt that we could no longer operate a facility that is losing money for the government. We are restricted in what we can charge for meals in terms of government rates. Also, we did not want to be advertising this service in competition with the private sector who are out there trying to also supply lodging and meals.

We feel if the centre is demarketed—and it can be marketed for greater use for both the lodging and the meals for seminars, for weekend retreats for various organizations. It can be marketed, but I do not think it is fair for us to market that facility in competition of the private sector.

If it is in the hands of the private sector, then they can market it and get a greater use of the facility and save us from the annual losses that range anywhere from \$3,000 to \$36,000 a year. I think it will end up with more use and probably better management in the process. The process of privatizing it will be through a tender-call process. The department will analyze the tenders as to who the successful tender

will be. The people who had been currently employed on a part-time basis, we will be asking that they be given consideration for being hired by whoever the successful bidder will be.

Ms. Wowchuk: It was my understanding that the Ag centre was there to provide training, to offer different courses to people in the farming community, and that this facility was, the accommodations were at a very reasonable rate so that it was accessible to all people. I would have some concerns that now it will be outpriced, there will not be the accessibility to people who were using that facility.

I realize that it will be run somewhere else, but it will be at an increased cost. I think we might be losing the purpose of the Agricultural Extension Centre to provide educational services for the farmers and for rural people. So I have some concern that it might be at a cost that might not be accessible to people as it was before.

When will the tender on this facility be let go? When will we know who the private contractor is that is going to be managing this facility?

* (1620)

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I hope the member is not confusing the purpose of the Ag Extension Centre with the purpose of the lodging and meal component. The two are quite separate.

The Bain building, to be used for training and courses, will remain exactly as it is today. The lodging and the meals have been an add-on to the facility. Yes, it was convenient and it was nice, but we cannot go on losing money as government. If she looks around the country, she will see all governments are starting to face that reality. It is nice if it was cheap, but somebody is subsidizing and that cannot continue. The user has to use it.

As I said earlier, if the person who operates it in the future—and the tenders will be called very shortly, proposal calls will be put out very shortly, and we would hope that the conversion occurs by the end of June, that is our hope. I cannot say that it can be met, but it is our hope. We do not know who is going to respond, whether the proposals will be adequate, reasonable or workable, but I want to guarantee her that the process of using the extension centre for training and education will continue in the future as it has in the past.

I can tell you if that food and accommodation facility is competitively advertised and promoted, we

will bring more people to that centre, particularly weekend retreats by various groups, and that will end up using the main building for the training process even more in the future than it has been today. So I see it as being a win-win all around, and I think whether there are increased costs remains to be seen.

If you can increase the usage by 25 or 50 percent, that shares some costs over more people, maybe the operator can offer it at much the same rates today—which are very attractive obviously with the rest of the private offerings in the city of Brandon—and not increase the cost, because he shares the fixed cost over more people.

So there is something to be marketed, and I think the private sector can do that, and it is the responsible thing to do. Government should not compete with the private sector offering the same services. Our role is training and using the Extension Centre. The private sector's role is supplying accommodations and meals for the people that come and use the facility. I do not see any less use. In fact, I personally see more use.

Ms. Wowchuk: Maybe we could just go back a little bit.

Can the minister tell us or can his staff advise him—he says the extension centre will continue to operate. When was the residential section added on? He said it was built on. How long has that facility been in existence, and why now is it suddenly such a concern? If it was operating up until now and providing service, why is it such a concern? Has government not made any effort to increase the use of that facility at any point?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, we do not have the exact date, but it would be early '70s, say, approximately 20 years ago, maybe 25 years ago, somewhere in that category.

The Extension Centre, we have aggressively advertised courses, advertised to people to use it, but I am of the opinion that more can be done. We will advertise the use of the Extension Centre for courses and training. The private sector will advertise the accommodations and the meal services for what they want to do. It will be in conjunction with the training activities that occur in the Extension Centre. All that will be analyzed by staff in the process of reviewing proposals that will come forward.

The member asked me, why have things changed. I am sure the member is aware of what is happening in this country and the kind of budgets that come down in places like Saskatchewan and Ontario and Newfoundland. This is a different world. We are not living in it with a government with a rate of growth of income on the existing tax base of 16 to 18 percent a year, which was happening in the '70s and the early '80s. Today you live with a growth on our tax base income of 1 percent, plus 2 percent, maybe minus 1 percent. That is the reality. You see, it cannot go on. Things are not the same as they used to be.

Premier Rae of Ontario said, things are not the same as they used to be. He said it with a glum face. He meant it, because he knows that is true. The Premier of Saskatchewan said, we used the credit card too long, and they are prepared to take the credit card away from us. Those are harsh realities.

We were making decisions of this nature in this government over the course of the last five years, trying to prevent ourselves from getting in that dilemma that those two governments are in, because they are telling the truth. We are dealing with the facts of life and the truth right here.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I agree with the minister. Things are not the same. In that sense, I agree with him. Things are changing.

On the one hand, he continues to talk about, farmers have to be educated, farmers have to be prepared to diversify. We have a centre here where people can be brought in for training. Let us face it, some of these people are very low-income people. If we have a residence that is set up there, we should be using that facility.

I just have to say that I disagree with this move. I disagree with what you are doing with this particular centre, and we will leave it at that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Item 1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries \$975,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$453,700—pass.

1.(d) Computer Services (1) Salaries \$255,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$77,400—pass.

Item 1.(e) Personnel Services (1) Salaries \$265,800.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would like to ask the minister a couple of questions as far as staffing goes. Earlier, under decentralization, I mentioned briefly vacant positions. I want to ask the minister, when we look at the total number of staff years within the department, how many positions do we have that are vacant, identified as staff years but positions that have not been filled within the department.

Mr. Findlay: At this point in time, there are 39 vacancies, but now that the member has raised staff, I want to make her aware of something that I am going to comment on because I am proud of it. That is the fact that on April 1 of 1992, my department's employees were 48.3 percent women. On December 31 of '92, my department's staff was 51.0 percent women.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister must have anticipated my next question, and that is on the affirmative action plan. I am pleased to hear that there are 51 percent women working in this department. I want to ask the minister if he has any breakdown, whether most of those positions are in clerical staff or whether women are being hired in the upper management of the departments. Where are the women being hired?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, we made a conscious effort to have women in more management positions in the department, and we have in the last year—there are 13 women who have been appointed to what we call nontraditional roles. It is people like Joanne Buth, Chief of Crops Management; Norma Toews, Manager of Accounts; Janet Kelly, Field Officer in Killarney; Davetta Sheppard, Acting Director of Finance, MACC. There have been a number of women moved up into, we will call, senior management positions. There is an acting regional director in Portage now, a woman, Dori Gingera, former chief of 4-H, and another woman has taken her place in an acting position of chief of 4-H.

