



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, Marcel	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>	Rupert Island	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 6, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Harold Bennett, Franklin Magnusson, Leslie Mowatt and others requesting the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to consider restoring the funding of the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance Program to the level it was at in 1990-91.

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Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Marion Ramsay, Gerald Sinclair, Juliet Burke and others requesting the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

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Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Wallace Mowat, Tom Mowat, Ernest Mowat 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.

* * *

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Sylvia Kostiw, Michelle Kostiw, Charlene Baraniuk and others requesting 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. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dave Gregotski, Sharon Kumps, Paul Kumps and others requesting 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. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Melvyn Taylor, Ross Carwahaw, Tracy Strahl and others requesting the

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

* * *

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ted Smitke, Grace Smitke, Telmo Reis and others requesting the government of Manitoba to consider keeping the Misericordia Hospital open as an acute care facility.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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 (by leave). 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 fisheries are a vital resource industry in rural and northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS there are over 800 commercial fishermen netting some 12 million pounds of fish each year on Lake Winnipeg alone; and

WHEREAS the high costs of supplies and shipping fish to market are putting ever more pressures on the commercial fishing industry in this province; and

WHEREAS the provincial government reduced the Northern Fishermen's Freight Subsidy Assistance Program for commercial fishing by over \$90,000 in 1991; and

WHEREAS this subsidy is vital to the survival of the commercial fishing industry; and

WHEREAS restoring the Freight Subsidy to the level of previous years would make fishing in northern Manitoba more competitive and help ensure the survival of the industry.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request 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.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mrs. Carstairs). 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 residents of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the Misericordia General Hospital has served Winnipeg for over 95 years; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia General Hospital has a long record of dedication and service to its local community and the broader Winnipeg community; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia General Hospital is identified by the residents in the surrounding area as "their hospital"; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital plays an integral part in maintaining and promoting the health of the community; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital provides diverse services including emergency, ambulatory care, diagnostic and inpatient services, acute and chronic care which are vital to the community; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital is currently engaged in developing innovative and progressive community-based outreach programs; and

WHEREAS the Misericordia Hospital is ideally located to be within the "hub" of the health care delivery network for Winnipeg.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Manitoba to consider keeping the Misericordia Hospital open as an acute care facility.

* (1 335)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 30—The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst), that Bill 30, The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability

and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant les personnes vulnérables ayant une déficience mentale et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of the bill, recommends it to the House.

I would like to table the message.

Motion agreed to.

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 Warren Collegiate, sixty Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Jake Wiebe and Mr. John Smith. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns).

Also this afternoon, from the Immanuel Christian School, we have fifteen Grades 6 and 7 students under the direction of Mr. Heres Snyder. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

No-Fault Auto Insurance Appeal Process

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

Today's announcement by the government dealing with no-fault, coming five years after the Kopstein report and over three years after the Tillinghast report on the savings potential for motorists, we believe is somewhat overdue.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the costs that have been outlined in the material provided by the government are fairly consistent with industry cost projections to the year 2000.

Our concerns now are going to be dealing with the fairness of the system that the government will be implementing on behalf of all motorists in Manitoba. One of the areas that we think is very vague in the government's announcement today is the whole issue of the appeal process, the so-called independent appeal process.

Can the Premier today outline, given that the fairness and integrity of the system is crucial and the appeal process is a very important component part, if not the keystone part of this program, what kind of independent appeal process is contemplated in government policy for this new plan?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. It is an integral part to the credibility of any plan such as this, and we will be very conscious of that in putting together recommendations that will be introduced and legislation that will outline that matter.

First of all, you will need to make sure that the people are appointed for a credible length of time so that they can have some assurance of the responsibility and the knowledge that they will be able to build up, that they will be people of quality and people who will be able to hear any of the complaints that come forward and deal with them in a completely independent and dispassionate manner, to make sure that it is fair to those who would appeal.

I would only remind the member that the appeal upon which we are—I presume he is asking, and the one to which I am responding—is the final appeal, that there will be a series of steps prior to anyone desiring to go to this final appeal, where they will have an opportunity to appeal within the system as to concerns they might have about how the plan is treating them.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the material that is being sent to all the motorists—I assume in Manitoba—explaining the program, the government and the corporation, claims that they are going to be an independent appeal process. They do not say who will establish the appeal process.

In Manitoba, we have examples of an Electoral Boundaries Commission, which is set in law, an institutionalized independent body. We have the Ombudsman's office, which is appointed by this Legislature as opposed to cabinet. We have bodies like the Clean Environment Commission which are Order-in-Council appointments, and we have bodies that are internal to organizations such as the appeal body and the Workers Compensation.

I would like to ask the government: Who will be this independent body? Who will appoint them and how will they be independent and be perceived to

be independent, because that is very crucial to this program?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I think I can assume that the member is supportive of the program in general, and he has some specific questions about how an appeal mechanism would operate [interjection] Well, are you saying that he is not supportive of the introduction—did you caucus it?

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member in the introduction of the legislation, we will make it very clear on what grounds a panel will be established. I want to tell you that the principles and the policy which I want to see incorporated in that process will be as I outlined, that we guarantee the independence of the appointees and that they are able to operate on a given period of time without fear of any reprisals, so they will be fully independent.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. He has the Kopstein report that made three or four recommendations on an appeal process. He recommended an independent arbitration board; he argued for the appeal of that process to the courts.

The minister has those recommendations, but it is very important that the minister tell us today: Who will appoint the appeal body? Will it be placed in law as an independent body like the Electoral Boundaries Commission; will it be a body appointed by Order-in-Council; will it be a body appointed by this Legislature like the Ombudsman; or will it be somebody internal to the corporation?

I think those are fundamental questions that I would have thought would have been addressed in the government's announcement today, or in the House today in the questions we are raising.

Mr. Cummings: The member is trying to have me introduce the legislation piece by piece today. The fact—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, he knows full well, if he has made comparisons with the Quebec plan or other plans, that there needs to be an undisputed independence of the commission. I assure him and I assure Manitobans, that when we introduce that legislation he will be satisfied with the independence that we will be presenting.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Opposition, with a new question.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I did not think we would have to pursue this for a new question.

Mr. Speaker, it is very vague in the document that is presented to us today. We are already getting phone calls, as legislators, on the newscast, about who will deal with these matters, who will decide. Obviously, not on the detail of the Kopstein report, but people want to know and we would like to know, what is the government policy? Will this body be established—

An Honourable Member: Independent.

Mr. Doer: The word "independent." Some bodies are independent, Mr. Speaker, and some are more independent than others, so perhaps we can ask the question specifically.

Will the independence of the appeal body—[interjection] If the Premier (Mr. Filmon) wants to answer one of the questions, he could stand up and answer the questions. If he does not have a opinion on this, he will remain silent like he has.

Will the independent appeal body on this very important change, a change in concept which we support—[interjection] We will adjudicate the fairness when we see the implementation of the fairness. Will this independent appeal body—

An Honourable Member: How can you support the bill if you have not seen it, Gary?

Mr. Doer: I said the concept, my friend. I know that is foreign to Liberals, to have any concepts, because they change them every hour on the hour.

Is it the policy of the government that the independent appeal process, which is articulated on page 7 of the document that they are releasing to motorists today—will that independent appeal process be appointed by legislation similar to the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Manitoba?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, as with many other aspects of this plan, we have said that this will be a made-in-Manitoba plan for the best interests of Manitobans. There are a number of models, including the ones that the member is suggesting, that we are considering.

In the introduction of the legislation, I guarantee you that if he is willing to take an objective look at what we have in the legislation, then he will be satisfied with the independence that we will present.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, you will excuse us if we say the answers of the minister are starting to contradict one another. Two answers ago, the minister mentioned that they looked at the Quebec no-fault

plan. Now he is saying we are going to have a made-in-Manitoba plan. Then the minister said, we are still considering some of these matters.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): Did the minister have the government approve a major shift in policy on bodily injuries without determining the independent system of appeal that would be utilized by the citizens of this province? Can the Premier please tell us what type of independent appeal process will be in place? Will it be appointed by the corporation? Will it be appointed by the Legislature? Will it be appointed by Order-in-Council, or will it be institutionally appointed in legislation like the Electoral Boundaries Commission?

It is a very, very crucial part to the fairness of any bodily injury change in plan in Manitoba.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I enunciated the parameters for independence that I think should satisfy the concerns of that member. Unless he wants to wait in the bushes and be dissatisfied with whatever we bring forward in legislation—I think that is what he is trying to do.

He supports the plan but he has to find something to worry about so he is going to lay in the bushes, and no matter what this government brings forward, he is going to be critical. It will be an independent commission that will respond to these concerns. I invite him to wait until the introduction of the bill.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Kopstein report five years ago articulated the cost projections and articulated an independent appeal process that would be appealable to court. Is the government accepting the Kopstein recommendation? Is it rejecting the Kopstein recommendation? What is the policy the government must have?

I suggest to the government, you cannot make a quantum change in the whole way in which the tort system is utilized for bodily injuries without having a truly articulated and known system of appeal.

Would the government please tell us, in all those hundreds of briefings that have taken place in the five years they have worked on this plan, what will be truly independent for the appeal process? The Legislature and the people of Manitoba have a right to know. Please come forward and be clear about the process you will have in place.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the people of Manitoba I think have a lot more understanding than the Leader of the Opposition is beginning to display.

Mr. Speaker, we announced today that we are moving to a plan that will restrict tort. We presented examples of the type of coverage that would be available so that people can debate the benefits pro and con. We will introduce all the details, including the concerns that the member is raising when we bring the legislation to the floor of this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I believe he will be satisfied at that time.

No-Fault Auto Insurance Benefits

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I must confess that I am not so quick to support this plan. I am a little disappointed, frankly, by the NDP who seem to be so ready to give up on something they built that did provide benefits for all Manitoba and exchange it for something that is going to reduce the benefits available to Manitobans.

Now, I would like the minister to cast back two short years when he was questioned about the no-fault proposals that were contained in Kopstein, and he said—"he" being the member of the NDP who was raising the question about no-fault—that he does not, however, talk about the fact that a great portion of that money—that is, the savings that accrued to the insurance company under no-fault—would come from the pockets of those who have a right to be reimbursed.

That is the issue here, Mr. Speaker. The fact is insurance companies in jurisdictions that have a form of no-fault accrue large profits, and the source of those profits would seem to come from the benefits that are available to people who are injured. [interjection]

Now, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) from his seat makes the comment about lawyers. Lawyers are less than a third of the costs, and if he wants to control lawyers' costs, there are ways to do—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne, with your question, please.

Mr. Alcock: My question to the minister is: What has changed in his understanding of the way the system works, and how is he going to ensure that people are not protected?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I hope I misunderstood the question. I believe he said, how would I

assure that people were not protected. The fact is I intend to assure that people are protected.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits that are outlined this morning, if adopted by this Legislature—and I invite the debate and the discussion that we are now entering into. The benefit levels we proposed in the discussion this morning are very generous, and, in fact, those who are injured with loss of income, they will be reimbursed. The income replacement as we outlined would cover 90 percent of the population of this province. All other benefits are virtually uncapped.

I think the member may well have a little fun at my expense about the fact that I have always cast about for other ways of containing costs of automobile insurance in this province, and I have said on many occasions, which I fully acknowledge, that I believed for a considerable length of time that there were other ways by which this government or any other government could cap costs, but we believe that is not the case.

* (1350)

Private Sector Involvement

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, another feature of this, and the minister mentions it in the pamphlet they have prepared for this release, is the increased involvement or the reintroduction of private-sector insurance companies to provide insurance for those people who feel they require some top-up.

I would like to ask the minister: What are his projections about the extent of private-sector insurance involvement in this province as a result of this change?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a moment ago, the containment of cost is one of the very primary concerns we have in terms of maintaining future quality insurance in this province and making sure that people have adequate coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the plan we put forward this morning, the outline, indicates that 90 percent of the people in this province will be covered by a \$55,000 maximum. That will cover 90 percent of the wage earners in this province, and it is correct to say that those who wish to have insurance beyond that would likely have to go to the private sector to obtain additional extension.

I would remind the member that all of the benefits that flow within the plan are without cap, lifetime without cap. If he is asking me how large an extent of an involvement do I see, I would look to the Quebec plan, and I would inquire what happened in Quebec. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of groups that are involved in group plans, but the volume of private additional insurance that is sold is very small.

Mr. Alcock: Well, Mr. Speaker, that view is not shared by the Canadian Automobile Association in their opposition to this plan.

Revenue Transfers

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Let us speak about Quebec for a minute. Quebec has begun to use the profits derived by the reduction in benefits to people in Quebec as a form of taxation as they transfer the revenues from the insurance corporation into general revenue.

Will this minister commit that this government will not undertake such a transfer?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I would be only too pleased to put that argument to bed completely, because there is a clause in the MPIC Act which I intend to make sure applies to all aspects of the corporation and that clearly indicates that governments, present or future, cannot strip profits for other use.

No-Fault Auto Insurance Implementation

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I would like to address a question to the Minister responsible for MPIC.

We have asked this minister for almost five years when he was going to implement the Kopstein report's main recommendation of a no-fault plan. On April 28, 1992, in the legislative committee, and it is reported on page 42, the minister stated, and I am quoting: "You will not be seeing initiatives on my part to move to a no-fault insurance."

My question therefore to the minister is—[interjection] In fact, there is another one, too; there are two—why did the minister not act sooner to implement the no-fault system and avoid the dramatic premium increases such as the 9.5

percent to 13.5 percent increase that was experienced this year?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I readily acknowledge, as I said before today, that I was not the first to advocate this is the way one should deal with rising costs to the corporation and that I believe that other methods of control would do the job. But, Mr. Speaker, we have now seen how dramatically the increase of bodily injury is impacting on the cost of insurance in this province, and the majority of those costs are going for noneconomic loss.

That is very important for all of us to examine. A majority of those dollars are going for noneconomic loss, and that is where we believe there is a good reason to be able to make sure that those who are dramatically injured or seriously injured are fully, completely taken care of, but some of these other losses have been less than responsible.

* (1355)

Mr. Leonard Evans: I am glad the minister has finally seen the light, Mr. Speaker.

Benefits

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Is the minister truly satisfied that the announced benefit schedule that was released today is fair? How does it compare with other jurisdictions that have a no-fault system?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the information has been gathered from about 17 different jurisdictions across the United States which have various aspects of this program. The program itself is, in a broad sense, following the Quebec plan.

I would indicate that the figures that are included in the proposals that are brought forward have been examined in the light of Manitoba conditions. First of all, the income replacement is at a higher level than it is in Quebec. The other benefits that we are offering are all in excess of what is offered in Quebec, as I understand the plan.

We know, without any doubt, that if we do not take these types of dramatic actions, we will see a doubling of the rates by the year 2000.

Fairness

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): My final question: How will the minister ensure that certain groups in Manitoba are treated fairly by the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation? I am thinking, for example, of senior citizens; I am thinking, for example, of homemakers. How can we ensure that they are going to be treated fairly by Autopac?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, all of those groups that the member has pointed to—first of all, we need to remember that in the plan the economic losses are replaced. There are portions of the plan that are meant to be very flexible in terms of making sure that special situations are addressed.

For example, I believe the benefits that are outlined in the case of a homemaker, for example, are more generous than any plan that we know of and more generous than what would be acquired under a private plan, if there was a competitive plan.

Those are the types of approaches that we have taken in making this recommendation to assure that specific groups are in fact treated better.

Manitoba Housing Authority Subsidized Housing—Students

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Housing. When the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) eliminated the bursary program for the students this week, she left almost 5,000 students ineligible for grants.

According to the Manitoba Housing Authority, students who do not receive bursaries are not eligible for the special student rental fees. They further indicated that they had no idea what the impact of the minister's elimination of the bursary program would mean to students' rental rates.

Can the Minister of Housing tell this House what impact the bursary cuts will have on students living in Manitoba Housing Authority units?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice and report back to the House.

Manitoba Housing Authority Subsidized Housing—Students

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education explain to this House why she did not consult with her colleague the Minister of Housing, so that he could ensure that staff at the Manitoba Housing Authority were aware of the impact of her regressive changes to the bursary program?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Let me just make it clear again to the honourable member that students, yes, will not be receiving bursaries, but they will still in fact be eligible for a guaranteed loan. The money, Mr. Speaker, is still available to students wishing to study at the post-secondary level. In addition, we have retained for the most needy students, a bursary, the third level.

* (1400)

Mr. Hickes: Mr. Speaker, can she confirm that some of the poor students may no longer be eligible for subsidized housing under the new program? Would she tell this House how many students will be affected by the change? If she does not know the answer, could she ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon)? He should know. He is their—

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

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, let me tell my honourable friend again how the system works. The system is based on need; it is based on number of weeks of study and the amount of money required, what the tuition is. Students receiving student financial aid, first, starting at the Canada Student Loan level, is based on need. When that does not quite fill the need, then they move into assistance through the Manitoba Student Financial Assistance. Where there is continued need for the most needy students, we have built in a bursary system.

No-Fault Auto Insurance Minor Claims Cap

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the government today made a major announcement with respect to coverage that will be available to Manitobans under the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. In their pamphlet which they are going to distribute, they indicated that almost 80 percent, indeed 80 percent,

of the claims before MPIC were, in their words, minor claims. They said minor claims are the main problem. They said, of 20,000 injury claims, 16,000 were of whiplash. Of those minor claims, almost all of them are settled for less than \$15,000, many for much less than that.

Can the minister responsible tell the House why it is they chose a no-fault insurance program that would affect every claim and did not cap it at a \$15,000 level, which would have taken care of almost all of these minor claims?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the member raises a good and legitimate point. It also is a point that deserves careful response because very often under these types of programs which we have looked at in other jurisdictions, what happens is, where there is a monetary threshold beyond which the person may decide to sue, this very often drives a situation that encourages the claimant to drive towards that threshold so that they may then get into the tort system.

Mr. Speaker, when we looked at the financial projections we have that see us, by the year 2000, being in a virtually unaffordable situation for insurance in this province, we felt we wanted a plan that was totally predictable and that we could, according to the known statistics, be able to show containment of the costs, and at the same time, protect everyone who was legitimately injured and needed help, either through health care, rehabilitation or income replacement—that they are fully and adequately covered. That is the reason we went this direction.

Public Utilities Board Review

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are very prepared to support the government in initiatives that protect Manitobans and protect them equally, but we do not believe that this particular initiative, as it is so laid out, protects people equally. That has to be the serious question that is put before legislators in this province.

I have to tell you, on the basis of the information here, not only would I take out private insurance but I would take out private insurance for my two daughters, who certainly do not make incomes of \$50,000 a year, to protect them against future earnings which are not protected in this particular

program that has been announced by the government.

Will the minister tell the House today why he is unwilling to take this whole proposal to the Public Utilities Board to allow them to make an evaluation and judgment that this party will abide by? Why are they unwilling to do that in order to ensure that there is absolute fairness in this initiative?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Public Utilities Board will review the rate-setting process, as is required by the result of this change in the proposal of MPIC.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it seems to me that the member's question is based on the assumption that she believes the present system is fair. There is an inherent unfairness to certain aspects of the existing system. It can occur that it is a bit of a gamble as to who hits you and what the coverage may be, even if you do go to court. It may very well be that you could be dramatically injured, you could be of high income, but the person whom you intend to sue does not have the insurance or the wherewithal to cover your suit.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this plan covers the needs—the health, the medical needs, the rehabilitation needs, salary replacement. I think this is very fair.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister says it is a gamble. Let us take a look at the gamble. If I on this scheme drive out of the Legislature today and I get hit by a drunken driver and we both become paraplegics, we both end up with the same amount of money, even though one person was completely at fault. One person was driving under the influence and in violation of the law.

Mr. Speaker, I want to have someone provide me with an independent analysis as to whether this program is fair. The Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) from his seat yells out, that is why we are all here. Well, we are also all here to protect those who cannot protect themselves. The importance of establishing a fair policy is to make sure that we are not doing this for political motivation.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this House today that he is prepared to go to the Public Utilities Board, allow an independent evaluation of this program and to report back to the citizens of the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I hope she does not want to turn policymaking of this Legislature over to Public Utilities.

The member assumes—and this is a very important point—that there will not be any provisions to deal with impaired driving. That is an assumption that she made without any basis, Mr. Speaker. This government, this Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) has taken great pains to make sure that impaired operation of a motor vehicle is not condoned in this province. I can tell you that when we introduce the legislation, there will be nothing in that legislation that will undermine the work that is going on in terms of protection of the public from impaired drivers.

Mr. Speaker, when she talks about what would happen if the two people are both seriously and dramatically injured, first of all, they will receive all of their costs complete with an income replacement, and their costs will be without cap. Today, if you were at fault, you would only receive a maximum of \$19,000 under our existing program, and you would fall on the welfare and the social assistance and the public health programs of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this plan does address the aspects of that, and I believe that puts the other aspect of fairness into it which the member may not have contemplated.

Student Social Allowances Program Funding Elimination Justification

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, when the government cut 1,200 people from student social allowance, they potentially eliminated 40 classrooms of students in Manitoba. This is the equivalent of closing three out of four inner-city schools, Children of the Earth, Argyle and Gordon Bell—the total population. This would be quite a legacy for a government which claims that education is the key to the future of Manitoba.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey): Could she explain to us again the rationale, the reason, for this policy?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, this program was one that was unique to the province of Manitoba that other provinces felt that they could not offer. We looked at the very difficult budget decisions that we had to make and this was one of them.

I know the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has frequently said that governments have to make

tough decisions. This was a decision we made. It was a program that does not exist elsewhere in Canada, and there are other alternatives for those students that we have articulated before.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, last time I asked that question it was the difficult choices answer. Today it was the race for the bottom answer.

Student Social Allowances Program Student Employment Prospects

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could I ask the Minister of Education to tell us about the fate of these students. What are their realistic prospects of finding the part-time jobs that now are in fact their only hope for any change in their lives?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again, students—and I believe the member may be referring to summer job prospects. I am not sure if she is also referring to prospects through the year, but we do have in place programs that this government is supporting to assist students to help find their summer employment. It will be assistance to help students find summer employment that may be related to future careers, or also employment within government. If the member has an additional question, then I will hear from her.

* (1410)

Decentralization Office Space Availability—Arborg

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, this government announced in 1989 what they called a decentralization program, that they would provide economic benefits to rural and northern areas. What we have had are jobs leaving communities, such as Arborg and Ashern, with government offices sitting in Arborg empty, waiting for these decentralized jobs.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): Why is the government building in Arborg sitting one-third empty while money is being spent by this government on leasing and renovating office space in Gimli for these government jobs?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member I appreciate is referring to essentially staff in the Department of Natural Resources. Gimli was recently selected as the headquarters for the region, with the Director, Mr. Worth Hayden, residing in that facility. Certainly the member, who has on many

occasions drawn to the fact that my department has undergone some downsizing—that is the simple reason. Some of those offices that were previously filled are now no longer needed.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to the Natural Resources; I am referring to the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) employees that are being—

An Honourable Member: Then ask the Minister of Housing, okay?

Mr. Cliff Evans: I asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon). The Premier should be aware of what is going on. I will ask the Minister of Housing.

Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I think that if the members opposite want to incur and engage daily in political gamesmanship, this is not the way to go. If they have a question of a minister of a department, they know what department it refers to. Do not refer it to the Premier. Do not refer to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey). Refer it to the person you want the information from. This is straight political gamesmanship. It is an abuse of this House and the members opposite are getting what they deserve.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am quite frankly amazed. Our rules are very clear in this House. Members can ask questions to whomever they wish. It is up to the government to decide. If the Premier does not want to answer questions, I am sorry, but he is going to have to find that increasingly Manitobans are asking him to be responsible for the action of his government. He cannot hide from that. It is about time he answered some of those questions.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable First Minister, I would like to quote from Beauchesne's 418: "Hon. members may not realize it but questions are actually put to the Government. The Government decides who will answer."

Decentralization Office Space Availability—Arborg

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): The question then is directed to the Minister of Housing, Mr. Speaker.

On what rationale did this Minister of Housing decide that his department should locate in Gimli, when there is office space, provincial government space, available in Arborg—a more central location for his department?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): The fact remains that Gimli is the most central location for this region for the Manitoba Housing Authority. In fact, the bulk of the units contained in that region are contained in the town of Gimli and the R.M. of Gimli adjacent.

No-Fault Auto Insurance Additional Costs

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, this government does have a track record of doing things somewhat prematurely, and not knowing in terms of what the consequences are going to be, by implementing a policy.

I do have a concern with respect to the no-fault insurance, and it is to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). I would like to ask the Minister of Health, because in the province of Quebec there has been an additional cost on the Department of Health. My question to the Minister of Health, assuming, of course, that he has consulted and participated in the decision making, is: What cost is the Department of Health going to incur as a direct result of no-fault insurance?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member knows that MPIC pays the cost of at-fault drivers' health care today. There is no reason for us to drive additional health care costs into the health care system.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, my belief is that this will reduce the reliance on the public health system. Obviously, as today, public health is the first—if you are in an accident and taken by ambulance, you automatically have access to the health system. But all rehabilitation, all additional health care costs that you would have to go to your pocket for are completely covered without cap. The impact of that is that the recipient of coverage will in fact be much better covered in many respects.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in the province of Quebec, there is an additional cost on the taxpayers with the Department of Family Services. To the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer): Does he have any idea of additional costs to the

department as a direct result of the no-fault, that there is going to be an addition—

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

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the implication of the member is really without foundation, because when he considers that all of the costs would fall to the public health care system and the social services system today will be picked up without cap by the automobile injury recovery plan that we have here today. When he considers that all of those expenses will be carried, then he has to acknowledge that this may in fact reduce the costs to those services.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister responsible then assure this House that there is not going to be any additional costs to the Department of Health, to the department of social services, as a direct result? Can he give us that assurance?

Mr. Cummings: As opposed to what happened when the Liberal administration in Ontario decided to remove certain costs to the insurance industry and try and pass it off as a no-fault system, this system is complete. It does take care of those who are dramatically injured without cap.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge him to prove otherwise.

Antiracism Strategy Government Mediation

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, this is further to my question on Monday to the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism and refers specifically to the recent incident of alleged racism at a Winnipeg SuperValu store.

As the minister will know, that incident is causing a great deal of anxiety among the community and is of concern to us. It is the kind of issue that can best be resolved, I am sure we would all agree, by all those involved sitting down and talking it out and finding a resolution.

I am not asking for any specific action from the minister other than her help in facilitating such a meeting. Since the union has agreed to participate and the Filipino community wants such a meeting but we have not heard from Westfair, would she contact Westfair Foods and make the suggestion that such a meeting be initiated or that the company itself participate in such a meeting?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, the whole focus of this government, with the introduction of our multiculturalism policy and our Multiculturalism Act, was in fact to focus on the benefit of all new, recent and previous immigrants to the province of Manitoba to look at how we can attempt to accomplish a greater economic focus and a greater focus on, multiculturalism means business. I think that is the whole thrust of our act.

Not only does that talk about new immigration and what previous ways immigration have contributed to our economy and to our community, but it does focus, too, on those well-established businesses and their ability to try to accept and understand all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the incident that did take place has certainly, in my conversations with members of the Filipino community and other communities, caused a major uproar. I think they are taking the right approach in trying to determine and get to the bottom of the situation and the facts. I commend the community on the responsibility and the actions that they are taking.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.
* (1420)

Nonpolitical Statements

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mrs. Render: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this opportunity to mention that May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. I think all the MLAs have received an invitation from the Coalition of Manitoba Motorcycle Groups.

I would like to remind all my colleagues about the MLA's Ride for Safety, which is happening tonight at six o'clock at the legislative steps.

* * *

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, might I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, last night was the 17th Annual YM/YWCA Women of Distinction

Awards. These awards have come to symbolize not simply the giving of individual awards to deserving women, but also the recognition of the contribution of Winnipeg women to the life of our community.

There were 33 women honoured last night, women from the arts, women from business, women from the voluntary sector, immigrant women, aboriginal women, individuals who were representative of the important roles that women play in virtually every aspect of our business, professional and voluntary sectors.

As the awards were announced last night, there was not a sense of winners and losers, nor a sense that someone else should have won. There was a sense of pride in the room, a sense that these women have been our leaders, our role models and our builders. Virtually every winner acknowledged the help that she had received in her chosen field, how important the people were who had supported her and the importance of the women who had gone on before.

It was a special evening, and I would like to pay tribute to all of those who were nominated. The five winners of the awards were: Winnifred Sim was recognized for her many contributions in the field of music and the cultural life of Winnipeg. Many will remember her for the impressive work she has done with the choral groups in this province.

Mary Wilson was distinguished because of her work in the health care field, her work within government and her work with the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses.

Sandi Funk is one of the aboriginal women who has taken a very real leadership role in the past several years. Her work with original women's network, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata and with the media in making the issues of aboriginal women better known, was acknowledged last night.

Dr. Stella Hryniuk, through her academic and community work, has shattered the myths and stereotypes surrounding the Ukrainian immigrants in Canada. She is an outstanding example of the rich multicultural heritage in Manitoba.

Mona Brown has become a nationally known figure as a spokesperson in the issues surrounding women and the law. She is one of Canada's leading experts in the area of gender bias in the courts. Her award attests to the importance of these issues for us all.

Manitoba must be proud of these women as examples of the talents and skills that women contribute to our province. They are truly women who make it happen and represent only a few of Manitoba's women of distinction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, yes, I would like to rise on behalf of our caucus and also congratulate, not only the five winners of the 17th Annual YWCA Women of Distinction Award; Mary Wilson, Sandi Funk, Stella Hryniuk, Mona Brown and Winnifred Sim as the minister has outlined their accomplishments, but also the other women who were nominated last night. It was truly an energizing event to attend. As a woman, I think sometimes we forget or are not aware of the incredible range and richness of the backgrounds and the strengths that women in Manitoba bring to absolutely every field of endeavour in this province.

One thing I was also very interested in, Mr. Speaker, is the age range of the women who were not only nominated, but were selected last night. Generations were represented last night, women who had provided service to this province and this country for, in some cases, 60 years, as well as women who are beginning their contributions to the province of Manitoba.

On behalf of our caucus, I would like to congratulate the winners and the nominees and to say that Manitoba is richer for their contributions, and they will enable women to follow on in their footsteps. Thank you.

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

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my caucus, I would like to join with my colleagues and other members of the Legislature in recognizing the YW Women of Distinction Awards. Certainly, the dinner and ceremonies that were held last evening were very indicative of the fact that women's roles have certainly changed in our society and certainly, particularly, in Manitoba.

As one read through the very brief resumes that were presented of the 33 women who were nominated, it was very, very obvious of the outstanding contributions that these women have

made in Manitoba, whether it was through arts, music and culture, whether it was through contributions to public health and community services, whether it was as a community activist or whether it was through women and the law, it was certainly very obvious of the outstanding contributions.

I thought it was very interesting that the organizers of the event last night chose to invite young women from the various high schools throughout Winnipeg and gave those young women an opportunity to be at the event and to see first-hand some of the accomplishments and achievements of the women. I think that was an excellent idea, and I hope they continue to do that.

Again, I would certainly like to congratulate not only the five individuals who were given awards for outstanding contributions but, as well, the other women who were nominated and particularly the women who, in fact, were not on the list, but who are out there working in the communities who certainly contribute to our society, perhaps the unsung heroes, whether they are working in the community today or whether they are women who are no longer with us, but over the past decades and over the course of the 20th Century have certainly contributed to the fabric and life of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to putting the question to the House, I would like to advise the House at this time that the House had agreed, on a prior occasion, to allow the chief critics to move down to the benches of the Leaders of the opposition parties.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: No, leave is not granted. The House had already decided that. I am just putting this forward for the information of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) who had asked that question.

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.

* (1430)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good afternoon. 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.(e)(1) on page 59 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to ask a number of questions sort of following up on the initial question raised by my colleague from River Heights regarding the Flin Flon Crisis Centre. I read again the minister's response to that question, which I have to say, unfortunately, was and is as evasive as the minister's response to questions that I raised in the House, questions that staff from the Flin Flon Crisis Centre and the chairman of the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre board raised in the minister's office.

I think it is clear to everyone who has listened to the minister's responses that, to date, we have not heard a legitimate reason for the government's decision and the minister's decision to cut all provincial funding from the Flin Flon Crisis Centre. There has been no logical explanation, no rationale provided that stands the light of any kind of scrutiny, and that leads one, of course, to start to surmise about what other possible rationale there could be, whether it is one of vindictiveness on the part of someone in the department or the minister, whether it is simply a matter of political expediency, the minister and his colleagues perhaps around the cabinet table deciding that—who cares? It certainly, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, defies logic.

When I look at what the objectives of the Family Dispute Services branch are, one of the areas under Activity Identification talks about: "Provides grants and monitors and evaluates agencies' financial

operations and service delivery to ensure accountability." The Flin Flon Crisis Centre executive director and chairperson have asked repeatedly for an explanation of the government's decision. There has never been, to my knowledge, any objective response which would indicate that in some sense there were service delivery problems in Flin Flon.

The minister is well aware that, on March 4, 1992, the director of Family Dispute Services wrote to the chairperson of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre and suggested that the government was going to be undertaking an evaluation and assessment of the services of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre. The minister is equally well aware that that evaluation never occurred, at least not to the knowledge of the board or the staff of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre.

I am asking the minister today whether he can provide us with any evidence to support the contention that somehow a review of this situation, the Flin Flon Crisis Centre, has been conducted by staff, by the minister's staff or the staff in the department of Family Dispute Services.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): I am pleased to respond to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). I can assure the member that the government does not make decisions on the basis of some of the criteria that the member put forward.

The member also knows that the government of Manitoba is facing very difficult financial decisions and has made some of these decisions, not unlike decisions made in other provinces, decisions that are made to contain a deficit and a debt that is growing dramatically.

The member is aware that in the province of British Columbia a major downtown Vancouver hospital has been closed. In Saskatchewan, 52 rural hospitals are being closed. In the province of Ontario, the Premier has announced the laying off of 4,500 hydro employees and some 20,000 provincial employees, and in the province of Newfoundland, the issue of the deficit and the debt is also being attacked by very, very difficult government decisions.

I indicated in my answer last day the tremendous response this government has had to this whole area of Family Dispute Services, and I have explained our decision in the past in a private

meeting with the board and with the member present. I have also responded to this in the House.

The member, of course, is always good with his use of terminology, and I have explained to him before that there was not a formal review of the shelter undertaken. I used the review in terms of internal discussions that we have made within the department to review the family dispute services that are offered in Manitoba. As a result, we looked at the services offered in the Norman Region and felt that that was an area that we could make some changes.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, unfortunately, the minister delivers the same recorded announcement that he has given since the day this decision was made. I guess that people in Flin Flon and the people who have supported and who built the crisis centre were looking for something a little more objective.

The rationale the minister has offered is that the government had tough decisions to make, tough choices, has tough choices. Of course, the government does have tough choices to make. This particular choice is not the result of a tough choice; it is a stupid choice.

The fact of the matter is the government had the option even within Family Dispute Services of reducing all areas within the department by 1 or 2 or 3 percent, and maintaining the services in Flin Flon. The logic of closing the Flin Flon Crisis Centre as the only crisis centre that had 100 percent of its funding withdrawn is simply not acceptable.

Flin Flon is a community in crisis. There is approximately 20 percent unemployment in Flin Flon and the surrounding region. There is the prospect of as many as one-quarter, 20 percent, 25 percent of the workforce of HBM&S losing their jobs in the next 18 months. There is tremendous uncertainty, and there had been an increase in bed nights at the crisis centre.

There are, if you want to use the argument of regionalization, other centres which could have been regionalized on a much more rational basis that are closer to other services, closer to other crisis centres. So it does not make sense.

I realize that the minister does not have to be responsible. The minister does not have to give us a reasonable explanation or a legitimate one. He does not have to be honest about the motivation for

the government's decision to do it, but I want the record to reflect that.

Anyone who had read the minister's responses since this decision came down would have to agree that the minister has been evading any realistic response to the question of why the Flin Flon Crisis Centre.