* (1630)

Many women have moved up in senior positions in the department over the course of last year as well as the increased percentage in the department. I think 51 percent, if I can go back to that, is just about the average percentage of women in the population.

Ms. Wowchuk: I sincerely want to congratulate the minister on this because the statistics do show that women are slightly over 50 percent of the

population, and it is time that they did start to take some of the positions that they have rightfully earned. I hope that the minister will continue on in this. There are many others, as the opportunities arise, that we do see more women in management positions.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

[interjection] Someone just mentioned here, as we look at his staff. I am not discrediting any of his staff. At some point, it might be nice to see women at that table as well. That was just meant lightheartedly. I appreciate what he is doing to increase the number of women.

I guess just on that, has this created any problems? Women bring different responsibilities with them, family responsibilities. Has the minister or the personnel staff seen any differences in people carrying their workload or different demands on leave time needed, or have any special arrangements been necessary within the department as far as child care goes? Has the increase in the number of women in the departmental staff brought along any other changes that have been addressed?

Mr. Findlay: Certainly, Madam Chairperson, there are different issues around the workplace today than there were 20 years ago. We operate by civil service guidelines, and the basic answer to your question is no, there are not unusual circumstances. I can assure the member that we are signing a lot of replacement authorizations for people who take maternity leave, but that is part of the modern-day workplace. It is not unusual. It is just a fact of the way it is.

I hear lots of compliments about the ability of the various female staff to perform. On the sugar beets, Carolynn Osborn has been the chief operator from our department in the whole process of negotiation over the course of many months. I have had people who have been in contact with her on the sugar beet issue and other commodity groups she works with saying very positive things. They are really excited by her professional capabilities. I get that many times from Ag reps who are female, from MACC agents who are female and all the roles that they play. I hear nothing but positives.

We all know that there is a little bit of a concern out there about whether women can perform the roles, and I am sure most people will not comment until they have done exceptionally good. I have no

qualms in saying that the female staff are doing exemplary performance in their jobs and the issues that we deal with in the department are very similar to any place in today's modern workplace environment.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am pleased the minister does recognize that these people are capable of doing the job, but that he also does recognize that women have faced greater challenges than men have when it comes to breaking into upper management and that type of thing. That is just the way the world was, but I am glad to see it is evolving.

When I was asking about the questions, I guess I was looking more at special situations that arise. I was wondering about daycare situations, and I guess that, in some cases, is addressed through the government daycare. There are facilities. I hope this will also reflect, when we see an increase in women in the staff, as well, an increased awareness by all government people of the challenges that women face in the agricultural industry.

We have talked about this at other times. We talked about the difficulties some women face in crop insurance and just lines of credit, establishing themselves in the bank. So I hope these changes we see within the Department of Agriculture will reflect on the changes that have to happen in the whole industry with respect to recognizing the ability of women and that women do choose at times to choose nontraditional fields of occupation, but that also, when women do go into these professions, we have to have greater family supports there for them.

When women played the role of the homemaker, they looked after many of the jobs that now they need support with. I hope we will see a recognition, through all policy that is developed through the Agriculture department, that will recognize the fact that women are taking on more nontraditional roles, and that as the department develops policies, they look at how it impacts on these women who choose to go into these fields, that there is a whole different angle that has to be looked at, because it affects the whole family. So I hope that this will also be implemented over the years as the department develops policy.

Mr. Findlay: I can assure the member that that is true in the department as a whole. I think it is fair to say that industry more and more is looking at a person as a person as a person, as opposed to a person who is a male or a female.

They are looked at in terms of their competence professionally to perform the job. I will tell you, any job that was advertised in the department over the last two or three years, there were 30, 40, 50 and sometimes 60 and 70 people who applied, and the competition is looking for the best person.

I do not think there is any selective process to try to improve the number of women. It just happens that they are competitively doing better in the analysis, in the competition process. Their performance is admirable, and it will make some of the male members of society improve their professional competence in order to compete in the Department of Agriculture.

In the industry as a whole, more and more often, you meet chemical reps who are female. Let us face it, that is a nontraditional role and a difficult one because some of the things they will face in their workplace, travelling from farm to farm, are tough. It is really tough. I sense society is getting more tolerant, more understanding—a person is a person is a person, and that is the way we try to operate.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am pleased about this, and I hope that we will see the same recognition of the skills of people in other departments of this government as well. The Department of Agriculture has done well in this recognition.

I want to move to the 39 vacancies that the minister had indicated that there was. Can the minister tell us what the plans are? Is there the intention to fill these vacancies. Is there a particular section of the Department of Agriculture where we see these vacancies or is it just spread right across the board? Why is there such a high number of vacancies?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the vacancies are not in any particular section. There is an ongoing roster of vacancies, positions being advertised and filled. There are people who move on to other things in life, they resign, people who retire. There is an ongoing process of people going on the list and positions coming off the list.

* (1640)

It is fair to say that it runs in that category on almost a continuous basis. The department executive prioritizes the positions that need to be filled the quickest. Obviously competitions take time. There are some positions that need to be filled right away; others positions can wait a few months. It is an ongoing management process for the

executive of the department that they do week in and week out.

I can guarantee the member, they are broadly based across the department. It is just a factor of the workplace again. It is surprising the number of people who retire; a lot of notable people have retired in the last year from the department. Also, a lot of people go back to farming or go back to homemaker or they get on with a private sector company. It is an ongoing process.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess what I was asking the minister was whether or not there was any freeze in his department for hiring but, from the answer he has given, this is just an ongoing process. That was the concern I had, to see 39 vacancies, and my concern was that if they were not going to be filled then where was the service going to be reduced? If they are ongoing, that is fine.

I want to move onto another section here and that is the workplace health and safety committee system. We all hear the statistics about the number of farm accidents that we have, the dangerous situation that farmers work in and in particular accidents with children. It is very serious the number of lives that are lost in farm accidents.

I understand that other governments have moved to developing a workplace safety package to deal with farm accidents, brought in working regulations, and I am wondering, is that the role of the work health and safety committee? Are you looking at farm safety and how we can improve standards in the farm community? What is the role of this committee?

Mr. Findlay: The Workplace Safety and Health committee that you are referring to relates to the department. This is internal within the department working with staff. In terms of the broader issue of farm safety and all that, we can deal with it under Vote 5 under Tech Services where we are involved more broadly with the farm community on agribusiness in terms of the broader question of safety on the farm.

It is a serious issue. It is a concern, and we all know that in today's farm situation, there is more activity by the wife in doing farm activities. People do take their children out. In some cases I have heard of the situation where they lock them in the house. Well, they will be safe because they are locked in the house.

It is an unfortunate situation, but it is of concern and I think the figure last year was some eight children were injured in farm accidents. It is not a nice statistic at all.

A lot of effort is made by the department in terms of trying to convince people to think safety first. I will give the machine companies credit. They do a lot of work too to make sure the appropriate signage is in place on all kinds of equipment. We have chemical fertilizer dealers doing training courses for people handling anhydrous ammonia to improve safety there.

Manitoba Hydro goes around to various fairs with their demonstration on moving augers and overhead wires. So it is an ongoing process trying to improve safety. It will never end. I wish I could think that it would stop accidents from happening, but all we can do is hope that we reduce the number of accidents as much as possible. Human error is generally a factor in an accident, fatigue and not thinking obviously another factor. In today's stressful lifestyle, you cannot eliminate it entirely, but education continues by the department working with the total industry. If you want more detail we will get it in Vote 5.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will bring that up again under Vote 5, and I apologize again for getting into the wrong section here.

I want to ask the minister if it would be under Personnel Services that we could discuss the shorter workweek, the four-day workweek, or where would we talk about that? [interjection] Okay.

If this is the section, I want to ask the minister what his feelings are about how his department will run when we look at the letter that has gone out, the shutdowns that are going to take place during the summer months which is the busiest season in the farming community.

I wonder whether his department has done any analysis of this, what the implications will be throughout the department. I think about things like hail claims that may happen on Thursday and many other things that will get delayed. I know that when we talked to people who were in GRIP and some of the backlogs that happened at Manitoba Crop Insurance, they said it was just too much work.

So I wonder what the implications are going to be, and what kind of backlog we are going to see with the reduction in the workweek, and whether any consideration has been given perhaps to shifting

that workweek shutdown to a different time of the year when it will not have such an impact on the farming community?

Mr. Findlay: Certainly the department executive has looked at how to handle these 10 days off, and it is fair to say that their consideration is to use seven days in the summer, and three during the Christmas and New Year's break.

Staff generally believe there is no slow time. There is always work ahead of them, always work to be done. Let us face it, there are events, emergencies that can happen, with an outbreak of a disease or a hailstorm or a surge of activity at the vet lab, and these 10 days off will be treated no differently than the weekends off.

If there is an emergency, a disease or a hailstorm or at the vet lab, staff do work on days off, whether they are Saturdays, Sundays or statutory holidays. This would be part of the same process, where emergencies or a need arises, they will adjust. They operate with flexibility.

I think it is fair to say that you will find staff that will show up at work as if they never had the 10 days off, they are that committed. It will happen occasionally, but staff, the general principle is, the government policy of seven days in the summer, seven Fridays, and the three days between Christmas and New Year's, but will respond to emergencies when and where they have to be responded to, as they always have in the past on long weekends or normal weekends. That is traditional policy in the Department of Agriculture, and these 10 days will be treated the same way.

* (1650)

Ms. Wowchuk: Just a little further on that, so what will the adjustment be? How is it normally handled? Is this handled as overtime or do they just adjust and take another day off somewhere else? I am wondering if they have to work on a day that is supposed to be a day off, is it going to be overtime pay and in the end not saving money? How will that be addressed?

Mr. Findlay: It will be dealt with the same as anytime that people work on weekends now. It would be other days off. There will be flexibility in the other days off. So a day worked is exchanged for a day off somewhere else, some other time of the year, any other day of the week, whatever works out. So staff have the responsibility of managing that process in the context of 10 less days pay.

Mr. Gaudry: Madam Chairperson, you say here, continue staffing vacant positions for the decentralized branches. How many positions have become vacant since you have decentralized these branches? Do you look for local people or do you advertise across the province for these vacant positions?

Mr. Findlay: Certainly, in the process of decentralization, the government used a very humane process in dealing with people that did not want to move for whatever reason, and other positions were found or they were put on the redeployment list.

Where positions were advertised, say, MACC in Brandon, or Crown Lands in Minnedosa, or Soils and Crops in Carman, the advertisement was for anybody. Anybody could apply. Certainly, in certain cases, local people obviously had a little bit of an inside track because they lived there. If somebody was hired from another location, the desire was to have them live in the community where the job is, not mandatory, but if the person is going to drive from a distance, it is a fair cost.

It is fair to say that a lot of the positions that were filled in the decentralization process in the locations like Brandon, Carman, Minnedosa were filled by local people, or people within 20 miles. Again, for many people, it has created another off-farm employment opportunity. A lot of people are farm wives or part-time farmers that were the successful candidates in these competitions.

There was not any specific desire to hire locally, but it worked out that many were, and many that were hired from distances away would move to the community. So the end result, you ended up with more people in the community working for the government and bringing a payroll to that town. They built houses, and they have their kids involved in the local community activities. There are more volunteers. It has a lot of spin-off benefit for the communities.

Mr. Gaudry: Madam Chairperson, in regard to hiring local people also, personally, I would look at having young people that are looking for positions in their community. It would tend to keep them in the community. Could the minister tell us how many young people were employed in these positions that would have gone otherwise out of the community?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, it is interesting the member would raise it. He and I being about the

same age, we are excluding ourselves from ever being successful in these competitions, but there is no discrimination on age or no bonus points, I guess it is fair to say, for age.

Some of the positions were filled by young people, some by middle age, some by older people, so there is no discrimination, and no preference can be given. We have to be nondiscriminatory, but do not forget, where we are at in our lifestyle, we do not want to be excluded either.

Mr. Gaudry: In talking about decentralization, the minister mentioned a redeployment list and people that did not want to move out. How many of these people did not want to move when you decentralized your department?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, out of the 94 positions that we have decentralized, each individual had really three options. They could accept the transfer, the move; they could take early retirement, which many did; or they could go on the redeployment list, which many did. In total 28 have moved or are commuting. Some have stayed in Winnipeg, are commuting to the job, and so there are 28 that went with the job; 58 were hired into the position. Out of that 58, 44 will be called local, so that means 14 are not necessarily local, so they take a bit of commuting to get to the community where they are working, out of the 94 positions.