The argument that the government has tough choices to make simply does not hold any water, not within the context of the spending in his own department, and certainly not within the context of spending on a government-wide basis. It simply does not hold water.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I was hoping that the minister would have some additional explanation, perhaps some additional information at his disposal that he could share about this decision. Obviously, he does not, or he is not willing to share it with us, which can only lead one to believe that the motives that I spoke about earlier are, in all probability, the motives that precipitated this closure.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have a couple of other specific questions that I would like the minister to answer. Right now the Flin Flon Crisis Centre board is reviewing its options, including its obligations in terms of existing financial resources that it has at its disposal and the possibility of continuing to operate, and I would like the minister to answer the question with respect to those reserves. Does the Flin Flon Crisis Centre maintain control and authority over the reserves at its disposal as a private, nonprofit incorporated entity?

* (1440)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know that the member does not accept the fact that government has to make these decisions and would like me to give different answers every time he asks the question, but we have consistently indicated that this was a difficult decision.

We looked at the fact that the Northern Women's Resource Centre, which has its headquarters in Flin Flon and a satellite office in The Pas, is providing services there. It provides counselling, outreach, and information referral services, including services to women who have been abused. The shelter in The Pas operates a 150-mile radius, toll-free crisis line which is accessible to women from Flin Flon, and we do have a toll-free provincial line. We also have indicated that the RCMP will assist women

who need an escort to access services in the region, and that transportation costs are, in fact, covered.

The answer to the latter question is that we have indicated to the board that we would like to work with them at the present time. My understanding is that an audit is still in process, and a meeting that was scheduled has been rescheduled because that audit has not been completed as yet. We think that, if there is some funding that is left at this particular time, there are some options that we are prepared to discuss with the board.

On the question of the surplus funds, our legal advice is that the funds remain within the purview of the community and the board.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, a subsequent question in the same vein. The Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre, unlike many other shelters, owns its own facility. Is it within the purview of the board to sell that facility, to lease back that facility and to continue to operate with any surplus funds that they may gain from the sale?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Community groups throughout this province offer a variety of services that are not under the auspices of government. I think in many areas we have seen that community groups have a role to play, and if there are community groups within that particular community that want to pursue that, they are free to do so.

Mr. Storle: I want to thank the minister for those answers. Just a comment, I guess, the minister suggests that somehow I will not accept the fact that governments have difficult choices to make. Of course, that is not the case at all. In fact, when I did make—the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre group that met with the minister made a suggestion, the minister seemed very reluctant to accept an alternative.

The minister had many, many choices that he could have made that would have maintained the service at Flin Flon over these difficult times, and he chose not to do that. In a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars, it is difficult to believe that the minister is not intelligent enough to find a way to maintain the services in Flin Flon if it would have been the minister's desire to do that.

The argument that somehow the Northern Women's Resource Centre, which provides no family or crisis counselling whatsoever, could provide some sort of an assistance in this matter is simply not acceptable. The fact is that the Flin

Flin--Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I met approximately three weeks ago with the director of the Northern Women's Resource Services group and her staff, and they indicate they are in no way an alternative to a crisis centre.

The minister should not attempt to construe that as an alternative to the services that were being provided. It would be an extreme misrepresentation of the facts if the minister suggested that.

The fact of the matter is that there are crisis centres in Winnipeg, in the surrounding areas, which could have been regionalized and left women and families in crises a lot closer to services with a lot more alternative services than the decision that has been made. The minister has made a mistake, a colossal mistake that is going to cost people in Flin Flon and surrounding area sooner or later, because they simply will not have access to the services they are going to need.

This government has also provided grant money to gun clubs. This government has provided grants to gun clubs, I think approximately \$45,000 this year to a number of gun clubs. In terms of priorities, it seems to me that a crisis centre has to maintain something of a higher priority on the government's list of priorities. This government has made all kinds of choices, and the idea that somehow we are going to leave families and women vulnerable in Flin Flon and Creighton and Cranberry Portage and Sherridon and Pukatawagan simply, I think, reflects contempt for that community and the people in that area, rather than a question of the government having to make difficult decisions.

It is obvious by the minister's demeanour here and his demeanour in the meetings that we had that he has no intention of correcting his ill-advised and ill-timed and ill-considered decision. That is, indeed, unfortunate. I only hope that there is not a tragedy that is a direct result of the fact that that service is not longer available.

The minister may know that there was an incident in Flin Flon last night. That is tragic. I simply hope for the minister's sake that someone was not looking for help at the crisis centre at the time. I am not suggesting that was the case. I am simply saying I hope that is not the case. I know the minister is not familiar with Flin Flon or the region and perhaps is not sensitive to the crisis that people feel, the uncertainty people feel, but I can tell him that this service could not have been removed at a

more inopportune time. I certainly hope that events do not, I guess, create a situation where the minister will ultimately regret his decision, as many people already do in the Flin Flon area and as I do.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister and his department in their Estimate process, I think, quite deliberately removed funding and support to those groups in our society that need it most and, in many cases, have the least power to oppose and to have their voices heard. I am thinking here as well of the friendship centres in Flin Flon and in Lynn Lake. I think what is most disconcerting is the apparent lack of concern the government has, and this minister has, for communities in northern Manitoba that are suffering as a result of the general economic downturn, as a result of government indifference--some would say, as a result of difficulties in the primary industry sector of our economy.

Communities like Lynn Lake have no other services. The friendship centre was one of the only family service agencies in the community. There are itinerant services provided out of Thompson in some cases. There are two Family Services staff in Lynn Lake, but they are overwhelmed. I have spoken to them about their caseloads. The decisions that the minister has made, including the crisis centre in Flin Flon, simply defy logic. They attack the people who most need the services and the communities that most need the services. It is quite obvious that the minister either is unaware or simply does not care of the havoc and the despair that his decisions have created and are going to create over the coming months and years.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, with that in mind, I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that this committee condemns the government for its decision to arbitrarily close the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre and urges the government to reconsider this ill-timed, ill-considered and damaging decision.

* (1450)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I am going to take this matter under advisement for just a little bit. I want to do some research, and I will get back to the committee on it.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member for Flin Flon and his colleagues recognize and have said frequently that governments do, in fact, have tough decisions to make, and that the

member is indicating that if we made decisions in other departments, we would have more funding in the Department of Family Services.

The fact of the matter is, Family Services has accessed additional funding each and every year, far beyond what other departments have been receiving. I have asked the member and his colleagues to bring back some recommendations and ideas whereby this department can find additional resources within it, to take care of other priorities. The only suggestion that has come back so far is to get rid of 11 civil servants and replace them with volunteers, and that is not the type of decision that we would like to make.

Point of Order

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Minister of Family Services is misquoting me. I did not say that we should get rid of 11 civil servants; I was talking about volunteers in the community assisting the staff.

Mr. Gilleshammer: On the same point of order, he brought it forward as a budget reduction within this department, and now he says—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable members do not have a point of order. The honourable minister continue his reply.

* * *

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, thank you. The challenge continues then, that I would ask members to bring forward some responsible options that are within the realm of possibility.

We have seen dramatic increases in the expenses in this department and, as the member knows, those revenues have not kept pace with them. Every government in this land is making decisions to deal with the deficit and the debt, and I can appreciate that members in opposition do have some disagreement with decisions that are being made. But you must recognize that governments must make tough decisions, as they are in other jurisdictions.

I would point out to the member that at no time did I say that the Northern Women's Resource Service was a replacement for the shelter. I said that was simply one of the services and a continuum of services offered within the region. So, again, I recognize that the member does not accept the fact that governments have to make these decisions. I will certainly have an opportunity to peruse his

comments, and we have made a commitment to work with the existing board to examine some possibilities.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): I have a number of questions in the same area. I, too, have great difficulty in understanding why the minister would cut a crisis centre.

An Honourable Member: Excuse me, is the motion in order? Are we debating—

Mrs. Carstairs: He is taking it under advisement.

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

The reality is that, as the minister indicated, this government has indeed put a great deal more money into the whole issue of Family Dispute Services. The government has put that money into Family Dispute Services because more and more women now have the courage to come forward and to go into shelters, to take their spouses or their partners to court, to protect their children as they never had before. I think the minister will recognize that is the reason why this department and this particular section of this department has grown so rapidly.

What the government has chosen to do here, however, was to say that one particular section of the province that had been served by a shelter in the past, would no longer be served by a shelter. I would ask the minister if he can tell me exactly how long it takes to go from the community of Flin Flon to the community of The Pas.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I am given to understand that it takes about an hour to an hour and a half.

Mrs. Carstairs: I would suggest that if you are going less than an hour and a half, you are in violation of speed limits.

I wonder why the minister would think that he thinks that a woman who has just been beaten by her partner, who has children who are hysterical, can put those children in an automobile and drive to The Pas. Does he not think that many women in this community will now choose not to avail themselves of the support they previously had, because of additional trauma that has been placed on them because of the inability of them to get quickly to a shelter?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would point out that not every community in our province has a shelter facility.

What I have said, in reference to this decision, that we are looking at the regional service that is provided in that area. In fact, we do have a shelter operating at The Pas. We have other services that are available within the region.

I recognize that the member has indicated that government has put tremendous additional resources into this area of our budget, as I indicated the last day, a 262 percent increase over the last five budgets, a tremendous commitment to the fact that services were woefully inadequate here in 1988.

I know that the late colleague of mine, Gerrie Hammond, brought forward many, many new ideas that have been accepted by government, either within this department, within the Justice department to make a dramatic difference in the services that are offered.

We looked at the services provided within that particular region of the province and felt that we had an array of services, a continuum of services that serviced that area. I know the member can bring forward specific scenarios. I do not, in any way, deny the tremendous trauma that must exist when one is in the middle of a family dispute. Having said that, we did, within the department, examine those services and made that decision accordingly.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me what consideration was given if the decision was made by the department—a decision with which I am in total disagreement, to close a shelter—if any consideration was given to closing an alternative shelter?

For example, the minister talks about the regionalization of services. Well, someone who lives in Selkirk can, quite frankly, get to Winnipeg an awful lot faster than they can get from Flin Flon to The Pas. Somebody even living in Portage can get to the city of Winnipeg, or indeed to the city of Brandon faster than a woman can get from Flin Flon to The Pas.

Was that taken into consideration in the decision making here? If they were really genuinely looking at regionalization of services, did they consider, for example, the geographic area and drive circles around it and say, okay, these are distances from one to the other and therefore this one gets targeted because this one has a share of services?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I can say to the member, that in working from last August through the fall and into the winter months on decision making surrounding budget, every aspect of our department was considered in terms of looking at reductions that we could make. Within this specific area, staff were involved in bringing forth recommendations as far as the number of services offered on a regional basis, and, as a result of those deliberations, a decision was made. We not only look at distance, we also look at volume and collateral services that are offered. In the city of Winnipeg, for instance, we have a tremendously high occupancy that makes it difficult to accommodate additional cases from other areas. But I can assure the member that there was a review done within the department of all aspects of programming prior to these decisions being made.

* (1500)

Mrs. Carstairs: In the payments to External Agencies listed for 1993-94, can the minister tell me why there is such a differential between what they were paid in '92-93 and what they will be paid in '93-94?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Are you referring to a specific—

Mrs. Carstairs: I am talking about all the shelters. If you look for the grants for '92-93, which were distributed last year, the Ikwe, for example, shows \$107,300. It now shows \$319,600. I had assumed originally that that had to do with the change of funding, but at the bottom there is a note that says it reflects grants only and does not reflect the per diems. So can the minister tell me why there is such a discrepancy?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There was a 2 percent adjustment on the grants listing, but the shelters also access per diem funding. We are flowing funds to them in two different ways—unless I am not sure what the question is that the member is asking.

Mrs. Carstairs: Last year when I received the document, Department of Family Services Payments to External Agencies, it lists the shelters. I am quite prepared to show this to staff if they want. Flin Flon was listed at \$90,200, Ikwe at \$107,300, Parkland at \$86,000, et cetera, and, at the bottom of that, it said they reflect grants only and do not include per diems. All of these amounts are dramatically larger this time, and I am only assuming that perhaps the note at the bottom should not be there or else there has been a mistake.

Mr. Gilleshammer: That reflects the new funding model that was introduced which reflected the fact that grants were changed upward and per diems were lowered.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it might have been easier if, in fact, there had been a note on the form which said that had happened. So, in reality, what is the differentiation that is now being received from the shelter vis à vis last year to this year, because it was impossible for me to do that comparison?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I will just get some further information on that, but what was happening with the old funding model is that some of the shelters were rapidly accumulating surpluses while other shelters were feeling that they did not have enough funding. So there has been an adjustment in the funding model so that there is a more even distribution of the funds based on the volume that they have.

There were changes that we will have to calculate the percentages for, but there was a shift from money for Housing into Family Services so that those grants went up. We also added some funding for children's programming in last year's budget. So there is a difference in the way we budgeted and flowed funds to the shelters.

Mrs. Carstairs: In simple terms then, are the shelters receiving more money in 1992-93 than they received—excuse me, in '93-94 than they received in '92-93, or less, and by what approximate percentage?

Mr. Gilleshammer: They are receiving more money, and there has been a transfer of some funds from Housing to reflect that.

Mrs. Carstairs: If they are receiving more funds, was any thought given to perhaps giving them the same amount of funding and using the remainder, if you will, to be used to maintain the operation in Flin Flon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The reason we made the shift was because there was seemingly an uneven distribution of the funding available whereby, as I have indicated, certain shelters were accumulating surpluses; others were running deficits. So we have reshaped the manner in which those funds flow.

The idea was to stabilize all of those shelters. So some of them were in fact going to get less money, and some were going to get more. Then the other

factor that comes in, there is the volume, that the ones that have a higher volume, of course, are accessing more per diems.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I am just going to bring the ruling forward on the motion.

It has been moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), seconded by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that the committee condemns the government for its decision to arbitrarily close the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre and urges the government to reconsider the ill-timed, ill-considered and damaging decision.

Having reviewed the motion moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon and seconded by the honourable member for Burrows, I note that the government is being asked to reconsider; that is, to consider again or to re-examine its decision. Therefore, I am ruling that this would not involve expenditure, and I am ruling that the motion is in order.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, before other members of the committee who may wish to address the motion and ultimately vote on it, now that you have ruled it in order—I would like to indicate that the government side finds the ruling, the acceptance of the motion, troublesome.

Motions of condemnation by a committee are in order any time. I have no difficulty with that, but to reconsider, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have laid before the people of this province a budget and Estimates, Estimates which very definitely make up the total expenditure in program area of \$4.9 billion. Reconsideration of one element of that can lead, theoretically, to the reconsideration of every item. [interjection]

Yes, it can. Obviously, you could have a motion—if this motion is acceptable, opposition can call for the same motion on every line of the Estimates, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. [interjection] Well, I am speaking to the motion.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I would just like to ask the member if he is challenging the ruling of the Chair or if he is speaking to the motion. If he could clarify that for me, then carry on.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is not for government to challenge it. I am, though, speaking to the motion, but I must say, in speaking to the motion, that I also want to address the fact that never

in my history of being here has ever a motion been allowed to build back into the Estimates and a debate on that motion.

* (1510)

Point of Order

Mr. Storle: On a point of order. I respect that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is attempting to defend, in one way or another, a decision which is indefensible. The fact of the matter is, I think, that the decision is an important one, and it recognizes that this minister had choices. This minister still does have choices, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. What we want this minister—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Flin Flon does not have a point of order.

Mr. Storle: I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Flin Flon is challenging my ruling on what?

Mr. Storle: Point of order. It was not a point of order, you said. It was a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour of the Chair's ruling, that it was not a point of order, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I request a formal vote.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I need two members to request a formal vote.

Mr. Martindale: I request a formal vote.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: It has been moved by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storle), seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that a formal vote be taken.

Mr. Manness: So we are voting on a point of order?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We are voting on a point of order.

A formal vote has been requested on the ruling of my point of order. I will be reporting to the House.

* * *

The committee took recess at 3:12 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 3:44 p.m.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The motion of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storle) is before the committee at this time. The honourable Minister of Finance was debating it.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think it is a motion that, under other circumstances, I would challenge. I will not today. I certainly would another time.

The motion calls upon the government to reinstitute funding after the condemnation. Of course, members in opposition always have the right to condemn. Beyond that, I would say I would love to support motions like that. I would love to have all the money that those of us on Treasury Board, therefore, would not have to go through the agonizing decisions that we did. We had to go through agonizing decisions. This one was not taken lightly. It was a most difficult decision. There was rationale behind it. The minister has provided that rationale. It was a most difficult decision to make.

The motion of the member asks the government to reconsider. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the difficulty with that, if the government reconsiders then it has to find the money from somewhere else and members on the opposition would say, well, that is part of prioritizing, that is part of governing, just go somewhere else to find it. If we go to somewhere else to find it, then when that line comes up, whomever is the opposition critic of the day can bring forward the same motion and say find it somewhere else. Ultimately, whoever's department is last, would be the last department that then would be the collector of all the decisions of government reconsidering.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, with those very few remarks, I do not want to in any way take away from the seriousness of the situation. I have listened not as carefully as I should, but certainly have listened to the representations made by the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) and also the member for Flin Flon. We hear the agony behind, at least I hear the agony behind the calls and I know the minister does also. The reality is that difficult, very tough decisions have to be made from time to time and have to, not only in this province but throughout the land.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in terms of the point of order, the Minister of Finance suggested that he, under other circumstances, would have challenged the ruling. His remarks clearly were a challenge to the ruling, and I think the ruling is a correct one because it does not ask the government to spend additional dollars. It simply asks the government to reconsider as I have asked the minister on previous occasions to reconsider this decision. The Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre staff and chairperson of the board met with the minister and gave him, in fact, alternatives which would have seen the continued operation of the shelter.

It has been pointed out that additional monies were provided to other crisis centres this year. Certainly in terms of precedent, many other groups had their grant amounts cut on a universal basis in a way that affected all agencies on an equal footing. If the minister had chosen that avenue, the people in Flin Flon would have maintained their service. I get more intrigued by this all the time.

It is now apparent that the decision was not made at a staff level. If you listen to the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) remarks, the decision was made around the cabinet table, and that concerns me even more.

Mr. Manness: No, that is not true.

* (1550)

Mr. Storle: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Minister of Finance will read his remarks. He said, we made tough decisions. I take that to include the Minister of Finance and his cabinet colleagues around the table.

The Minister of Finance also said in his remarks that the minister had provided a rationale. I invite you to read the minister's remarks on this issue. From the time it was first read, you will find there has been no rationale. There is no rationale that would explain the singling out of the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre as the only crisis centre in the province that had its funding cut 100 percent. There is no rationale. There has been no rationale provided in terms of the service, no rationale provided in terms of need, no rationale in terms of the expected need of the crisis centre in the community of Flin Flon.