So we have created a lot of new jobs for people. As I said, 44 local people received jobs because of decentralization; 28 moved; some of them are still commuting; and 14 were hired from areas that would be called nonlocal.

Mr. Gaudry: In those positions, have there been any retirements of these employees that were on the redeployment list?

Mr. Findlay: Eleven have retired and 25 have been redeployed.

Mr. Gaudry: In the 25, were there any that have accepted a severance package because of the fact that they did not want to continue with the department?

Mr. Findlay: All those that have retired have received a severance package, as does anybody who retires.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just want to ask the minister, on the management staff, there is a large reduction in salary. Was there a change in management in this department. What happened here? There is still

one staff year in it, but a decrease of some \$12,000-\$14,000. Has that been a change of staff?

Mr. Findlay: With all the background noise and the fan over there, we cannot hear. Our time is just about up. We will answer for you beginning of next session.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

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

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

Motion agreed to.

* (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), Bill 200, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Also, standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans) who has one minute remaining. Stand?

Is there leave that that matter also remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 202—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), Bill 202, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation, standing in the name of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 203—The Health Care Records Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), Bill 203, The Health Care Records Act; Loi sur les dossiers médicaux, standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

An Honourable Member: Stand

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on Bill 203, The Health Care Records Act, as first brought forward by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) last December.

This is a very important act, as are all of the other private members' bills that have been brought before this House in the last four years by the party of which I am a member. This particular bill has a very interesting history, Mr. Speaker. The principles behind it and the bill itself have very many similarities with another bill that was brought forward by the same member over three years ago and was passed unanimously by this House over three years ago and then never proclaimed, that being the antisniff legislation.

Just recently the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has brought in a pale imitation of that piece of legislation, which we will be discussing at great length in the House at its appropriate time. So I will not go into any more detail on that particular piece of legislation at this time, except to say that the process that was followed by the antisniff legislation is eerily similar to the process that has been followed by first Bill 36, which was introduced a couple of sessions ago, and now Bill 203.

The purpose of this piece of legislation is to ensure health care consumer access to medical records.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be very difficult for any member of this House, either government or opposition, at this time to put on record any statements in opposition to the principle behind this bill. I say that because the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and his colleagues in the government have touted strenuously, at least verbally, their commitment to health care reform, elements of which include decentralization, local service delivery and patients' rights.

Well, this piece of legislation, should it be enacted by the government—and it certainly would be supported by members of the NDP caucus—would facilitate all of those processes that the government speaks to.

I would like to begin my comments by giving just a brief background on the history of this legislation. It actually was a result of several years of consultation beginning in 1988 by the then-NDP Health critic, the honourable member for Churchill, Jay Cowan, who spent a great deal of time discussing the whole issue of access to health care records, confidentiality of health care records, and the process for enabling both access and confidentiality to be maintained.

Mr. Speaker, unlike this government, which talks about consultation and talks about meeting with the people who are actually impacted by legislation particularly in the field of health care, the member for Churchill, Mr. Cowan, actually did something about it.

An Honourable Member: Yes, he did.

Ms. Barrett: He certainly did. He consulted with health care consumers, health care professionals, facilities, doctors, unions and ordinary Manitobans throughout the province.

An Honourable Member: Did he consult with them, too?

Ms. Barrett: He certainly consulted with ordinary Manitobans.

I think it is very interesting that Mr. Cowan consulted with health care professionals and doctors, because often in our society—thank goodness it is changing now—we have confused health care professionals with doctors without realizing that the health care system includes a wide

range of professionals in addition to the professional doctor.

I think it is important that we recognize in all of our deliberations on health care reform the vital role that is played by all of the health care professionals in the field, and not simply the doctors who are one major component, but certainly not the only one.

Another component of this consultation was that the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties was especially helpful in this deliberation that was undertaken by the then-member for Churchill, Mr. Cowan, especially their health care consultation rights committee.

The Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties is a nonpartisan organization that has done a great deal of work in the whole area of rights and liberties in the province of Manitoba and has provided a great deal of support and direction and, at times, advocacy and concern to various governments in this province of several political stripes.

They have an excellent record and certainly cannot be accused of being partisan in any way, shape or form. I put that on the record, Mr. Speaker, because the government has the nasty little habit of accusing various organizations that are referred to by members of the opposition as being tools of the opposition, or alleging that they are not independent and apolitical. Well, MARL certainly is apolitical and independent and has a well-deserved, positive reputation.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, MARL wanted, and as did we, an all-party co-operation on this piece of legislation, something that we thought we had achieved in the antisniff legislation only to have our hopes and our expectations dashed. I must excuse myself, I am digressing.

The parallels do keep coming to the forefront. MARL tried several times. I would imagine, knowing the history of this government, they tried on numerous occasions to contact the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who then as now was the member for Pembina with, surprise, surprise, absolutely no success.

I know the honourable members will find it extremely hard to believe that the Minister of Health, the honourable member for Pembina, had no sense that he should consult with this very prestigious group about a very important health care issue.

* (1710)

Mr. Speaker, calls were placed. Letters were written. Not a single call was returned, not even a single letter of acknowledgment by the minister or his department. The Health Care Consumers' Rights Committee of the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties, after several months of being frustrated at every turn by the Minister of Health—something that we on this side of the House and health care organizations in this province know too full well his typical *modus operandi*—did hold a press conference that was attended by members of both opposition parties, presented their briefs and made their request for consultation in November of 1991.

In June of 1992, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court ruled that records belong to doctors, but patients have full access to the files. I quote from that statement: The patient has the right upon request to inspect and copy all information in the patient's medical file which the physician considered in administering advice or treatment.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important although very simple concept that while the physical files must remain in the possession of the doctor for very good and sufficient reasons, the content of the files must be accessible to the patients. The patients are the ones who are being affected by the treatment and any other consultation or activity that the doctor takes under advisement in dealing with his patient.

In September, just several months after the Supreme Court ruling, the government finally acted. It would not act on the recommendation of the opposition parties, and it would not act on the recommendation of the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties, but it did respond finally to a Supreme Court ruling.

A letter was sent from the Evaluation and Audit section of the Department of Health to all executive directors, administrators, hospitals, personal care homes and other health facilities asking if legislation was needed. They asked for a response in one month. I love it, Mr. Speaker. They obfuscate, refuse to respond to legitimate requests for over two years, and then demand a response from every health facility in the province in one month.

In December of last year, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) asked if the minister would put his comments on the record regarding this piece of legislation, regarding the requirement of the Supreme Court that health records be made

available to patients, and if the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) would table the results of the survey of all health facilities that was held in September of 1992 as to the need for legislation in order to implement the Supreme Court ruling.

To date, nothing has happened. The Minister of Health has refused to respond to those requests. There is no government legislation on record, and patients continue to have to rely only on the Supreme Court ruling if they wish access to their files. There is no provincial legislation.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reason for Bill 203. I am sure the member for St. Johns, who introduced this legislation, would be more than delighted if the government also introduced its own bill that covered the areas that this piece of legislation covers. We on this side of the House hold no hope for that happening as we have seen with the antisniff legislation. Any legislation that the government does bring in is likely to be, as I stated earlier, a pale imitation of the needed legislation.

So we are going to continue to ask during this session of the Legislature for the government to support Bill 203 so that the patients of Manitoba will have access to their files as required by the Supreme Court of Canada.

In order for health care reform to be truly effective, it must include consumer involvement and it must include and assist self-help models. Consumers must be responsible for their own health care. We all agree with that, but how can consumers be responsible for their own health care if they do not know what is in their own medical files? Knowledge is power, Mr. Speaker, and if the basic knowledge of their own health care files is kept from patients, they cannot be full participants in their own health maintenance and health care.

Self-help models are needed so that individuals and groups can avail themselves of the information that is put forward in their files. Consumers must have the fundamental right of access to their own health care records. The natural justice, the Supreme Court ruling, and all of the consultation that has been done throughout the province of Manitoba in the last five years leading up to the introduction of Bill 203, have that as a basic tenet. Individuals in all areas of their lives should have access to information that reflects directly on their own health and well-being in a number of areas.

However, I think it is arguably the single most important area that many people will face, and by that I mean the health care records area. It is essential that Manitobans have the ability to be well informed about their health care, that they be allowed to have access to their records, and that doctors know that this is the process and the procedure that must be followed, so the doctors are aware of what kinds of material should be in the file so that they are more easily accessible and understood by patients, so the doctors know, if there is a fee to be charged, what the fee structure is going to be. That kind of information can only be made available to the health care professionals through regulations upon passage of a piece of legislation.

I cannot understand why this government would not bring forward legislation to deal with this fundamental right of Manitoba citizens. The Supreme Court, as I stated, ruled in June 1992 that this was a fundamental right. The government did respond by sending out a questionnaire to every health care facility in the province, and it is incumbent upon the government to act upon that information. So I would urge the government to support Bill 203 in speedy passage so that the patients in Manitoba have a fundamental right to their information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege for me to participate in this debate concerning The Health Care Records Act, Bill 203. I think there are at least three issues here that we have to discuss.

The first issue is what I call the issue of human dignity. The question is whether a patient, an individual person, has the integrity and dignity to be able to see and to look at her own physical and medical records. I think it is an insult to any human being, to any individual to be denied access to information concerning the very own health of her own physical body, or his own physical body.

Why is it that it is a rule sometimes that patients are denied information concerning their own physical condition? It has been traditional in our society to accord certain individuals who occupy social roles too much power over others, and among the powerful position of roles in our society are the professionals, including the medical doctors and the lawyers and the judges and other people of high reputation in our society. If they are given the

exclusive authority and exclusive right to possess the information concerning the file of individuals, that gives them too much power, in my opinion, that they can control and manipulate that information to the detriment of other individuals. In other words, it promotes power to the holder of the position, and yet dependency and helplessness on the part of individuals subjected to their authority and to their formal position.

* (1720)

This is the case with the patient who is denied information about her own physical and medical condition. She is too dependent and becomes helpless and powerless as far as the relationship with her own medical doctor. Whatever the doctor will tell her, of course, will be like God speaking to the individual and cannot be negated, whatever the instruction is.

Indeed, in our own civilized society it is very difficult to go against the advice of your medical doctor, a very powerful individual. Sometimes he will prescribe things for you that in your own natural state of mind, in your natural feeling, you know it is not good for you. Who has the most information, the most sense, the most judgment to make the decision whether or not a medical prescription is good for the individual except the individual who is taking it?

Of course, you will say, the doctor who studied a number of years in medical college should know what he is prescribing. But medical doctors are not entirely immune from any kind of self-interest. Sometimes they get free medical samples from drug companies, and in exchange for the advantages that they enjoy, they may try certain kinds of medicine on certain people.

We have seen tremendous consequences about this. When we have seen, for example, in the past people have been tried with certain kinds of new medical drugs that are not yet tested in the market and have suffered. Just remember the case of the thalidomide babies, when they prescribed certain drugs to pregnant mothers with some horrendous consequences for the children.

Also, the kinds of prescriptions that some American drug company had tested in Canada. We have witnessed the consequences of that in terms of the neurological sanity of people. A case in point is the wife of the former member of Parliament, Winnipeg North. She died before she even had a

claim to compensation for the injuries that she had suffered as a result of this error on the part of medical companies.

Therefore, it is very important that patients should be accorded the information that is essential to her own self-respect and self-awareness. People should not be subjected to the complete and absolute control of any other person. Confidentiality, of course, is the rule that facilitates all of these kinds of inequality in the relationship of people with people.

Moreover, the right to know should not be denied. The person, herself, if it involves her very physical, mental and emotional stability and sanity, that is the issue.

I think one of the major causes of inequality in our society is the so-called rule of confidentiality. They make the relationships confidential so that nobody else can enquire into it. Therefore, any kind of unfairness, any kind of inequality will be hidden from the public scrutiny. That facilitates, of course, some kind of scandal sometimes, in the relationship between individuals, among individuals in our society.

The public's right to know should be respected because the public's right to know is essential to the integrity of the individual human being himself. Denied such right to know to your own physical information, you are reduced to something less than a human being. If you are denied the right to access information concerning your own physical and mental and emotional condition, you are reduced to less than a robot or an automaton, you are reduced to less than a human being. It is simply unacceptable. It is simply irresponsible.

Now the question is: Who has a right to this medical record? Is it the physician who has physical control of the record, or is it the patient himself who has a vital and basic interest in the information in one's own record?