The Minister of Finance should know that the community of Flin Flon and the surrounding areas are suffering at this moment. They live with uncertainty on a daily basis. The need for the crisis

centre continues to increase and has been increasing over the last year. Those facts are known.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to believe the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) when they suggest that somehow they are concerned and they hear the pleas for help and assistance from the community. But when you consider that this is the only crisis centre that is affected, when you consider the scope of the Department of Family Services' budget, the scope of the governmental budget, it is difficult to understand why this cut had to occur.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, obviously I know the government has received literally hundreds of letters from people across the region, from other parts of the province, but certainly from people in Flin Flon and the area, about the cuts and their impact. I want to read one particularly poignant letter that came from Mrs. Moira Davis, President of St. Andrews Presbyterian Women's Group in Flin Flon. She wrote this letter to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

She says on the second page of her letter: The Flin Flon Crisis Centre is a vital service to our area. We know that people are not likely to talk to their minister or their church elder about personal problems. There is a certain amount of embarrassment and stigma attached to admitting that you or your family are having problems. This is especially true when you are discussing these matters with someone whom you see each Sunday at church. We also know that times needed to talk to someone do not often occur between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. These people need to talk to someone who is trained, who is anonymous, who is available any time, day or night. The crisis centre is needed here now more than ever before. In an isolated community such as ours, there are no alternative services available.

In parentheses I might add that the government continues to suggest that somehow there are other services available. There are not other services available. The closest comparable services for Flin Flon for the Manitoba catchment area of residents is 140 kilometres away. The closest area for service for the people on the Creighton side, the Saskatchewan side of the border, is more like four hours away, more like 400 kilometres.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this person goes on to say: How can the Manitoba government expect that the crisis centre in The Pas will be able to deal effectively with people from Flin Flon? If someone is in an abusive situation, how can the government expect them to pay for a long-distance call to The Pas? Many families who have used our crisis centre do not even have a vehicle. How can they be expected to get themselves to The Pas if they need shelter in the middle of the night? The residents of The Pas are not facing the same situation as those people in Flin Flon. The Manitoba government cannot expect people to travel 85 miles or pay a long-distance phone call to get help in a desperate situation.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this letter is typical of letters that I have received and the government has received from the chamber of commerce, from every service club. I have a letter from the Rotary Club of Flin Flon, from individuals throughout the community who are involved in community service. It is not without irony that the Department of Family Services itself and its staff refer people to the crisis centre.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this is an unfortunate and hopefully not a tragic one, but an unfortunate circumstance for women, for children, for the victims of abuse and for the victims of family violence in the communities that were serviced by the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre. I would not have required and our caucus would not have required a motion in committee condemning the government had there been the semblance of an answer to the question, why the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one would have thought that given the length of time that the government has to prepare its Estimates, the months and months that it has to prepare these Estimates, that if there were objective, rational reasons why Flin Flon was chosen over the other crisis centres as a target for closure, why alternative ways of financing all of the centres could not be found is difficult to understand.

The bottom line is that people in Flin Flon grow more cynical by the hour about the government's intentions, certainly when it comes to the crisis centre, but not only the decision with respect to the crisis centre, but also the friendship centres and other cutbacks that tend to hit in an unfair way the people who live in our region and who are most

distant from alternative services or other services the government has to offer.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this motion to condemn the government and ask them to reconsider their decision is a serious one. We still believe, I certainly believe, that the government has alternatives, that if they wished to find alternatives to maintain the services in Flin Flon that could happen.

* (1600)

Having said that, if the government, the staff and the Family Dispute Services branch of the department were genuinely interested in providing service to families and victims of violence, to women who are being abused, instead of insisting that the crisis centre close down when it has some financial reserve and some capacity to continue to raise funds through the charging of per diems—and the minister identified earlier the fact that the core grant had been increased to shelters and that the per diems had been decreased—the fact of the matter is in Flin Flon's circumstance they received some significant support from the Saskatchewan government which pays per diems approximately twice as high as is provided by the government of Manitoba.

My question is, why is the department not interested in working with the board to maintain services there? Why are they not working, encouraging the shelter to remain open? Why did they threaten, in effect, the shelter and attempt, certainly in their eyes, to intimidate them into closing their doors when they had some resources they believed at their disposal? Will the government now change its position and allow the staff in Family Dispute Services to encourage the centre to stay open?

This is a more specific question to the minister. Will the government continue to pay per diems should the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre reopen? If women in crisis, families in crisis, show up at the crisis centre door, will per diems still be paid by the Department of Family Services?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I refused to participate in the previous vote because I thought it was silly, and one of the privileges of deciding you are going to leave this business is to not put up with silliness.

But I will vote on this one, and I will vote, quite frankly, with the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), because I think that it is beyond understanding why a government would choose to close down a crisis centre.

I recognize that tough decisions had to be made, but there are monies that can be found in a variety of other areas, not necessarily in this department but in other departments. I indicated some of those areas in my reply to the budget. I simply cannot understand why a government would choose to close down a crisis centre which offers support and hope to women who have been battered by their spouses in a society that still tolerates such behaviour.

We have a Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) who talks about zero tolerance. We have a Minister of Justice who proclaims loud and clear that this is what he wants in this province. This policy of closing down a shelter, in my opinion, is the direct opposite of what that policy is all about, so I have to support this motion to urge the government to find dollars wherever they can find those dollars to keep this centre open.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the annual report of the Minister of Family Services for 1991-92, there is a description of the objectives of the Family Dispute Services branch. They are: "to ensure that protection services are available to support families who are caught in the cycle of violence; to offer support services to women; and to plan and develop a continuum of services across the province which would better address the needs of battered women, their children, and those who batter".

For better or worse, we have a very large province. That means that some services are expensive to deliver because of a low density of population outside the city of Winnipeg, but in spite of that, this objective says, to provide services across the province.

One of those programs is the Wife Abuse Program. It says: "The purpose of the Wife Abuse Program is to support the development and maintenance of services to aid women who are victims of violence, through the provision of funding and consultation to community-based agencies which offer crisis and support services. The branch also develops and monitors program policies, and

is engaged in the development of service standards for shelters."

I would point out in this paragraph the expression "community-based agencies." It seems to me that a shelter in Flin Flon and Creighton is a community-based agency because it is in their community and it is the largest community in that area, serving a number of smaller communities.

The next closest community of any size that has a shelter is 140 kilometres away, The Pas, Manitoba. I would say that is not a community-based delivery of a program if people have to go 140 kilometres to find assistance and shelter in another community.

Continuing over the page, it says: "The funding to community-based wife abuse services is provided by grants"

It repeats the statement that it is to be a community-based service. So I think if the minister is to be consistent, maybe he would change it and say a regionally based service, at least for northern Manitoba, maybe not for Winnipeg and not for the Parkland, maybe not for the prairies, but for the North, it is not community-based if there is no centre in Flin Flon. It has become a regionally based delivery of services.

I also have a very interesting clipping from the Opasquia Times, for Wednesday, April 14, 1993, in which there is a description of a vigil that they had in support of the crisis shelter in Flin Flon. The vigil was put together by the Aurora House in The Pas and was a vigil mainly to express their concern for the closing of the Flin Flon shelter, and also to say how it would affect their shelter in The Pas since they would be the ones who would receive the women who formerly were provided shelter in Flin Flon.

The mayor addressed the gathering and asked the government to reconsider their decision to cut funding to the crisis centre, the same expression that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) used in his motion that we are now debating, that the decision be reconsidered.

Lawyer Lore Mirwaldt, who addressed the crowd, expressed anger about the government's decision to cut funding to the centres and said: It is a very black day for all victims of violence. She continued by saying: It is tragic that just last month, we marched in a vigil against violence, and the Justice minister (Mr. McCrae) promised to take all steps

necessary to protect victims of violence. We certainly hope that there is no lessening of protection to women who are victims of violence because of this decision. If some woman is a victim in Flin Flon and is not able to find transportation or get to The Pas, then we may have more victims and that would be tragic indeed, especially given all the public pronouncements and the participation and vigils that the Minister of Justice and other cabinet ministers and backbenchers of this government and opposition members have taken part in.

She went on to add that the safety of women and children should not be a matter of fiscal policy but rather a moral obligation.

I would hope that this minister and his colleagues would see it as a moral obligation and not just as an area in which to save money.

She concluded: It is my hope that next year, we are not standing here for our shelter.

So obviously, there is concern by board members, staff and supporters of shelters in other communities that they are not going to be next if there are more cutbacks next year.

The article continues by saying that the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre closed April 1, despite a request by the shelter for approval to remain open for another three months, using money from surplus funding which was carried over from last year's budget. Now, I do not know if that is accurate or not, but apparently there was a request that they continue for another three months.

So in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I certainly support the motion that I seconded for my colleague the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and I, too, would reiterate that this minister and this government should reconsider their decision.

We are not saying that they have to spend more money because that would be out of order, but the minister could reconsider and make his own decision about whether to spend the money or not. So I speak in favour of the motion.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, before we move to vote on the motion, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has assured us, and the minister has attempted to assure us, that there was a rationale for the decision to isolate the Flin Flon Crisis Centre and close it. I want some answers before committee decides to vote on this about what was the basis for that decision, other than we had tough choices to make. That goes without saying. I had

asked earlier whether in fact this was a cabinet decision as opposed to an Estimates decision. I would like the minister to answer the question: Did this issue, the closure of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre in isolation, go before cabinet?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member may not be aware, but this is the time of debate, not the time for questioning. So let us carry on with the normal business of the committee and vote on this, and then we can get to your questions after the motion has been defeated or carried.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister, of course, can comment in any way that he wishes. If he chooses to answer the questions in a straightforward and truthful manner, I think it would certainly help members of this committee who may want to vote on this issue. The issue, I think, needs to be dealt with in an objective way. Are there objective reasons why this decision was made other than the whimsy of the minister? Who made the decisions? Can the minister edify us with some comments, some contribution to this debate? I mean, we are debating a serious motion—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that, when we do get back to the Department of Family Services on line 5.(e)(1) Salaries, he will be able to ask the minister exactly those questions, but at this time we are debating the motion that the honourable member for Flin Flon brought forward. I would ask the committee if they are ready for the question.

All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The Nays have it. The motion is defeated.

We will now move on to 5.(e) Family Dispute Services (1) Salaries \$267,700.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we were promised answers after the vote. The vote has been taken. Can we have the answers?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have indicated a number of times that governments across this land are making difficult decisions. The member for Flin Flon acknowledges that other governments are faced with the same kind of difficult decisions in the 1990s,

and people like Premier Romanow and Premier Bob Rae are saying the same thing—

Point of Order

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Premier of Saskatchewan did not close the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre. This minister did. We are asking for an explanation from this minister.

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

* * *

Mr. Gillehammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) wants to interrupt me when I am giving an answer to him that he has been demanding.

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

I recognize that the reasons that I have given him that he does not find acceptable, but I can tell you that part of the very difficult decisions in government was decisions made within the Department of Family Services. I have indicated to the member that we looked at the services, the continuum of services provided on a regional basis in the Norman region, and, comparable to other regions, the Norman region has the service of a shelter, the women's resource centre, a toll-free crisis line. As Premier Romanow indicated in one of his speeches, it is a very, very difficult thing to take away services that were put in place during the '70s and '80s, but this is a reality that all governments are facing.

* (1610)

I know that in meeting with the board from the shelter in Flin Flon that there was disappointment and hurt, but I think they also understand the difficult position that this government is in in making decisions around budget. I have indicated to the member that we have reviewed the services that are provided through Family Services and made some very difficult decisions. If the member does not want to accept the decision, that is fine. He has had an opportunity to vote on the budget and speak on the budget.

The fact is that governments of all political stripes across this country are making these difficult decisions, and I do not take any particular glee in doing this. This was just a terribly difficult decision to make within government to look at any of the programs offered by Family Services, but the reality

is that we have programming and demands on this department in many different areas.

I have challenged his colleague the critic, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), to come up with other alternatives. He has come up with none and all we have heard for the last few days we have been in Estimates, the 20 or so hours that we have been here, is to spend more and more and more in all areas within this department, and we simply do not have the capacity to do that.

Mr. Storie: Well, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we have given the minister other alternatives. By we I mean the chairperson of the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre and the executive gave the minister alternatives when we met in his office. It would have been a simple across-the-board reduction to all crisis centres to allow this one to continue to operate.

The minister did not answer the more direct question, and it speaks to the question of whether this was a politically motivated attack on Flin Flon. The question was: Did this issue go before cabinet?

Mr. Gillehammer: Well, I have rejected the premise that the member has put forward before that this was a politically motivated decision. It certainly is not. We govern for all of Manitoba and are concerned with all of the people in Manitoba. We looked at the region and looked at the services that were provided there and made some very, very difficult decisions.

A lot of the decisions that we have made impact different areas of the province. In this budget, there has been a sense of fairness that the people have recognized across this province where there is less money for education, less money in the Department of Health and, certainly, some of the services provided in the Department of Family Services are receiving less money—very difficult decisions.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the minister did not answer the question. The question was: Was this decision discussed at cabinet?

Mr. Gillehammer: The member is aware that decisions are made in a process and the final budget is concurred with in caucus and cabinet. The Finance minister has told you that the answer to that was no, that he presents an entire budget and that is the decision that government makes.

Mr. Storie: Given the fact that the minister can offer no reasonable explanation, that any lay person, any person not connected with this issue would accept

as being rational and based on any kind of sensible decision-making process, one can only conclude that this was a political decision, a decision made to attack people who the minister and his colleagues may feel cannot defend themselves because of their isolation, because of their relative lack of population, because of the small numbers of people who may be affected.

I wish that the minister could convince me otherwise, but the answers that have been given to date simply do not justify any other conclusion being made.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I accept the member's position that he is not going to readily accept the government's decision, and I also accept that that is part of governing, that the government must make very difficult decisions on expenditures and revenues, and the role of the opposition is to criticize.

I have indicated to the member that I reject his premise that these were politically motivated. These are very difficult decisions, and decisions we have made within government impact many, many areas of the province, all areas of the province, many Manitobans. The tough decisions that are made within this department, within this government, are not dissimilar to decisions being made right across the country.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

We have talked before about the option of raising taxes, which a number of jurisdictions have done. Manitobans are overtaxed now, and the neighbouring provinces have hiked the sales tax. They are raising income tax. They are raising every tax they can find.

We are proud of the fact that we have maintained the same level of taxation now for six budgets. So the decisions on revenue are sound and well-accepted by the people of Manitoba. The decisions on expenditures are very difficult. I accept that the member is not happy. He has made his point. We have indicated our rationale for making this decision and that has not changed.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister keeps saying he has explained the government's decision. Can the minister explain why the government was prepared to request in many other cases, all school divisions for example, to take a small reduction overall and to continue to operate, why that would not have been an acceptable

compromise in respect to the crisis centres in the province? Why was one crisis centre singled out?

If the rationale that we can all share the pain is acceptable when you deal with school divisions and you deal with hospitals and you deal with other agencies of government, why was it not acceptable when you deal with crisis centres?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I indicated earlier that in the crisis centres in the province, we have recently gone to a new funding formula to sustain those centres. The member is indicating, and he indicated in a meeting we had in my office a number of weeks ago, that other crisis centres were prepared to give up a portion of their budget to Flin Flon. I know that he probably canvassed those centres.

The fact of the matter is, to maintain their viability, we have had to restructure the funding and now feel comfortable that we have a funding formula that benefits all of those centres, whether they are the small, medium, large or extra large. We have spent a lot of time on that funding formula to be sure that the appropriate funding is in place.

The fact of the matter is, in the Norman Region we looked at the continuum of services that were available in that region and felt that there was one shelter that could serve the region and, as a consequence, have made this decision.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister keeps saying that they evaluated the services that were available. Could the minister then enumerate which services he refers to?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I can. The Department of Family Services funds the Northern Women's Resource Centre which has its headquarters in Flin Flon and a satellite office in The Pas. This agency provides counselling, outreach and information referral services, including services to women who have been abused. The shelter at The Pas operates a 150-mile radius toll-free crisis line which is accessible to women from Flin Flon. We also have a provincial toll-free line which is available to residents of the Norman region.

We have indicated that, if a client wishes to use the services of a shelter, there is daily bus transportation from Flin Flon to The Pas, Thompson or Winnipeg. As well, the RCMP have, I believe it is under the victims' assistance program, a staffperson provided there, with funding to develop the victims' assistance program. The detachment in the town of Flin Flon received funding for a

half-time co-ordinator. While the program responsibility is at the local level, the RCMP headquarters have indicated to the branch that if victims require assistance to access shelter, the victims' services program would have volunteers to fulfill this need. There is a crisis line. There are other services that are available in that region.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister's explanations get more bizarre as we get into this. The minister is now saying that the crisis line that they established, after they closed the crisis centre, is justification for closing the crisis centre. He also suggests that somehow the bus service contributed to the making of the decision. The bus service along No. 1 Highway, I would say, far exceeds the level of service that we could hope to achieve in Flin Flon.

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

The minister talks about the victims' assistance fund. The minister is now suggesting that what we need are darn victims, that is what we need, then the government will respond. The crisis centre was to prevent the victimization of children, women and families. That is what it was for. This fund was never, never conceived as contributing to the evolution of crisis centres for women and children. This is just after-the-fact rationalization and very poor rationalization at that.

The question was—if the minister really wanted to regionalize service, wanted to look at what alternative services would be available to women—can the minister show me any evidence that Flin Flon is better served in terms of alternatives than the community of The Pas, the community of Thompson, the community of Brandon, the community of Portage, the community of Selkirk, the community of Winnipeg? Is the minister suggesting there are not other services, like services, available in Winnipeg for women, while there are in Flin Flon? I think that is a ridiculous argument. Has the minister never been to Flin Flon? How can that be a justification? It just does not make sense.

* (1620)

Mr. Gilleshammer: The member asks what services are available, and then when I give him that answer he says that is not what he wants. I am telling you that on a regional basis the Norman region has services comparable to other regions of the province, that they have a shelter, that they have

the access of a crisis line and that they have the Women's Resource Centre there, all within that particular region. The member is indicating the transportation is not an issue. Certainly transportation is an issue, and we have pointed out that there are ways to access the transportation in that area.