Well, the Supreme Court judges had ruled in June 1992 that physical records, as a matter of physical thing, belong to the doctor, but the information that is contained on this physical file is a matter of information to which the patient is entitled to inspect and to make copies of, all this information, upon payment of reasonable fees for reproduction of such information, and that the right of the patient is limited to the information related to the diagnosis, the advice and the treatment of the illness of the patient.

However, if the doctor believes that the patient is not entitled to see their own record, it will not be for the interests of the patient to see their own record, that can be denied the patient. That is the ruling of the Supreme Court.

I suppose it will be in a situation where someone is in an unbalanced state of mind or someone has some incurable kind of disease like cancer or other terminal illness, that it will make the matter worse if the patient knew what the disease is all about. Nevertheless, still it is debatable in my mind why a patient should not know if she is dying or not. If she is really suffering a terminal kind of a disease, I think it is still her right, or his right, to know that such is the case.

Why should a person be denied the right to know that the illness is terminal in nature? Who is the master of your own self except yourself? I am just asking the question, but then, if you are mentally incapacitated, for example, you have a very low level of intelligence, or you are born with a level of intelligence of a child two years old, say, you are an idiot—well, it is nice to be an idiot sometimes because you can disclaim responsibility. I say, well, you cannot be blamed for anything if you are an idiot because all you can say is, oh, I am sorry, I did not know that.

Aside from those exceptional circumstances, it is very difficult to deny to the individual the right to basic information concerning your own health or his own health or his own chances of life or death.

The real interesting question related to this is the right of people who are a liability to society to perpetuate and multiply themselves. This has been a case in the Supreme Court in the United States, when a long time ago, they had the issue of whether they can remove the rights of women who had bred morons to reproduce, and siblings who are also morons, and whether or not you can deny the right of any human being to the pursuit of happiness, so to speak, by denying the right to reproduce. Can they be sterilized, for example?—a very interesting issue for society.

If you were in a position to make the judgment, would you sterilize people who are breeding idiots in our society? I cannot be a God and say you should do this or do that. I think it is a matter of basic public policy for those who are temporarily in control of society to make that decision which is also a moral decision. [interjection]

* (1730)

The same issue that the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has been raising—if you are, let us say, a subordinate in a hierarchical organization, like a military organization, and you are subjected to the absolute control of your own superior, and you know that there are certain rules that if you do not obey the command, you can be shot for disobedience. The question is, would you obey or disobey an order which you know is immoral?

That is the same question that had been settled in the Nuremberg trial. In the Nuremberg trial, it has been decided that that is no excuse. You cannot say that because you are afraid for your life, you are therefore exempt from liability in executing an order which you know in the first place is illegal or immoral. There is such a thing called command responsibility, and those who are at the top of the hierarchy in the chain of command will be held accountable for the acts of their subordinates if these acts of subordinates amount to criminal acts, even if they do not know what their subordinates are doing.

The same thing holds true in our civil service. The minister who is at the political level is accountable for his own department and is held by our rules and practices to be accountable for practices of their civil servants despite the fact that they may not have actual knowledge of what is going on in his own department. Therefore all the honourable ministers in government should be held accountable for the activities of their own department regardless of actual knowledge on their part or not.

There is a primordial rule or principle in our society which says—even in the private sector, we have a rule that says customers are always right. That is a rule in private business, in the private sector. There is an equivalent rule in the governmental sector, the voter is always right. That is the assumption. The patient is both a voter as well as a customer. Why can the patient not have the right also to have the information that a medical doctor should have? That is the question, Mr. Speaker, and I think the patient should have that right to her own information.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? No. Okay.

As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

Bill 205—The Ombudsman Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman, standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak in favour of this particular amendment brought forward by my colleague the member for Kildonan. He brought this forward last year in the Christmas sitting of the legislative process, and it gives us the opportunity now to speak on this particular amendment, Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act.

We feel that it is a very good amendment, Mr. Speaker. We feel that it is worthy of support from all sides of the Chamber. We look forward to the government later on perusing the bill and investigating and realizing its merits to individuals in Manitoba. We know that they will be supporting this bill unlike a piece of legislation that was passed, private members' legislation that was passed, in a previous session which the government failed to proclaim. Unfortunately, we see now that the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) in a feeble attempt to redeem himself is bringing forward a similar piece of legislation, but it fails on many points.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, this particular piece of legislation brought forward by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) expands the authority of the Ombudsman to investigate complaints within the educational system. I suppose and I imagine most members would be quite surprised that currently it is a situation here in the province that the Ombudsman does not have the jurisdiction to investigate complaints within the educational system. This particular amendment would deal with that specific issue and as well it would relieve school boards in the province of any potential or perceived conflict of interest. It would allow for the investigation into complaints by children or parents, teachers or administrators or trustees.

As I was mentioning, currently the Ombudsman does not have that particular jurisdiction. Presently a parent when they perceive that there is a problem with one of their children, they take recourse to the teacher who then if they are unsatisfied with their results then proceed to the principal, then to the administration and finally to the school trustee. If a parent appeals to the school board, the board will probably refer the matter back down the ladder to the administration, so we have the administration basically investigating itself.

We feel that this lacks objectivity under certain circumstances in certain situations, and perhaps with certain teachers, the administration will not be as thorough in its investigation of certain teachers, perhaps.

We feel that the current situation, because they are investigating themselves, is putting the administration in a conflict of interest situation, one I do not think they should be in and one that this particular piece of legislation would deal with. It would be an external agency, an independent body to investigate complaints within the school process, educational process in our province.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) likes to talk about reform. Well, here is a very tangible reform that we feel all members of this Chamber should be supporting. I sense that they will be supporting this, because I believe all of us are concerned about the welfare and the well-being of our children. We know that parents are very concerned about this, because I was mentioning before the current process: teacher, principal, administration, trustee and then back to the administration.

Many parents whom I know are intimidated by the process. Many find it difficult to approach their child's teachers on a difficult or a contentious issue. They may be embarrassed about their own lack of education, but they would feel more comfortable approaching, I feel, an independent agency such as the Ombudsman with a concern regarding their child. The office of the Ombudsman is a well-respected agency within government. It is known for its ability to deal with the particular issues, whatever they may be, in an understanding and an unbiased manner.

So this is a very important piece of legislation. It is a very simple piece of legislation. It would allow

for a referee, as it were, to deal with educational concerns by an independent adjudicator.

So as I was mentioning before, it is a very simple piece of legislation. I know that the members opposite would find this most appealing, and it would go a long way to addressing concerns raised by parents and educators in this province. It would go a long way to reforming the educational system here in Manitoba.