The member is saying that a crisis line is not important. Certainly a crisis line is important. It is important that we have a line where people can access service. The member wanted to know what the services were; we have indicated to him what those services were, and then he rejects that, that the services of that region are comparable to other regions. Certainly, I am aware that there are individual differences within regions of the province and within communities.

The Westman Region is serviced by one shelter out of Brandon. I am aware that we have crises committees in some communities. The fact of the matter is, we do not have all of these services in all of the communities. We have indicated consistently, when we talked about this particular initiative, that we have looked at this on a regional basis, and the Norman Region has comparable services to other regions within the province.

Mr. Storle: Well, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I certainly do not accept some of the minister's suggestions in terms of alternative services that are available. I think it is very flimsy.

My question was a more direct one, and that is, yes, there may be, in the minister's mind at least, alternative services available. The minister may find it acceptable that women now should jump on a bus, and if they happen to have a crisis at eleven o'clock at night and there is no bus out of Flin Flon till eight in the morning, the minister may say, well, you simply pack your bags and you bring your children, you sit them at the bus depot, and just wait there for those nine hours—just wait at the bus depot for those nine hours. I do not think that is very realistic. What I am pointing out to the minister is that in terms of level of service, a decision to reduce services or close services in other areas would have made a lot more practical sense.

The other question I wanted the minister to address was: Was there an objective review of what other services were available for other centres that also could have been, or may have been as alternatives, closed? What services are available

to those people in the immediate area of Brandon? He mentioned Brandon. I am sure that if the minister wanted to present us with a list of alternative services that are available through other nonprofit groups, it would have been a broader array than is available to the women of Flin Flon and families in Flin Flon.

The same is true obviously of the communities of Selkirk and Winnipeg. So the minister listing off a couple of rather dubious services in terms of their acceptability to the people in Flin Flon, it does not do much to improve his credibility about why this decision was made.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have indicated before the tremendous commitment this government has made to the whole area of Family Dispute Services since we came into government in 1988. There has been a 262 percent increase in the funding for the services that are provided through this department.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) can call these services "flimsy" and he can call them "dubious," but they are a far cry from the services that existed when he was a member of cabinet in the Pawley government. We have increased the resources; we have increased the number of shelters; we have made a tremendous commitment to this area of our budget and this department. The member talks about sitting at the bus station waiting for the next bus to arrive—those are his words, that is his interpretation.

I have indicated to him that through the Victims' Assistance program, the RCMP have indicated that anyone who on an emergency basis needs to access that shelter will be able to access transportation. So the member should not confuse the committee with people sitting at the bus depot. That is not the case. There is assistance available.

The member has asked if we have reviewed this whole area, and whether it was objective. Yes, as part of the budgetary process, we have reviewed all of the things that we do within the Department of Family Services. The member knows that through the experience that he would have had sitting in cabinet that every year the departments annually examine their expenditures and government examines the income that they access and have to make difficult decisions.

The member was a member of cabinet when the resources of government were increasing year over year by double-digit amounts, yet still had

tremendous deficits and have left us with a problem this government has to deal with.

I say to the member that government across this land in the 1990s are making difficult decisions. I recall a press conference that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) had with the media to condemn the economic plan that the government had. When he was asked what alternatives do you have, the only alternative that he had was to let the deficit go, and indicated in the press that day that the deficit did not matter, spend money. The important thing was to have job creation at the expense of taxpayers. We went through that in the 1980s when the member was a member of the cabinet where the public works program was put in place and his current leader roundly condemned the government of the day for the flimsy and dubious initiatives taken by that government.

So the member has no answers either other than to let the deficit go. Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we are not going to do that. I have indicated that we have looked at the services that are provided by Family Dispute Services on a regional basis, and the Norman region compares favourably with other areas of the province.

I realize that he has not accepted this decision and he will not accept this decision, but that is the luxury of being in opposition where you can simply criticize government and ask them to make increased expenditures in each and every area of the department, as he and his colleagues have done over the last 20 hours that we have been here. That is not achievable. That is not achievable in the 1990s. The governments have to take a critical look at the way they expend their money with the realization that revenues will not increase the way they did in the 1970s and 1980s.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) indicates that he has not asked us to increase expenditures. I think if you will look at his comments over the last 20 hours that every decision we have made to reduce expenditures, he has rejected and has indicated that they should be reinstated and that we should flow more money in almost every area of the department, whether it is social allowances or whether it is daycare.

The member has indicated that he would see higher expenditures in all of those areas and, at the

same time, his colleagues in Question Period, his colleagues in other department Estimates are indicating that they want more expenditures right across the board. It is not on, and as a result of these budgetary decisions, budgetary decisions that have been well accepted by the people of Manitoba as having been arrived at in a fair and equitable way—they recognize that governments have to make these difficult decisions and accept that this government has done it in a way that is palatable and acceptable to the general populous of this province.

* (1630)

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I recognize that the minister would like to move us off into another area rather than a decision this government had made, and a decision that—I guess that is the motion we are debating—many people, certainly the people in Flin Flon, consider to be a wrong decision, a wrong-headed decision.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would not want the minister to believe that there are people in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba in particular who have lent any particular support to this budget. The fact is that it has been damaging to northern Manitoba and rural Manitoba.

The letters and the support that I have talked about did not just come from individuals and groups. I have a letter here that came from the mayor of Flin Flon. I want to read part of it into the record, that part that relates to the crisis centre.

"In the case of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre they will have to close on April 1, 1993, and discontinue operations. At a time when Flin Flon is in transition and the attendant stress that comes with that process, the loss of this important resource would be devastating to a section of our community who are least able to fend for themselves, i.e., women and children. The logistics of servicing these people in crisis through The Pas is not only impractical and impossible but inhuman."

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have a similar letter from the mayor of Creighton. It is not simply a question of the member for Flin Flon or those people with a vested interest, i.e., women in Flin Flon and the board and the staff at the crisis centre who see this as an inexcusable decision. The minister keeps saying that somehow we do not recognize that governments have to make difficult choices. We

have given the minister alternatives within his own department.

As I mentioned on a couple of occasions, the minister's department is large. The amount of money that could have been used to support the ongoing services of the crisis centre is relatively small. If the minister places a priority on protecting the victims of family violence, as he and his Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) and the government continue to say, then why is this not a priority? That has to be the question that is asked.

The minister wanted to talk about the debt. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I find it rather ironic that the Minister of Family Services, anyone in this government in the front bench has the gall to talk about debt when they amassed the highest deficit in the history of the Province of Manitoba, the highest deficit ever. The gall of a government who took a surplus budget and ran it, in five years, into an \$862 million deficit is quite astounding.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member should know—and he can consult with the business community—that people now refer to the previous administration as "the good old days," when people had jobs, when businesses were making money, when people were staying in the province, when young people had a chance. So I do not need any lectures from the Minister of Family Services when it comes to economics either.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the fact of the matter is that the Minister of Family Services' department is just that, it is a service department. The minister is responsible as much as anyone else for prioritizing those services. What we have tried to point out here is, if the minister's rhetoric about protecting women and families and children is genuine, this is a bad decision. That is why the motion.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wish, despite the fact that the motion was defeated, that this minister will take some time to reflect on the many letters he has received from people outside the political process who have called on the government to reconsider this decision, to lend its support to the Flin Flon Crisis Centre, both financially and in terms of staff time, so that we can get back on track, because without the crisis centre the process we are facing right now is going to be more difficult than it needed to be certainly and than it should have been.

The minister, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, unless he changes the language and the explanations he has

been giving us for his decision, unless we get something a little more closely resembling what factors actually went into this, it is going to be difficult to accept that this was a reasonable decision.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Here we see the contradiction of the NDP. The member for Flin Flon says that it is a big budget and that we can find that funding somewhere else in the budget. Yet his colleagues, many who have tramped through here in the last 20 hours, are saying, you have to spend more on Income Security, that our rates are not high enough, that we have to spend more money there. We already spend close to \$400 million there.

Now the member for Burrows says, oh, we are not saying, you have to spend more money, we are just asking questions about it. Well, I think if he rereads his comments and rereads his questions in Question Period, he will see that he clearly is calling on the government to spend more money, but it is an interesting comment he makes, that now he is saying, no, no, we do not want you to spend more money.

You obviously are either spending enough or spending too much. So I am pleased that he is on side on the rates because that is a support. Of course, he has changed his mind on a number of issues in the past and it does not surprise me he is changing his mind again.

Then other colleagues come in and say, well, you should be spending more on daycare, that you cannot freeze licensing, you cannot cap subsidies, you should just let that flow and spend millions of dollars more.

Just the other day, the member was calling on us to spend more on child welfare. So it is quite a contradiction when the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) comes in and says, yes, it is a big budget, you can find it somewhere and, at the same time, instead of offering places where we could find savings, his colleagues, his seatmates are coming in here and saying, spend more in all areas of the department. Let the deficit go.

Now, the member says it is funny that we talk about debt and deficit, that people are longing for the good old days. Give me a break. What good old days? I mean, your Leader condemned the ways of the Pawley government when they instituted the Jobs Fund in Manitoba and your Leader talked about having people counting flowers. Not one job has remained since those

days. The only thing that has remained is the debt, and it is the debt we are paying now.

The member says that it talks about a balanced budget. There was no balanced budget when the budget was defeated in March of 1988. There was a \$300-million-plus deficit in that budget. The member says, nonsense. He knows well what that budget said.

Where are the good old days? I think Steve Langdon was longing for the good old days when he talked about NDP policies that have led the federal NDP to an 8 percent rating across the country, that the reality of NDP governments who are governing, and I think Audrey referred to them as being conservative, with a small "c", and that she was saying that all governments have to be more conservative. Here we have members in Manitoba, in opposition of course, who are saying, spend more everywhere.

Here we have the contradiction of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) saying, you have a big budget, you can find that money from within your budget and, at the same time, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) have all been in here urging us to spend more on social allowances, on daycare, on child welfare. I think this NDP caucus needs to get together and have a little meeting before they come into these Estimates, because they are all over the map.

Federally, they are having to discipline members who, again, are speaking out in opposition. In opposition, of course, you can have it any way you want. The reality is in government that governments have to make some very, very difficult decisions. I know the members have conceded that the Romanow government in Saskatchewan is making some very tough conservative decisions. [interjection] Well, the member says he agrees with it. I will tell you, in government you have to make difficult decisions, and I am pleased that he recognizes that there is a difference between being in government and being in opposition, that there is a responsibility there.

Certainly those members in Ontario are having difficulty coming to grips with the fact that they are laying off 4,500 people with Ontario Hydro, that Premier Rae is saying that 20,000 jobs in the public service of the government of Ontario have to go, 52

hospitals in Saskatchewan, a major downtown hospital in Vancouver. In fact, we just recently came back from there and there are signs all over the city that say, save Shaughnessy Hospital. These are the tough decisions that governments across Canada have to make. At the same time, we have to rethink our programming, find ways to provide those vital services that we are mandated to provide.

It is interesting to me that now the member for Burrows is saying, you do not have to spend any more in social allowances, your rates are fine, your programming is fine, but it is an interesting conversion that is taking place. I think if he reads back his questions in Question Period, his comments here in Estimates, he will find that there is a major direct contradiction in the position he is putting forward today with what he has said the last few times we have met.

So the member for Flin Flon is longing for the good old days. Certainly, on the income side, governments would like to be able to have income coming into government in the double-digit numbers, as the governments through the 1980s were able to access more funding for program. Instead of dealing responsibly with budget in those days and coming in with a balanced budget and paying off the debt; no, the philosophy and the theory that the member subscribes to is to spend more. Of course, implicit in that is to tax more.

* (1640)

The member was a part of a government that raised the sales tax twice. Now we are finding that governments across this country, because of the debt load, because of the deficit, is hiking that sales tax in many, many jurisdictions. We are finding in western Manitoba especially—and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) I am sure is aware of that in his home town—that Saskatchewan residents are now buying in Manitoba because of that 9 per cent sales tax that has been imposed by the Romanow government. That is not a solution. That is not a solution that we subscribe to.

Manitobans are taxed to the hilt now, and by keeping taxes down we are putting more disposable income into the hands of the consumer. Recent studies show that some \$600 million will be put into the hands of consumers because of the fact that taxes have not been raised, and who better to spend that money than the consumer to spend their

money. So there is a fair degree of contradiction over there, and implicit in what they are saying in spending more money is, of course, to raise taxes.

It is a decision we have made that we will not go to the people for more tax money. As a result, we have to make those difficult decisions, or we are going to be in the position that other governments are in. They are making those difficult decisions, making those difficult cuts within their budgets and raising taxes at the same.

Because we have been responsible in budgeting over the last number of years, we have the position of making some decisions now and not having to raise those taxes. The sales tax, income tax, corporate taxes do not have to go up, so I am not sure where the member is coming from.

I suggest that maybe he get together with the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and decide whether in fact we can find those savings within the department, and then come forward with some suggestions that we can use.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that was an interesting, rambling kind of a response, but I think maybe the minister would enjoy having his remarks put in context.

The deficit that the Saskatchewan, the Romanow government faced, of course, was the result of Conservative mismanagement—many, many years of it. The government in Saskatchewan has not used the previous government as its whipping boy nearly as much as this minister, and this minister has been in charge now for six budgets.

When does the deficit that the government incurred last year, the \$762 million or \$862 million, depending on whether you believe the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) or the member for Rossmore (Mr. Neufeld)—when does the government take responsibility for that? When does the government take responsibility for its \$473 million deficit this year? That is what the deficit is. That is the more accurate figure.

But that was not that point. The minister said, he had difficult decisions to make, and they made them. Well, I am telling the minister, if he wants to give me his chair for two hours, I will find the money in his department to operate the Flin Flon Crisis Centre.

He had a choice, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, so he can attempt to absolve himself and the government all he wants. The fact is he had a choice, and he chose to close down a service that the government

says is a vital service. Those are the facts of the matter.

If the minister wants to say that he cannot manage to protect vital services and the government's priority services, then that shows a shortcoming on his part and no one else's.

In terms of the crisis centre, I was involved when the crisis centre began in 1982. The minister can certainly take some credit, and the government can, in providing additional services in the area of protecting families in crisis. I have never denied that.

What I am concerned about is the closure of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre. The fact of the matter is that prior to 1981, there were no crisis centres in rural Manitoba, in northern Manitoba, or very few, and those services began and were funded by the previous government.

The minister can also take credit for being the only Minister responsible for Family Services that closed a crisis centre, and closing one in northern Manitoba where we have no other services. So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if the minister is maintaining, from where he stands right now, that he had no other choice, then I say the minister should step aside and perhaps he would let one of the people in the opposition benches make some decisions for the department and see if we can come up with a more responsible set of decisions. Because no one is denying that tough decisions have to be made, but what we are arguing about is whether this decision should have been made and whether there were alternatives.

I think that in fairness to the people in Flin Flon and the crisis centre there that they did attempt to provide the minister with a reasonable alternative and he chose not to accept it. The final decision is in the minister's hands and on the minister's head. The minister closed a crisis centre in Manitoba and he did not have to, and that is unfortunate.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The member says he would like to sit in a cabinet chair for two hours. That is a frightening experience that Manitobans simply would not put up with. The thought that he was there for seven years before he was unceremoniously turfed out of office—but two hours I think is a risk. It is a risk that Manitobans simply will not take. [interjection]

Well, we talked earlier about the job creation that the member was so proud of with green and white

signs all over the province and people counting flowers. That is the kind of initiative and expenditure that Manitobans rejected in 1988 and again in 1990. They still remember the days when the member was in cabinet where millions and millions of dollars were spent in Saudi Arabia on telephones. They still remember the mismanagement of MPIC when those decisions were made in cabinet, and the thought of the member even walking past the door is frightening, let alone his offer to sit in cabinet for two hours. It simply is something that Manitobans would not accept.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we do not want to prolong this debate too much, revising history as the minister is doing. The minister will remember when he mentioned MPIC, and it is interesting that we come to this discussion at this point, when the Minister responsible for MPIC came to committee to deal with the annual report of the MPIC board in 1988 he acknowledged on the public record that MPIC required a major increase, acknowledged that the opposition, then Conservatives, were wrong. So just for the minister's edification he should know that his comments probably would not stand the test of close scrutiny even within his own caucus.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the issue is the Flin Flon Crisis Centre. That is the issue, and unfortunately after many hours of discussion and many questions the minister has not laid out any rationale which would have justified the closing of that centre. The bottom line is that there are going to be people, unfortunately, who are going to require that service who may not be able to avail themselves of the necessary services. Obviously, only time will tell whether someone's life will be jeopardized or sacrificed because of this decision. This is not simply about the minister's ego or the government's political agenda. This is an issue about care of children and families and wives and husbands. This decision, I believe, is wrong-headed. Many other people, certainly in Manitoba, involved in women and family issues believe likewise.

* (1650)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member constantly tries to revise the history of this province. I have acknowledged that he does have some skill with the English language, but there is not enough skill there to fool the people of Manitoba who recognized the type of government that the member

was a part of and a recognition that is coming to people in Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, in fact, all of Canada, that I think we will follow with interest the developments of the member's party over the course of the coming months and coming years. [interjection]

Well, the member for Burrows wants to have an election. This again is the luxury of opposition where you can say anything at any time and not have to take responsibility for it. We have talked about that, and now that he is here to carry the banner for his colleagues, I am sure he is going to set the record straight on all of the contradictions that have arisen between he and his colleague here.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) says there are savings all over the place and that we do not have to be spending so much money in social allowances, and we could spend less in daycare and child welfare. I do not know how the member for Burrows could sit there quietly and not say anything. I know that he got into a bit of a fight here with the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) the other night when he was being a little too honest.

I think here is his chance to put to rest some of the contradictions that have developed in the last little while. I know as a straight shooter that he is going to have trouble with this, because the member for Flin Flon says there are all sorts of savings there and, yet, the member for Burrows wants to spend, spend, spend. So I do not want to deprive him of a few minutes to make a few comments, because I am very vitally interested in what he has to say.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, before I ask some questions, I would like to once again rebut some of the comments that the minister has made and point out that, although I have asked many, many questions, I think it is very difficult for the minister to draw conclusions as to what policies we would have when we are in government. But I can tell you one of the fundamental differences. The minister should not lecture me about stick handling. This minister is probably the best skater in the Conservative benches. He should be in the NHL or the Olympics. [interjection] Well, it is not intended as a compliment. You just skate whenever I ask you a question in the House.