* (1740)

As we mentioned before, members opposite, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), for example, speaks of reform to the health care system in this province and it is really just a guise for cutbacks to essential services to Manitobans. We are seeing this again in the Department of Education where the minister talks about reform, but no tangible reforms. Instead, we see a \$16-million cut to the educational budget, a 2 percent cut, which has seriously negative implications to the quality of education here in our province.

So when they talk about reform, they are basically talking about the cutting of service, and here is a very simple but meaningful reform that this government could bring in if they had the will and the intention to do so, that could impact in a very positive way upon the educational system here in this province.

Members opposite often criticize us for not offering constructive suggestions or alternatives to the problems that we all face as Manitobans. We often hear them. They are saying that we are too critical, we are too negative, simply for the sake of being critical, but we have here before us, brought in by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), a constructive suggestion to deal with a serious issue within the educational system, constructive suggestions that the members opposite must take very seriously. We hope that they will, as I mentioned before, take the legislation, take the particular amendment, investigate it and they would see the value of the amendment, notwithstanding the simple politics about who brought it in.

Although we have witnessed this prior with the antisniff legislation brought in by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), where the government supported it, but they played politics and they failed to proclaim it. So for that period we are waiting. There were lives at risk within the province. It was

raised again today by my colleagues here in the Chamber.

They did take some limited action on that. It was a watered-down piece of legislation brought forward today. All of us, as members of this Chamber, will have the opportunity to speak on that particular legislation. As the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) mentioned, the new legislation brought in by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) penalizes those who are most affected by the tragedy of solvent abuse.

In this particular bill, I know that the members opposite will listen to our comments very seriously. They will take our suggestions seriously. I know the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) is very interested in this. He, like many members opposite, are concerned about the quality of education in our province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, undoubtedly he will take this and write a letter to his constituents, as he has done in the past, and probably mention some of the very thoughtful comments that have been put on the record by myself and other members of our particular party. Maybe the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) can take it and spend another \$8,000 sending it across the province.

We acknowledge that this would enlarge the Office of the Ombudsman. There would be a small, small increase in its budget, but it would definitely be money well spent. In fact, we feel it would be cost-effective, because it would free up the minister's staff to deal with some of the other issues facing our educational system, some of the other problems that she has created.

In the long run, Mr. Acting Speaker, this would save money for the province. It would be a quick and relatively easy way of providing meaningful reform to our educational system here in Manitoba. I urge and expect all members in this Chamber to pass this amendment as soon as possible. I thank you for the opportunity to put those few comments on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): As was previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer). Agreed? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 208—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 208, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It is my pleasure to rise to commence the second reading debate on this, I believe, important piece of legislation. This is not the first time we have had the opportunity to debate this legislation in this House. It had been originally introduced by my colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) a short time after this legislation had been struck down. It was originally in place to protect firefighters in the province, but I will explain in a few moments how it was struck down by the courts.

First, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to start off by recognizing an individual who was a long-time firefighter in the province of Manitoba, who had dedicated his life to preserving and protecting the lives and the property of individuals in our province, and through unfortunate circumstances lost his life as a result of a heart attack while he was employed as a firefighter in this province. That individual to whom I am referring is Mr. Bill Laird, who was the president of the Manitoba Professional Firefighters Association.

I would like to start off by reading the words that Mr. Laird had read into the record of this Legislature when we were talking about Bill 56. Mr. Laird was representing his colleagues, the firefighters of this province, and I quote the submission that Mr. Laird made: is dedicated to the memory of those firefighters who gave their lives in the line of duty, not in a dramatic fire scene covered by the media with bright lights and followed with bold headlines, but far removed from the scene and sometimes years later.

To those firefighters who died by the exposure to slow insidious hazards of firefighting, that robs them of their health, quality of life, and then takes that life, to those firefighters, we will keep the faith.

Those were the words that Mr. Laird used to express his sentiments as he attempted to put

forward the position of firefighters and explain to members of this Legislature, and indeed to members of the public, the hazards that firefighters face in the performance of their duties.

Now, there are many of us—and I know the members opposite quite often make light of the serious nature of this legislation, and they think that it is not important. I know the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) says that it is not essential for us in this province and, of course, he quite often ignores the needs of firefighters in this province. I find it is unfortunate that the minister thinks that firefighters are not an important segment or component of our society. He makes light of this legislation, and has done so every time this bill has been introduced in this House.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

This bill is designed to recognize the occupational hazards encountered by firefighters in the performance of their duties, protecting the lives and the property of Manitobans. Medical studies have shown that there is a greater incidence of heart injury and injuries to the lungs, brain, and kidneys of firefighters than for any other comparable profession.

Firefighters were covered, Mr. Speaker, by legislation that had been in place as a result of previous governments, and then of course that legislation was struck down as a result of actions by the courts. We had legislation that started—the first regulation came in in October 15, 1966, that would protect firefighters from the occupational diseases that would occur as a result of their employment. That regulation was later revised by regulation in June of 1974, and that regulation was later amended in 1977 and was in full force until it was struck down by Court of Appeal of Manitoba in January 29, 1988.

* (1750)

So firefighters in this province indicated that that did have that protection, and it was brought in a significant period of time ago, Mr. Speaker, and had that protection.

Since that time, Justice Sterling Lyon indicated, and I will quote the reason that was used by Justice Lyon for rendering the decision to strike down this regulation: Under the present scheme of the act, if it is the intention of the Legislature to deem that certain diseases arise in the course of employment as a firefighter, resulting from the inhalation of

smoke, gases and fumes or any combination of them, then it clearly must be so stated by legislative enactment.

That was the comment of the Appeal Court of Manitoba Justice Lyon, judgment January 29, 1988. So that indicates that Justice Lyon felt that because the protection, the coverage, that was provided for firefighters, was only in force as a result of a regulation, had it been the will of the province and the Legislature, they would have done so in legislation. They would have enacted that protection in legislation.

When Bill 56 was brought in by the past member for Portage la Prairie, an amendment was brought forward by my colleague the member for Thompson at that time that would provide significant protection for firefighters. It is, Mr. Speaker, the present bill that we have before us that was brought forward as an amendment.

At that time, that amendment was spoken against by the business lobby groups of this province, by the City of Winnipeg, who put forward what I would deem to be an extensive effort on their part to ensure that this amendment to protect firefighters was not enacted as a part of Bill 56.