However, I can tell you what people are saying. When I go door to door in Burrows constituency, they are saying that they would rather see the government spend money on job creation than

spend money on paying people to stay home and collect social assistance. This minister's department is the perfect example of that, because we see cuts to job creation programs, and we see increases every year in the social assistance caseload and increasing cost to government. While almost every other department has had a decrease, this minister's department has had one of the few increases of this government of any minister, the reason being that the social assistance caseload is up and the minister has to provide money because it is a mandated service that this government must provide.

However, I would like to ask some questions about a proposal from Alpha House Project Incorporated, a proposed women's shelter in St. Vital, and I wonder if the minister could tell us, first of all, if he is aware if the federal government has given mortgage approval and if all of the approvals are in place from the federal government.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am interested in the member's discussion about job creation instead of social assistance, and it sounds a lot like the workfare proposal that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) was alluding to a year ago.

Certainly there is more interest across the country to find creative ways to deal with unemployed social allowance recipients. We have had an opportunity to talk in the past about comments that President Clinton has made and Premier Bob Rae and others. It is a real desire, I think, on the part of social services ministers, and when I met with my western colleagues recently, this was certainly a topic of conversation, how can we get more of these people into the workforce and off of the social allowance rolls. So if the member has legitimate ideas in that area, I would be very interested to hear them and sort of share them with some of the thinking that is going on, not only in Manitoba, but in other jurisdictions as well.

Now, the question on Alpha House. We are working with Alpha House, and I met with the board who are trying to firm up and finalize their plans. We have committed staff from the department to meet with them so that they can perhaps realize some of their objectives.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I understand that they are seeking assistance from the federal government to purchase a building, and

that the federal government is waiting for a letter of support from the Province of Manitoba. Is that correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, there is some substance to what the member is saying. I am not sure that we have had direct contact with the federal government, but there does appear to be some interest at the federal level to perhaps do some funding in this area. Again, I indicated to the member that I met with a group from the board recently, and we have committed some of our staff to work with them on developing a proposal.

Mr. Martindale: I appreciate the fact that the minister has met with their board and that the staff are working with them. What requirements do they have to meet before they can get established as a funded shelter? What remaining requirements are left?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The fact of the matter is that their proposal is not for the development of a shelter. Their proposal has to do with second-stage housing, and there are still some areas within their program that we are working with them to further develop, and there is ongoing discussion with department staff and proponents of that project that are going to take a while longer to flesh out.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I thank the minister for the correction. I really do know what the difference is between a shelter and second-stage housing. Can the minister tell us what kind of time line his department is looking at for approval for this second-stage housing? I understand that they would like to be in operation I think by September, but can the minister tell us when the negotiations will be completed and their programs in place so that they can open their doors?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I do not think I want to speculate on that. It is more a question of refining a proposal and doing some joint thinking on what it is that they want to accomplish. It is going to take a little bit of time, I think, for the proposal to mature, and I would rather not put some deadlines on it.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to go on to a more general question, moving away from Alpha House Project. Could the minister tell us if employees at shelters are paid for working overnight shifts?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that our new funding model allows for paid 24-hour staff.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The time is now 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

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 are on item 1.(e), page 14 of the Estimates manual. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

Shall item 1.(e) Personnel Services pass?

* (1430)

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I would like to go back and ask a few questions on this section that we were dealing with last time. I want to go back to the Vision for the 1990s document that the minister talked about the other day and indicated that that was one of the areas that this department was working on.

When I look at this document I realize that, although we had it earlier, there was reason for not being too excited about the document, because it is just a very general document about what the department is doing. It does not address many, many areas that will have an impact on agriculture throughout the '90s. There is no reference made to the Free Trade Agreement and what the impacts of that will be on agriculture. There is no reference to NAFTA and on the impacts of that agreement on agriculture, and in our opinion those two agreements are having negative impacts on agriculture.

Again, no references to the rail line abandonment or the Crow rate, to GATT, to any of those issues. I would think that if the minister was looking into the '90s and the future of agriculture, those points would have also been addressed in this document.

The other point that I have some concern with, although we are looking into the '90s and what can be done, diversification and many other things, there is no address made, no concern raised to the fact that farm gate prices continue to be low. I guess when we start to talk about value-added jobs, I believe that our main concern should be the farm gate price and the return to the producer, because that is where the real problem is right now. Farmers are not getting a fair return for what they produce, and I would like the minister's comments on that. How is this Vision for the 1990s—how can he avoid addressing all of the issues that I raised previously? Also, how will this Vision for the 1990s address the

concern we have and farmers have of not getting a fair return at the farm gate? How will we assure that there is an increase to what the farmer is making?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Chairperson, it is rather discouraging that the member starts to take this old-think, old, negative attitude and talks about agriculture and all their concerns. Agriculture, I want to tell the member, is all about opportunity, being aggressive about opportunity.

That is how we built the industry in this country. There is no doubt in my mind, there was not doubt in the minds of the 100 people who participated as stakeholders in this Vision for the 1990s. There was not doubt in the minds of the over 200 people that came to Gate to Plate. Those people are not worried about old hang-ups, and that is what the member of Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has, old hang-ups, trying to drag agriculture down.

Yes, I will talk about the value at the farm gate, which she does not want to recognize in the kinds of questions she asks in the House. I will talk about trade and marketing opportunities, which is what we built the industry on, and trade means access to countries.

We have had free trade in agriculture since she was born and long before that, free trade in agriculture, particularly with the United States. We have got into some trouble lately with countervail on hogs but, beyond that, we have had free trade in grain movement, cattle movement and hog movement.

We have been very successful in free trade historically. When the Free Trade Agreement came in in 1990, the issue was to remove the remaining 30 percent of commodities that are subject to some kind of tariffs or restrictions in moving into that marketplace. Agriculture had hardly any commodities in there.

She says, we are losing in free trade. We have accelerated the rate of the removal of the remaining tariffs on canola and canola oil. There is not a success story in North America better than canola and our penetration of a market with a superior vegetable oil to anything produced in the United States.

I am really disappointed the member wants to go back to those old hang-ups and say, we are losing in free trade. In agriculture with the United States, whether you like it or not, we have a trade deficit with

the Americans. Since free trade that trade deficit has shrunk. What a trade deficit means is, they sell more to us than we sell to them.

In western Canada we have a trade surplus, because more moves south. The food trade lines are north and south whether she likes it or not. She might like to be anti-American, but let me tell you, if we do not have the American market in the next few years, we are not going to make it in the agriculture industry, because the markets around the world are shrinking.

Yes, that is why we do not have a good price at the farm gates, because we are selling too much into a subsidized marketplace across the salt water. But in the United States we are not selling into a subsidized marketplace, we are selling into a domestic market that has a much higher price than that export market.

We have had free trade in agriculture as long as I or she has been alive. To try and deny it and bring forth these old hang-ups of, hide from the world, is old-think. I am just very disappointed that we are going to get into this kind of argument on a Vision for the 1990s, where everybody supports it that I have talked to wherever, other than her followers, and her thinking.

In agriculture in total, with the United States, we have increased our sales from \$3 billion to \$5 billion since 1989. Now, if that is not success in so-called free trade, I do not know what it is. She might like to define how we are losing in free trade. Yes, she will talk about this or that, though it is not related directly to agriculture.

In the agriculture industry we are selling more pork, more canola, more wheat, more durum, more oats to the United States. We are selling farm machinery, we are selling all kinds of things to the United States, doing a very successful job at it too. That is because of the aggressive entrepreneurship, new-think attitude of farmers and the agribusiness industry.

* (1440)

If we followed her line of hiding from the world, we would wither on the vine out here. We would take four out of every five acres of production in western Canada out of production, because we would just live with a domestic market because we could not compete. She does not want to compete. I find it astounding she brings that forward now. After going to Gate to Plate, after looking at this

document, if she wants to talk to the people who were the stakeholders in putting this together, she might have her eyes opened of the attitude and the thinking that is going on in the agriculture industry.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I guess the minister has his views and I have mine. I want to ask the minister—what I was asking for is where in this vision for the future does he see the increased price for farmers?

The farmers are producing and selling, and we talk about value-added jobs and processing jobs, but how are we going to get a fairer return for the producer at the farm gate? When we look at what the farmer is getting versus what the end price is, all along through the years the farm gate price goes up very little.

How does this minister propose to address that concern, because that is the real problem on how we are going to keep the family farm going? There has to be a fairer return there, and that is what I am asking the minister. Where in this vision is it being addressed that we will see a better farm gate price for producers?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the member did not say it, but I guess she is talking only about cereal grains, and I want to broaden her horizons just a little bit.

The cattle industry makes up about 15 percent of the farm gate income in Manitoba, and I cannot recall in my lifetime cattle prices, whether it is finished animals, feeders or calves or cows, ever being higher than it is today. It is the highest in Manitoba or a western Canadian record for cattle.

Hogs make up also about 14, 15 percent of gross farm income at the farm gate. Last year, we produced 2 million market hogs, the highest ever. We have doubled hog production in the last 10 years. So every year we have had more total gross income at the farm gate for hogs year in and year out. Prices have been down as low as 50 cents a hundredweight. They are now up to around 65, 66, 67.

I have talked to hog producers and they say the farm gate return is now in a very reasonably comfortable zone, and you will see more and more hog barns being built. Yes, they are larger. They are more efficient. We have the highest quality hogs anywhere in North America. She can check the hog index. It is the highest in Canada. We have

American buyers that are just itching to get hold of Canadian hogs because of quality.

PMU business—can she tell me a sector in rural agriculture that is doing any better than the PMU section? Maybe it is cattle, but the PMU, we have gone from roughly 20,000 horses to 45,000 horses on line in the last three years. The company expansion is going to take us to 85,000 horses on line, about a \$100-million farm gate income, and they do not need or have ever asked for a single dollar of government subsidy.

That is success in cattle, in hogs, in PMU. Now let us look at the crop side.

We are producing forage and selling it in many locations in north-south trade with the United States. Farmers that are doing that say they are making a pretty good dollar at it.

We are producing oilseed crops, particularly canola. When you can still sell canola at over \$6 a bushel, an average yield is \$180 an acre, well above the average farmer's cost of production.

The flax market, it is up and it is down, but there is tremendous opportunity in the future with genetic engineering and producing the kind of vegetable oil from flax that the consumer wants.

Yes, we have trouble in cereal grains. We have problems in cereal grains. For the last four months, I have been out talking in rural Manitoba about precisely this.

Let us look at where the successes are. Let us identify the successes, and let us also realize that because of problems in a certain sector, government is not going to be there to fill in the gap with ad hoc payments or safety-net programs in the future like they have in the past.

Starting back in '86, '87, '88, '89 and 1990, ad hoc payments went into particularly the cereal grain sector. In '91-92, GRIP was in place, paid out massive amounts of money. In fact, it will be pretty close to \$500 million of gross payment through that program in '91 and '92 because of shortages in the marketplace in terms of the realized price. The Canadian Wheat Board and the trade is selling more and more of those cereal grains in the United States. We do not know what price they are getting, but I guarantee you, it is probably 50 cents, maybe 100 percent higher than what they are getting across salt water in other parts of the world.

People have to realize that. That member has to realize that. Yes, wheat has been king. Barley has been a product that we produced and exported, but the cost of transporting those raw commodities, and really they are low value per tonne commodities, to salt water across this country, the grain handling and transportation system, has become a very expensive system. The portion of the value of that grain that goes to pay those costs has gone up and up and up. The farmer has had the cost passed back to his farm gate. That is one of the reasons why he says—and she has to accept—we are not getting a fair return at the farm gate. It is a very serious concern. I have espoused it many times. People get mad when I say it, because they do not want me to talk about the reality.

Whether you are talking elevation costs, whether you are talking cleaning costs, whether you are talking rail costs, whether you are talking Lakehead terminal costs or whether you are talking about costs on the Great Lakes going east or the same cost going west—I do not have the figures with me today, but I will bring them forward and I will give them to her later, which shows very clearly that from 1980 those costs have basically doubled, some more than doubled, some less than doubled.

Now, I ask her, and she should know what the price of barley and wheat has done since then. In 1980, at the farm gate, the initial price on durum was \$6 a bushel, Red wheat was about \$5.70. What is it today? It is less than half of that. You tell me who is performing? It is the people from the farm gate on, who have increased the costs and just passed them back to us in the system we have. Farmers are forced to accept that. That is why our prices are down.

Yes, you can say a grain trade war has driven prices down. That is the other factor. I will admit, we focused too long on the grain trade war, and said that is the problem. The real problem was really at home, where we did not control the costs from the farm gate on that the farmer was forced to pay. Things like demurrage costs of a ship sitting at Vancouver, and people go on strike and the farmer has to pay the demurrage costs. It is absolutely unacceptable that we have to absorb those costs without having any say. She seems to defend that process, that the farmer should accept less and less and less, and we should not say something about it.

The reasons that we have these troubles—we have to talk about them. I have talked about them

a lot lately. I will tell you people do not like to have the truth identified. Costs at the farm gate are down because of the grain trade war, because of high costs from the farm gate to the consumer. That is why we have to have this partnership. That is why the Plate to Gate is done. That is why this Vision for the 1990s was done.

Let us have a partnership and an understanding that the farmer is not the last on the totem pole. He is first, in my mind. If he did not produce these commodities, whether they are livestock or meat commodities or cereals or oilseeds or special crops, we would not have an agricultural industry where 75 to 80 percent of the jobs in the agricultural industry are beyond the farm gate. They are doing quite well. The farmers are coming up short.

I would like to hear her. Does she stand up for the farmer or does she stand up for the people beyond the farm gate and say it is okay for them to jack up their costs and the farmer has to accept lower? I say it is not acceptable, and the rest of the sector has to be challenged to get the cost down. Otherwise, we are going to have to take those cereal grains on the farm or off the farm and value-add them to a higher value before we export the final product.

* (1450)

We cannot go on producing raw wheat and barley and exporting it and expect the farmer to live with the marketplace. The reality is, we have to live with the marketplace, so we may have to do some changes. Let us talk about those realities. Let us not try to hide behind old-think. Let us get on with the 1990s and the millennium that is coming, because we are in a new world. It is not an easy world.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess the minister did not hear my first question. I was not talking about the grain industry. I was talking about farming in general. As we look towards the '90s and onward, this government talks about value-added jobs, and I agree, we have to have value-added jobs.

What I am talking about is, how do we get a fairer return at the farm gate, more for the farmer? When you look at certain products, what the farm gate gets versus what it ends up selling at the very end is a large difference. The farmer is not getting a fair return for what he produces.

Corn is not an example we have here in Manitoba but, when you look at a box of corn flakes, what a

farmer gets out of it is 14 cents. When you look at the percentage a farmer gets for milk versus the retail price of it, that is what I am asking the minister. I am not talking about only the grain industry. In the grain industry, I believe that we have to look at how we get a fairer return for the producers, a fairer share of the price, but also other products.

He talks about the cattle industry doing very well. Granted, they are, and I am very happy for the cattle producers, and I hope that that can be sustained, that we do not see a drop in price, because it is an important industry.

Again, when you look at value-added jobs and processing, how are we going to assure that the farmer gets the fairest share and is not forced to take the lowest possible price. How do we address that?

That is what I look at in this Vision for the 1990s. How do we get a fairer share for the farmers so that we can continue to have a variety of products produced in this province and across this country?

Mr. Findlay: Maybe we want the same objective. We want farmers to get more at the farm gate. They have to if they are going to survive.

What I am saying is, we cannot stay with what we used to do 20 years ago and achieve that. That is a fact of life. We are going to have to do the things that do generate a fair return at the farm gate, and it is cattle, it is hogs, it is PMU, it is oilseeds, it is special crops.

You look at any of those categories that I have just mentioned, over the last 10 years you will find that they have done substantially better than the person producing wheat and barley. Let us recognize that. Let us not say it has to always be the way it was and we have to be sure that they get a fair return at the farm gate.

There are ways and means to get a fair return. You see different people doing all kinds of different things. They are entrepreneurial out there. They are aggressive. They are achievers. They are people that do some processing on the farm, like baking bread as an example, like making kielbasa, those kinds of things.

You may say, that is not acceptable, it is not the way it was, and it is not the way it is, but it is the way of opportunity today and in the future. We have to satisfy that consumer with something that she likes.

There are all kinds of niche markets. With our ethnic community we have, particularly in Manitoba, tremendous niche markets that are untraditional for what used to be the retail market for food in Winnipeg 20 and 30 years ago. Are we accessing those opportunities effectively or are we allowing imported food to satisfy those people instead of trying to find those niches and doing it? Farm commodities in an organic sense, another niche market. Many farmers do not like it, condone it, but I say it is a niche market, that if there is somebody who wants to buy it and somebody wants to produce it, and they can get a fair return to farm gate, go to it. Do it.

I was pleased that the other day the member said that she did want to see the farmer get the best return at the farm gate. That is why I have found her comments and questions in the House the last week to 10 days rather peculiar about barley.

A round table was put together of 19 members which commissioned a study that demonstrated we are not doing as good a job at penetrating the U.S. market as we could in volume and price. She totally disregards the basic conclusion, that there are distortions in the marketplace that benefit somebody beyond the farm gate, it hurts the farmer. We are losing 17 percent of value in that market, and whether it is 17, 15, 10, 8 or 25 is really immaterial. The issue is we are not penetrating the market to the extent possible.

So far this year, compared to last year, our sales to the U.S. are down rather substantively, where there is a deficit of feed grains, particularly in 11 states in the midnorthwest. We have a superior quality feed grain that we can sell there. We can compete with corn nicely in there. Why does she not want to see and be sure that we are accessing that market to the best possible extent?

The issue to me is that we are accessing the market in terms of quantity and price. I want the people that are selling for us to respond to assure us that that is being done. If it is not, how do we adjust and change the system to be sure we penetrate it?

I have already told her, we have a trade agriculture deficit with the United States, so do not feel that we are going into the market where we are not welcome. We can argue that fair trade means equal trade and that balanced trade is the fairest trade of all. We have not got there yet.

We have to sell more to them to get there. We have done that in so many commodities. The buyer down there is not forced to take our wheat, durum, barley or our pork. He is a willing buyer. We have had free trade in pork and beef, basically, other than the countervail situation. So why can we not have free trade in all our other agricultural commodities?

Why do we have to put a restriction on selling barley to the United States that hurts us? We have got to bring the best return to the farm gate. I can assure the member, if we cannot sell barley to the United States where the transportation costs are so much less, where we take it from the farm, put it in a truck and haul it down there—we avoid elevation costs, cleaning costs and high rail costs.

If the net return to the farm gate—and I will just throw some numbers at her—if the net return is another \$20 a tonne to the farm gate, is she not interested? Plus we have moved that grain to a market in a nontraditional transportation and grain handling sense. That means that we have taken more out of the system that makes more room for our wheat that is going to go east and west to export markets.

Now she is not interested in exploring that because she has got a closed mind, the old-think. Export means get on the rail car and go east and west. The new-think is, we are going to produce feed grains here. We should feed them here and value-add them on the farm here, or we export them to the closest, highest paying market that we can compete in, and that is, most obviously, the United States.

Why she is so anti-American, anti Canadians accessing trade opportunities in agriculture, I would be interested in hearing. Just for her further information, out of the 19 members on the barley round table task force, 11 of the 19 say—and I want to read directly so she gets it straight—that they endorse the process used to examine the potential for marketing barley in North America. They felt that Dr. Carter did an admirable job of addressing our questions. That is 11 of the 19, and in a democratic process that is the majority.

She thinks she has to listen only to a minority group of that 19 who want to discredit the study instead of saying, okay, maybe it is not totally accurate, but are there not some themes or some concepts here that need to be explored, to see that we are penetrating it to the maximum extent

possible and getting the best possible return for the farmer at the farm gate?

I am not interested in whether the grain company gets the best return, I am interested about the farmer first and foremost. Yes, I would like to see everybody make a profit in the system, but my first interest has always been the farmer, and she seems to want to challenge me on that, and she does not have that same interest.

Ms. Wowchuk: Even though we are not on the section dealing with barley, I think I have to respond to this at this time. The minister indicates that he is interested in the farmer and I appear not to be. Well, I want to assure the minister that the farmer, but all farmers, are the ones that I am interested in and seeing that all farmers get a fair share and that we have a system in place that all farmers will be treated fairly no matter where they live.

He talks about the Carter report and how accurate it is and that the farmers have been losing a tremendous amount of money. I hope that he will look at the other reports, because there are other reports that are saying that the Carter report is not accurate. I am disappointed in the minister that he did not stand with Manitoba farm groups when this report came out.

* (1500)

There were five groups in Manitoba who said they did not believe the Carter report, that it was inaccurate.

He has failed to take a position on this one: Keystone Agricultural Producers, Pools, Wheat Board, Farmers' Union all have said this report is inaccurate, all have said that they do not want the Wheat Board to be weakened. We know that if we go to a continental market, the Wheat Board will be weakened. He says that we should be accessing the market.

Those people who chose to access that market on their own right now have that ability to do so. They can haul into the United States all they want, and I am not anti-American. I am in favour of getting the best possible price for farmers, a best return. We know that if we go away from the Wheat Board system that there are farmers who are going to lose.

There are people up in the northern part of the province who are not going to be able to access that American market on their own. Why would farmers want to give up a system that treats all farmers equally and that has worked very, very well? Why

would this minister be so supportive of a report that is, in reality, undermining the Wheat Board and taking powers away from the Wheat Board, a board that has served farmers well over the years?

I think that we have to—yes, there have to be ways to penetrate the American market, but that is not the only market, and we do not have to tie ourselves completely to that market. There are other markets that we have to look at, and we have to look at what the impacts will be if we switch over.

Who will be the group that gains the most if we go to a continental market? Will it be the Manitoba producers, the Canadian producers of barley, or is it going to be the brewers in the United States who want the cheaper malting barley? Who is going to gain? Will we see an increased price at the farm gate?

As I asked the minister in other questions, will there be an increase in profit for farmers? That is who we have to be concerned with. Will all farmers be able to continue to grow barley as they have, or is this system changing to a continental market going to hurt those farmers who are farther away? What bargaining power have you got if every farmer is going to be out there—does he see every farmer going out there and selling for himself?

Who is going to have control? Who is going to be doing the selling? Who are we shifting over the power to by changing to a continental market? I think we have to look at what is the best, the fairest way, for treatment of farmers. Who is going to benefit from this?

I go back to what I said earlier. What we have to look at is a fair return for farmers, and Mr. Carter himself indicated that under this system there will be no net gain for farmers. There will not be. He said that at the meeting when he made his presentation. It all balances out. Farmers are not going to be gaining on this system. So I do not know why we are so gung ho to reduce the Wheat Board's powers and let everybody out there sell for themselves. I am not opposed to selling to the United States, but we also have to look at other markets and where we can get the fairest return for our grain producers.

Mr. Findlay: I guess it is disappointing that the member does not even understand the issue that is at hand. She is worried about the farmer, but then she talks about defending the Wheat Board. The Wheat Board is not the issue. Defending the Wheat Board is not the issue—

Ms. Wowchuk: It is so.

Mr. Findlay: The member says, it is so. See, she cannot disassociate herself from a monopoly system and an opportunity. The opportunity is to sell grain and get the best price. I never mentioned the Wheat Board so far today.

The Wheat Board is—[interjection] The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) in his side remarks again does not understand. The farmer from Niakwa does not even have a Wheat Board permit book, so he does not have a clue what he is talking about—

Ms. Wowchuk: You do not have to have a permit book to understand that. I do not have one either.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask the co-operation of all members—

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, when that member was asking questions, I listened to her talk and now I am giving the answer. If she does not want the answer, let me know when she is asking the question.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I was just attempting, Mr. Minister to ensure that each member will have his or her turn, and I would appreciate it if they indeed would speak and be recognized by the Chair so that Hansard would ensure that the remarks are indeed recorded in Hansard.

Mr. Findlay: The report identifies there may be some shortcomings in the marketplace in terms of quantity and in terms of price. The recent statistics that I got today show that Canadian barley exports to the United States are 93,000 tonnes this year compared to 281,000 tonnes at the same time a year ago. So again we are not fulfilling the marketplace opportunity, I would suspect.

The Wheat Board is the sales arm. So all I am asking is the Wheat Board to respond. Why are the sales down? Why are the statistics shown in the Carter report there? She has to agree statistics do not lie. It shows that there has been a growth in the world barley market by 3 percent, but our share has dropped by about 1 percent, to use round figures. Whereas the wheat market again has grown by 3 or 4 percent globally, and our share has grown at the same rate. So it shows that the Wheat Board is keeping up on the wheat side but slipping on the barley side.

All I want is answers. All I want is performance. I never said anything about the Wheat Board should not be the sales vehicle, not ever at all. So do not

try to connect those two and confuse them. This is not an attack on the Wheat Board. This is asking for them to meet their mission to sell to the best possible extent of the farmer. This report raises some questions. I have asked the Wheat Board a number of questions related to what appears to be coming out of this report and what I see in other statistics that other people bring forward.

She says, why would I not stand with five people, five groups that were involved in the round table. I just gave her the answer, but she did not listen. I said there were 19 groups or people or individuals, whatever you want to say, involved in the round table. Eleven of the 19—and I will read it to her again.

I will read what eleven of the 19 said, and this is their own words. They would endorse the process used to examine the potential for marketing Canadian barley in North America, and we felt—meaning these 11 people—that Dr. Carter did an admirable job of addressing our questions. So that is 11 out of 19.

Now if she wants to stand with the minority, I think the majority has some valid comment there. Let us get the answers. The Wheat Board must have those answers. I have given you statistics that show again this year that our barley sales are down. Now there has got to be a reason.

We can get more return at the farm gate if we can reduce the costs beyond the farm gate. I have already said to her, if grain can be moved, the Wheat Board directly or through its agents can very clearly sell barley direct from the farm gate to a U.S. buyer, either a maltster or a feeder or whatever, without having to pay all the costs of elevation, cleaning and railway transportation.

If the alternative process is cheaper, then that is what they should be advocating that we do for the farm community, particularly in Manitoba, because our costs of going east and west are so high.

I would like answers to those from the people who have the jurisdiction and the responsibility, and I hope the member opposite would also, because the net result will be improving the sales for Manitoba or western Canadian farmers into a market that is of improved significance for us.

Three years ago, the United States was the sixth largest market for us in all grains. Last year, they were at third or fourth, I am not just sure which. Now

this year it looks like they might be as high as second. That is how critically important they are.

They pay a higher price because it is a domestic market, it is not a subsidized market. Costs of getting our grains into that market are lower, and the Wheat Board has done a good job on the wheat side. There is no question. But for some reason there appears to be a slippage on the barley side.

If we have identified some areas where we can improve ourselves, then the system needs to respond because the farmer cannot live with \$.50 at the farm gate for barley. He has to have more.

As I said to her earlier, if you go back to 1980 and you look at all the costs from the farm gate on, they have tended to double. If she wants specific numbers, I have got them back at my office, and I will give them to her, whether we are talking elevation, handling, cleaning, rail costs, terminal costs, Lakehead costs, all those costs. They are all recorded, and at the same time we have seen the value of wheat and barley at the farm gate drop to about half.

That is not sustainable, and I am not blaming the Wheat Board. I am not blaming anybody other than just asking some questions. There has been a principle that whatever the costs are, pass them back to the farm gate.

I have been on this issue for four or five years, and the whole issue of talking about transportation is all about that. It is the broader question. How does a farmer get more value out of the grain he produces? How does he get more value out of the beef he produces, the pork he produces? To me, that is the critical bottom line.

* (1510)

He has given up more and more of that value beyond the farm gate. Yes, we can say he gets the value of two slices out of a loaf of bread and use corn flakes as an example, and on it goes. Those examples are real. Now what are the answers? I have not heard of anybody beyond the farm gate going broke handling agricultural products, but I have seen a lot of farmers get into severe difficulty because they have been shorted at the farm gate.

We need some answers to that, and that is the restructuring that needs to occur. It is not that we throw this out or throw that out. The Wheat Board has done a good job for the Canadian farmers in western Canada. A very good job. But maybe it can be better. I cannot understand how so many of

the costs can double, and the farm community accepts that, and he takes less and less for his grain.

Now in the past, yes, they have asked government to jump in and fill in the hole. We have done it since 1986. It has been increased cost of beyond the farm gate which reduced our value of grain, and it has been grain trade war related, yes. But the facts are, as she well knows, it does not matter what political stripe, federal or provincial, people are understanding that there is not a never-ending pot of money to offset impacts of this kind of nature. I mean, you cannot throw billions and billions of dollars in subsidy into agriculture forever. We are going to have to live more and more at the marketplace. If we do not put these questions forward to the people beyond the farm gate to get some answers, we are in trouble as a farm community.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess the minister has said—he talks about the report and he talks about quoting figures on what the Wheat Board has and has not done, and figures can be quoted any way you want them to read what you want. But I would like the minister—he says he has information for us. I would like him to table that information. I would like to ask him if he would share that.

He also said that there was a 19-member task force, and there were 11 members who were supportive. I wonder if the minister could tell us which of the groups were supportive and which ones were not.

Mr. Findlay: Yes, I would. I have already indicated to the member that when we get to Vote 6, I will give her those numbers. I have left them in the office. I cannot bring the whole office in.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do not expect you to, but if you could just share them with us.

Mr. Findlay: I will share them with you in exactly the context that I have given them to you, in general detail.

I will go through the 19 members that were on the barley round table and tell her which ones are in the group of 11. Mr. Lee Erickson, Alberta farmer is one of the group of 11. Larry McQuire, a Manitoba farmer and on the Wheat Board Advisory Committee, is one of the members. Doug Campbell, president of Canada Grains Council, is one of the 11. Dennis Laycraft, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Cattlemen Association, who on the round table was

represented by James Bizan from Manitoba, also a member of Canadian Cattlemen Association, supported it. Mr. Bill Vaags, a Manitoba farmer and past chairman of Manitoba Pork and chairman of the Canadian SAGIT, that is the Sectoral Advisory Group on International Trade for Agriculture, supports it. Mr. Brian Hayward, CEO of United Grain Growers, is one of the 11. Mr. Paul Coleteck, manager of the grain merchandising of James Richardson & Sons, chairman of the Shippers and Exporters Committee of Vancouver Grain Exchange, supports it. Keith Lambert, senior vice-president, financial and administration of Molson Breweries, supports it; but he was represented on there by Margo Doer, also of the same company. Tony Temple, the manager of Louis Dreyfus Canada and chairman of Winnipeg Commodity Exchange, supports it. Karl Aushouse, president and general manager of Chinook Grain Company, supports it. Paul Hamos, assistant vice-president of merchandising at Cargill, supports it. So that is 11 of the 19 members who are on that committee.

She mentioned the Keystone Agricultural Producers a while ago. I have indication that there may have been a slight change in their statement recorded on CKLQ Brandon on May 4, where it is recorded and given to me that Keystone Agricultural Producers have reacted favourably to the decision to the results of the barley calculation. So there is pretty broad support for it, and I am prepared to call the reaction of the committee not 11 to 19 or five out of 19 on her side. I say there are two different views expressed, but there are some questions that need to be answered.

Let us move forward and ask for answers to these questions that have been raised by the report. The report in itself is not totally definitive, but it has raised some issues that are of concern to us, and it is part of the overall picture of assessing whether we are getting at the farm gate full value of what we are producing.

All the statistics that I have, and I will give them to her, show that our value of the commodity has shrunk and shrunk, while other people's portion has gone up and up and up. That is not sustainable, and government cannot stand in and fill in the hole forever. We have probably made a few mistakes in doing that because we have not given people an understanding of the true reality.

If you do not have to do it in cattle or hogs or PMU or oilseeds or special crops, then let us start talking to farmers about shifting more of the production to those commodities that give you a living at the farm gate.

So that is the list I have given her and these are the news releases that have come out. This is all public information that I have given her.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chair, I guess we could argue back and forth about the value of the report and how it should be interpreted and what the benefits are. We have heard lots of discussion from people who wanted to make presentations in Ottawa on this report and were not allowed to make the presentations.

All I was asking is that when we have such a large representation of Manitoba producers who are not in agreement with the report and it deals with an issue that will dramatically change the pattern of agriculture, I think that there should be the opportunity for producers to have input. I believe that producers should be able to vote on this and there should be a plebiscite on it. I was hoping that the minister would take that stand and stand with farmers and allow them to have input onto it.

I just want to get back to the program analysis part of the Personnel Services that we were looking at earlier. We have not passed that line yet.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Deputy Chairperson of Committees): Madam Chairperson, in the section of Supply meeting in Room 255, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) raised a point of order. As Deputy Chairperson, I ruled the point of order out of order. The member for Flin Flon challenged the ruling on the nonpoint of order.

A voice vote was conducted and the ruling of the Chair was upheld. Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote be taken.

* (1520)

Madam Chairperson: A formal vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* * *

(Concurrent sections in Chamber for formal vote)

* (1540)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. In the section of Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 to consider the Estimates of the Department of Family Services, the ruling of the Chairperson on a

point of order was challenged. A voice vote was taken and subsequently the ruling of the Chair was upheld. Members then requested that a formal vote be taken. Therefore, the question before the Committee of Supply is, shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

A COUNTED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 26, Nays 19.

Madam Chairperson: The ruling of the Chair is sustained.

AGRICULTURE

(continued)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The Committee of Supply will continue its deliberations. This section is dealing with the Department of Agriculture, and the section meeting in Room 255 will continue to deal with the Estimates for the Department of Family Services.

The Committee of Supply dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture will reconvene. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

Shall item 1.(e)(1)–

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I would like to get back to the question that I have twice tried to get an answer to. It seems each time I start there is an interruption in the House.

I want to go back to the managerial position in Personnel Services where we have a decrease in salary from \$58,900 to \$46,100. I wanted to ask the minister why there was such a decrease in that position. Is there a new person in the position or what is that? Why is there such a decrease?

Mr. Findlay: The difference is—there are a couple of features involved of why the difference exists. One was that the previous person in the position was at the top of the salary range. The position was then vacant for a period of time and when that happens, the department enters the figure which would represent the bottom of the range.

Over the course of time, a new individual has been hired in there who is at, we might say, the midpoint in the range between the two figures. The major reason for that is the person who was there has 24 years of experience, and the person who is there has six years of experience. So it is a combination of vacant for a while and filled by the

person obviously lower in the salary range because of less experience.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister tell us who is filling that position now?

Mr. Findlay: The position is currently filled by Marilyn Robinson.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just want to go back further then. The minister, in the first day of Estimates, said that 51 percent of the positions of the Department of Agriculture are filled by women. As I see this, this is a woman replacing a man, in Salaries, and I would just like to ask the minister if he can provide us with documentation of women who are in management positions.

He said there were about six women that had come into upper positions in the department. Could we not get a comparison of what their salary is versus the people that they replaced? I can understand that there is a difference in the number of years that other people were in the positions, but would it be possible to have some information on what the difference is in salary? I just would like to do some comparing on that.

* (1550)

Mr. Findlay: We will supply that, but I want to remind the member that she may be looking for some issue, but I want to remind her The Civil Service Act is gender neutral.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, I want to assure the minister I am not looking for an issue. I am just trying to do some comparisons of where women in the department are fitting into a pay scale versus people that were there and the number of years that they have been in that position, just purely for information sake, not trying to make an issue of it.

I want to also ask then under this section whether there are any aboriginal people working in the department. I ask that because we have aboriginal farmers in the province, and I know that many of them do not come under the jurisdiction of this department, as the minister has indicated when I talked about the loans program, but they are farmers and they do require services. So are there any aboriginal people on staff?

Mr. Findlay: At this point in time there are three.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can we just know where those people are employed? Are they here in the city, or are they out in the field somewhere? Where are they?

Mr. Findlay: Two in the city and one in rural Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson: 1.(e) Personnel Services (1) Salaries \$265,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$43,900—pass.

1.(f) Program Analysis (1) Salaries \$189,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$45,800—pass.

2. Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation (a) Administration.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I guess this is a very important section of Agriculture, and we have many questions that we would like to raise as to the changes that are coming in crop insurance.

We had the crop insurance review which took place last year, and we were supportive of that review. It was time that it should be done. However, I am disappointed that it took so long for that review to be made public and then resulting in the difficulties of not having the time to price things out, not having the time to implement those changes. The report ended up being tabled much later than it should have been, and it caused a lot of—even the people on the committee were disappointed that the minister chose to sit on that report for that length of time.