The city cited that one of the main reasons why they did not want this protection for firefighters was based on cost. So they equated the costs of operating the City of Winnipeg to the loss of firefighters' lives, and since the cost of that legislation was going to mean more to them than the protection of firefighters, that was why they brought forward their effort to have that amendment to Bill 56 struck down at that time.

The City of Winnipeg, the business lobby group were successful in having that amendment removed from Bill 56, and of course, since that time, we in this Legislature on this side have had to bring forward private members' legislation to try and enact that legislation to provide that protection for firefighters.

The previous minister that was responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, Mr. Connery, who was the member for Portage la Prairie at that time—and I will quote from a letter in 1988 that was sent to the minister at that time: On behalf of firefighters of Manitoba, we appear before you to ask for your help in having the heart and lung regulation 24-77 covering heart and lung for firefighters placed into the principal act of The Workers Compensation Act of Manitoba.

They made a specific request to the Minister of Labour at that time, the minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, asking that that protection be provided as it had been for over 20 years before that. The Minister of Labour, the minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, refused to accept that recommendation and that proposal that was put forward by the firefighters.

I know the minister across the way who is currently responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, to this day, has refused to enact that legislation that would provide the protection for the firefighters in this province.

Last session, Mr. Speaker, I asked this current member responsible for WCB when he was going to enact that legislation, and he said there was no need because he said they were going to bring in 24-hour comprehensive protective coverage for firefighters, something he has not done to this point.

Point of Order

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): On a point of order, the member for Transcona in his remarks said that I as minister have the power to enact legislation. I would just like to remind him, it is this Legislative Assembly that has the power—

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

* * *

Mr. Reid: The current minister responsible for WCB is obviously very touchy on this subject since he has sat on this for a number of years now since he was appointed as minister by his Premier.

We have brought forward these private member bills. We have asked this minister in private if he would enact the legislation himself, something he has refused to do.

The firefighters are waiting. Firefighters are dying and there has been no protection afforded them. Mr. Laird is one of the most recent examples who had worked long and tirelessly on behalf of the firefighters of this province and who died of a heart attack at a very early age while he was still employed as a firefighter in the City of Winnipeg firefighting force.

He suffered a heart attack. That is one of the provisions that would have provided protection to the remaining family members. Mr. Laird's widow

and surviving children would have been provided that protection, Mr. Speaker, had this legislation been in place, but since it is not, the widow must now fend for herself and is afforded no opportunities outside of any protection they might have provided for themselves during the course of their working career.

The legislation itself would indicate that there are obviously various causes of occupational diseases that would strike down firefighters. We take for granted in our homes, every one of us in this Chamber, I am sure, takes for granted the different products that we have in our homes.

There are many substances that are used that we take for granted, and yet when we view some of the products—and there are many plastic products in our homes, Mr. Speaker, that we take for granted, polyvinyl chlorides, the ABS piping in our homes, our furniture, our appliances, carpeting, draperies, all made out of synthetic materials that, when they burn, give off hazardous gases.

Some of the gases they give off, Mr. Speaker, are benzene and vinyl chloride—very, very dangerous to humans. PCBs is also another product that is given off, and we have heard much over the years about PCBs and how it can affect human beings. PCBs can readily penetrate the neoprene vapour barrier commonly used in firefighter protective clothing. So when firefighters encounter a lot of these chemicals in their firefighting environment, they are put at risk protecting the property and the lives of the people whom they go there to protect.

This bill would have provided some protection for them, Mr. Speaker. The mortality rate for firefighters is 30 percent higher than the average population. Firefighters can expect to live 10 years less than the average person in society, something that a lot of us in this House fail to recognize. This legislation would recognize that and would provide that protection for them.

Another area that we take for granted—when firefighters, they do not only put out fires. Firefighters attend accident scenes as well. I hope we all know that. When firefighters go to the scenes, quite often there are wounds where there are bodily fluids that are being secreted by the human body, whether it be through injury or otherwise, and that, Mr. Speaker, if there are individuals who are infected with the HIV virus, can put firefighters at risk. Now there is no protection in

the legislation currently that protects firefighters from the HIV virus.

An Honourable Member: Yes, there is.

Mr. Reid: In that sense, Mr. Speaker—

An Honourable Member: There is, Daryl.

Mr. Reid: There is no protection, Mr. Speaker, in there. [interjection] The current legislation says that it has to be proved that it occurred as a result of the work environment. The minister should be very clear about the legislation that he is attempting to protect here.

The minister responsible is choosing sides here, Mr. Speaker. He does not want to defend the firefighters. He has had significant opportunity over the years to defend the firefighters in this province and 39 of the American states have firefighter protection with heart and lung laws. On top of that, the common causes of line of duty deaths for firefighters is asphyxiation, explosion, building collapse, electrocution. So there are many other causes of death for firefighters.

The average age of a firefighter, who died from duty related causes by occupational disease, was 53 years of age, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the few jurisdictions in this country. This minister talks about harmonization of programs. British Columbia just recently introduced decisions that would provide protection for work related cancer for firefighters. I hope this minister will—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there a willingness of the House or leave of the House that the Speaker not see the clock—I notice the honourable member for Transcona has one and a half minutes remaining—allow the honourable member to finish his remarks and then to allow the House to either make a decision whether to pass it or to adjourn debate? Would that be agreed? [agreed] There you go, a minute and a half remaining.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I was unaware that I had that minute and a half, and I would like to make a few more comments about this legislation.

Getting back, Mr. Speaker, to the decision by the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia, the Workers' Compensation Board had viewed claims that had been put forward to them by firefighters that had contracted diseases, some on the opposite side might consider to be ordinary diseases of life, but the compensation boards of areas of the United States and provinces of Canada have recognized these as being work related or occupationally related.

The two decisions by the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia granted coverage to two firefighting members for work related cancer. The two claims date from 1986 and will probably be appealed by the City of Vancouver, but the firefighters are cautiously optimistic that both decisions were well written and were decisions of the Workers' Compensation Board of that province and not by an outside appeal agency.

One claim was for malignant melanoma, which is a form of skin cancer, as we know, and was accepted as a Schedule B presumption, and the other was multiple myeloma, which was accepted on the medical and legal merits. So, Mr. Speaker, in this country, we have other jurisdictions that recognize that firefighters encounter occupational diseases brought on as a result of their employment. I hope that the members of this House will support this legislation and bring it through to committee.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Niakwa): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being just after 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 4, 1993

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