Under this section, we have the GRIP program, and the minister knows that there are many concerns with that program. The program is, in fact, not meeting the needs of farmers, although it has resulted in some cash getting into the farmers' hands. It is not sound, and because of the sliding average that it is based on and many of those issues, farmers are quite concerned, and there are many issues that have to be addressed on that one.

When we look at the crop insurance review, that is the area where there are many issues that have to be addressed. I want to ask the minister, first of all, when the report was done, why did the minister choose to wait such a long time? Why was the report not made public so that changes could be made and many of the recommendations could have been implemented, rather than delaying it to such a point where there could not be the changes made this year?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I would like to introduce the staff that have now come into the Chamber. I have Mr. Brian Manning, the Acting General Manager; Mr. Neil Hamilton, the Director of

Research; and Mr. Dave Donaghy, ADM of the Department of Agriculture.

The crop insurance review is a very extensive document. Certainly, I want to congratulate all 10 members who were on the committee who went across Manitoba and synthesized into the report the views that were wide and ranging and many and varied. There was a very good turnout of people. There were lots of submissions given.

What the review has done is identify 123 recommendations, which is a lot of recommendations. Now if I would have tossed this out to the public the next day, the member would have said, why have you not got things ready to be implemented? You cannot win with her.

The corporation spent some time to be sure that they were ready to respond to the recommendations, and many of them are complex, many of them are costly, and some of them are certainly controversial. So we took some time to be sure that we were in a position to act right away on those that could be acted upon and determine those that needed to have further research and development before they could be put in place, and also there are some that do not relate or are nonactionable.

So the corporation and the board spent some time to sort of get the various recommendations categorized into those groups, so that when it was released, you could show that there was action. At the time of release, 30 percent of the recommendations had been incorporated into this year's program; 20 percent of the recommendations are under study for future implementation; another 30 percent are identified for future study or for future analysis; and another 20 percent basically do not apply or are nonactionable.

So the corporation, in my mind, did the responsible thing. It prepared itself for being able to respond in a very proactive fashion of getting on with the recommendations that were doable. The member says, well, we needed to get it out to the public so the changes could be made.

The corporation has to make the changes, not the public. The public had their input as to what changes they wanted to have done, and the corporation has to respond. The corporation also, in looking at some of the recommendations, has to keep in mind fairness to all. It also has to keep in mind the cost, whether the budget of the department can afford the cost of some of these.

As I said, there is a number in the category requiring further research, and the member would chastise us if we went and implemented recommendations and she found out later we did not do our homework. We are in the process of doing it. So you can always criticize us no matter which way we go, but I think the study was complete, it was extensive, it was a good contribution and good activity in terms of putting thoughts and ideas forward. The corporation is moving as effectively and as fast as it can.

* (1600)

The other thing to keep in mind is that you can only move so fast in all these proposed changes in terms of analysis because we have to run the daily program, and that is crop insurance, it is revenue insurance, it is livestock feed security and a variety of other programs. They have to be administered and operated, and you cannot stop all those to get on with addressing these proposed recommendations.

I think, in balance, the corporation and the board did the right thing in analyzing and getting ready for changes for '93, releasing it when it was done and doing the further research on the recommendations that still have not been acted upon.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess I neglected to commend the committee for the work they had done. I know that they had put many hours in, and I want to recognize them for the work. I hope that the recommendations that they made will be taken seriously and those that can be will be implemented.

I guess many of the questions will go hand in hand with GRIP and with crop insurance because they tie quite closely together, so if that is all right, I will go on those together.

When we look at crop insurance and GRIP, one of the concerns that farmers have is that crop insurance coverage has gone down considerably to where it was prior to GRIP. The concern is then if GRIP is going to be gone in 1995, as the indication is that we will have to be looking at different programs, what will happen? Since the coverage is going down under crop insurance, is crop insurance going to become ineffective as coverages continue to decrease?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chair, Individual Productivity Indexing started in 1992, and certainly one of the recommendations in the crop insurance review was greater individualization of coverage. Individual

Productivity Indexing determines each person's coverage for himself for each of his crops relative to how he has performed in previous years in comparison with other producers on the same soil zone.

You can envision, in general, 50 percent of the producers will move very little from their previous IPI; 25 percent will be higher; and another 25 percent will be lower, because they have produced previous crops or yields that were below the competitive average on their soil zone.

I think what the member is probably referring to in terms of reduced coverage is not because the bushels-per-acre coverage went down. In fact, overall if we did an analysis I am sure you will find the bushels per acre probably crept up to a small extent, on average, in a soil zone. But each individual person's IPI will be above or below, depending on how he performed.

In 1993 your IPI is 75 percent on the basis of your production of '90, '91 and '92, each creating 25 percent of your coverage, and your previous history the other 25 percent, and in '94 you will be 100 percent on your IPI of the previous four years.

One of the reasons that your dollars per acre is down in crop insurance is because of the value of a bushel of wheat or barley. That is why the coverage is down. It is not bushels per acre necessarily down, unless you have not before performed competitively relative to your IPI.

I can assure the member, many people have gone up in coverage of bushels per acre through the Individual Productivity Indexing process.

Ms. Wowchuk: What I was getting at is prior to GRIP, I understand, you could get your crop insurance by different levels. You could get three different levels of crop insurance. You could take a choice of what level you wanted to insure to, and now there is only one level that you can insure. That is the concern, that crop insurance has been weakened in that sense, that the individual cannot choose to insure to a higher level on crop insurance.

Mr. Findlay: Prior to GRIP you could have two levels, 70 percent or 80 percent. If you are still in crop insurance and not in revenue insurance, today you can have 70 or 80 percent coverage. If you are in revenue insurance, you get the maximum coverage in revenue insurance by being at 70 percent. Beyond that, revenue insurance fills in the

gap. So you still have a choice in crop insurance of 70 or 80 percent. That has not changed.

Ms. Wowchuk: But in that sense you do not have as much coverage as you used to when there was just crop insurance. The concern is that the level of coverage has dropped, so if it has dropped and the choice of different levels of insurance is gone—if we do not have GRIP, is crop insurance then a weaker program than it was before? That is the feeling of producers out there, that crop insurance has been weakened.

Mr. Findlay: The basic answer to her question is no. If revenue insurance terminates sometime in the future, it will not affect crop insurance coverage, other than, if you are currently at 70 percent, which you are in revenue insurance, you can then go back to choosing 80 percent in crop insurance. But there is no advantage today. You are throwing money away if you are in GRIP and you choose 80 percent, because you are getting double coverage between 70 and 80 percent, paying double premium, and you will not get double benefit.

What you are really doing in revenue insurance today is insuring to 100 percent of your IPI crop insurance yield, bushels per acre, times 70 percent of the 15-year IMAP price. So if you want to look at it that way, GRIP takes you from 70 percent crop insurance coverage to 100 in terms of bushels per acre, and your gross coverage is multiplied by 70 percent of the 15-year IMAP for each crop. So the fundamental support process in bushels per acre through IPI will stay the same for a farmer after GRIP, as it did before.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Chairperson, my questions will be directed in regard to the Lockheads in Minnedosa in regard to a letter that you sent out, Mr. Minister, on March 9, in regard to the acreage measurements. In your letter you say: The corporation's policy regarding acreage measurements has been consistent over the past number of years.

They seem to say that, as far as they can tell, the corporation's policy has not changed, but there may be a tolerance in 1993, and they feel that the issues have not been dealt with as far as the acreage and it says here: What about the agents coming up with different acres on the same crop, same year? What about the crop insurance having the right to lower acres but not increase them?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, we do not have the letter in front of us. The member has the letter and the questions that are asked in the letter are there. I dare say that the response in the letter that I sent is the correct response in terms of the issue. I guess it is always easy to nit-pick on some small detail and nobody is perfect. People go out and they measure, they measure bushels, they measure acres in a claim position and whether you are off by one or two acres, to my mind, they are human errors.

So we have responded to the letter, and we respond to many letters and concerns trying to help people understand the rules of the corporation and how agents function in the process of adjusting claims. Over the course of time, certainly, procedures do change and are altered as a result of experience. Maybe this is one of those cases, but I can assure the member this is one of many, many comments that come in, and we try to answer to the best of our ability. I will have to also warn the member that nobody is absolutely perfect, 100 percent of the time right on the nose. It is easy to nit-pick, and I think staff have done the best possible job subject to human error which we all are subject to.

* (1610)

Mr. Gaudry: In the letter you mention, Mr. Minister, that the technique of measuring and using a wheel is an accepted method for accurately determining acres. In the previous letter, they mention that they had been advised that the wheel was not going to be used anymore. How else, otherwise, would it be measured?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, in the past, the wheel has been used for measurement and it will still be used in the future—maybe not to the extent as in the past. What is called GIS technology or Graphic Information Services, which is really satellite imagery, may well be used in the future as a technique of verifying acres.

I would dare say, depending on circumstances, I would expect the corporation to use both procedures, the older procedure and any new technology that is available to them, to determine through overhead surveillance what the acres are, what the number of bales are, those kinds of situations.

Mr. Gaudry: Do you have an idea what the coverage will be for 1993 through GRIP? Has it been established at this date?

Mr. Findlay: Producers received the information for 1993 in basically two packages. By March 15, they received their Revenue Insurance Premiums and Support Prices, and then by April 15, they received their Individual Productivity Index coverages and therefore then you can calculate your coverage per acre.

It goes out in a form like this. You have got the Revenue Insurance on this side, Crop Insurance on this side. This is the documentation that went to them in the middle of April.

Just to read down to the Revenue Insurance category, you have got the IPI, Individual Productivity Indexing; long-term average yields for that producer for each crop; Support Price in terms of dollars per tonne or dollars per bushel for each crop; you have the Target Revenue for each crop in terms of dollars per acre; it has got the Premium Rate in terms of percentage; it has got the Premium Per Acre in terms of dollars per acre and in Crop Insurance basically the same categories.

So at the far right-hand side, you have your total GRIP premium, Crop Insurance plus Revenue Insurance and you have your dollars per acre Target Revenue in Revenue Insurance and your dollar per acre coverage in Crop Insurance.

So that farmer has a pretty complete document. It is quite readable and understandable, and in my mind, a vast improvement over the form in which it went out in previous years. So I congratulate the corporation for being able to put it out. A lot of information could be very complex if it is not properly put on a piece of paper, and it is very well done in this particular year.

So farmers have all that information. As I said before, the individual productivity indexing is 75 percent on the yield that they got on those soil zones in '91-'92, and '90, '91 and '92 got 25 percent on their long-term average yield. Next year it will be 100 percent on the previous four years.

So there are some adjustments occurring for farmers. You have IPIs anywhere from .7 to 1.3. I would dare say that 90 percent of the IPIs would be between .9 and 1.1, and farmers will probably be growing those crops that they are doing the best at and know that if they want to increase their coverage in the future, they had better do better than average in terms of production of that crop in competition with other farmers on their soil zone each year from here on.

Mr. Gaudry: Would it be possible to get a copy of that report, Mr. Minister, or just an indication of the—

Mr. Findlay: Yes, we will get both members a copy of this entire package that goes to each producer. It has a lot of information, deadlines and changes to the programs, crops for which there is individual coverage, all your deadline dates, a real bible of ongoing information that each producer should be reading and keeping at his fingertips over the course of the year. So I will get a package of this to each of the critics.

Mr. Gaudry: I would like to thank the minister.

One more question. Almost all of the reduction of the Manitoba crop insurance comes as a result of the cuts to GRIP, and the minister's speech in the budget indicated that he has been able to maintain the main pillars of GRIP, but it is hard to see how he will do this given the size of the cuts to grip. Can the minister give us an indication of what is going to happen?

Mr. Findlay: The GRIP program in Manitoba was based on an awful lot of producer input over a period of time, a task force which had about three-quarters of the producers on it, and the principles Manitoba farmers wanted were individuality of their coverage and predictability of their support prices year in and year out. Through Individual Productivity Indexing, as I have mentioned, that individualizes each producer's coverage.

Predictability is there because they know the minimum support price that they are going to have for each crop before they plant the crop. Of course, the sort of example that I have in front of me here, this phantom individual would have coverage on red spring wheat of \$137 an acre under GRIP; \$122 for feed wheat under GRIP; \$141 an acre on durum. If he is growing barley, he would have coverage of \$118; if he is growing flax, \$152 an acre; if he is growing Argentina rapeseed, \$162 an acre. That is the predictability.

He knows his minimum gross revenue from each of those crops on a per acre basis. When the harvest is over and he measures his production and the grade is determined, then you know the market value in terms of yield times price. Whatever shortfall there is between this target revenue and the marketplace, he is paid that difference out of GRIP. That is the predictability, the individuality, predictability that farmers wanted in revenue insurance.

* (1620)

The reason that the expenditure for the Manitoba government is down—I think it is some \$17-million reduction in our expenditure—is because the IMAP prices have come down. IMAP price, as an example, for wheat in 1991 was \$4.15 a bushel. Last year, it was \$4.08 a bushel. This year, it is \$3.83 a bushel. So the price is down. That is basis a 15-year IMAP; that is basis the design at the beginning of the program. The actual projected market price for those crops is higher in '93 than it has been. So there is actually less risk for the insurer, in this case being particularly the two governments, so therefore the premium comes down. When the premiums come down, we pay less in our appropriation.

For some farmers, their level of coverage may remain exactly the same as it was the previous years, because they have raised their own individual coverage through IPI. There may be more bushels per acre times lower dollars per bushel. They maintain their revenue insurance up there. The premium still comes down because the actual market price projected is higher than it was the year before. If I remember the figures right, the reductions in premium for wheat were 9 percent; barley was 25 percent; I think canola 36 percent—or figures of that general nature in terms of reductions in premiums.

I have them now: red spring wheat, minus 9 percent; durum, minus 25 percent; CPS, minus 12.3 percent; utility wheat, minus 15.2 percent; flax, minus 26.6 percent; barley, 26.1 percent down in terms of premium reductions. So that is why. The producer's cost in terms of premium is down; provincial government's cost in terms of premium is down, and the federal government's cost in terms of premium is down.

The total liability covered last year was about a billion dollars, and this year, it is slightly less than a billion dollars. The general market value of a crop in Manitoba is \$900 million to a billion dollars, and that kind of liability is covered in GRIP, but we expect to get more from the marketplace in total in '93 than we did in '92 and did in '91, but farmers have the predictability of minimum gross income. If the farmer sells his crop for more than the target revenue, it all goes into his pocket. It does not go into anybody's pocket but his, and he then does not draw anything from the program, but he has

achieved what he wanted. His minimum income plus some extra all goes to him.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I want to just go back to the review a bit and talk about some of the recommendations and what has been implemented. One of the recommendations was changing the board structure and having it on a rotating schedule. Is that one of the recommendations that has been implemented? The minister is indicating it is not. Is there a problem with changing that, or is that something that is being considered? Would there be difficulties in following those recommendations as far as the structure of the board?

Mr. Findlay: The answer is no, we have not done it. I will say it is one of those that is under consideration, but let me caution the member that although it seemed to be good from a farmer's point of view, do not forget that we are the ultimate insurer, we accept, have to pay any liabilities that exceed the premiums. In other words, we accept the responsibility for deficits. The board members, in my mind, are no different than the board of directors over at Great-West Life. They have responsibility to manage the program fiscally responsibly from that point of view.

It will not be possible, in my mind, to have a continuing changing membership on the board who come in there, and I mean this is a concern I have as an advocate for a certain group of producers who want something for the producers. The board has responsibility well beyond that. They have to do what is right for producers, but they also have to manage the insurance program. Otherwise, it is going to go bankrupt. Government is not a bottomless pit of money, as I know the member is aware. If we are going to have advocates for us to make changes and do things for the producer, it is difficult for them to take the responsibility of being a board member.

In terms of the board membership, I have tried as best I can to have representation across the province, people from different interest groups. Whether they have forage interest or shield crop interest or special crop interest or expertise from the standpoint of insurance and how insurance programs are run, that is the kind of expertise I am trying to bring to the board but, whether we could act on those recommendations, given the concerns I have identified to the member, I see it as being hard to do, because the board has a responsibility to

manage and run and make decisions on policy, and we have to fund it.

So you can understand, there has to be a close relationship between the board and the department. We have to strike a budget that we could afford in the context of the fiscal guidelines of the government as a whole and the department as a whole. So there are a number of factors there, and I just want to make the member aware. I am not saying it is impossible, I am saying there are elements of difficulty to act in that direction.

I can understand why a producer wants it. They want something that gives them what they want. If you are going to create high levels of insurance, you create high levels of risk; therefore, you create high premiums. Premiums will eventually get so high, people will say, I cannot afford the program, and I do not think you want that to happen. You want affordable premiums, a level of risk protection that farmers can farm with and be affordable all along the way.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I can appreciate that answer. There has to be a balance on the board to assure that there is fairness and that the corporation can continue.

Mr. Findlay: I would like to add one other thing, and that is that the board has met and continues to meet with producer groups who lobby, say, Keystone Agricultural Producers or the corn growers or forage producers or cattle producers. They listen to their input on a constantly continuous basis, as does my office and myself.

I think, in balance, we get the input in that context to the board and to the minister's office. We do not have to have the advocates on the board. The advocates can come and meet with the board. The advocates can come and meet with the board. Just as an example, corn growers have lobbied for some time for individual coverage and the corporation is in the process right now to offer individual coverage to corn growers this year. So that is the result of the lobby over time, and my understanding is that there is a high level of satisfaction with the process that is ongoing.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister tell us then what is the farmer representation on the board right now, and at the same time what time commitment is expected of board members, and how are board members reimbursed for their time? Is it per meeting or is it on a salary?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the board members who are currently on the board are: Terry Johnson, a farmer from Elkhorn, is the chairman; Norm Edie the vice chairman from Dugald, Manitoba; Gwen Parker from Ste. Agathe, Manitoba; Ian Wishart from Portage; and Vern Nelson from Winnipeg. Those are the five members of the board. The Crop Insurance Act specifies no more than five members.

Ms. Wowchuk: A total of how many? How many on the board?

Mr. Findlay: The board is five. The maximum allowed by The Crop Insurance Act is five members on the board. You asked about the remuneration paid and the level of activity. On average they meet once a month and each meeting is a day to a day and a half.

There is usually a half a day to a day of preparation for each board meeting because there is a lot of material that is covered. The remuneration paid to each board member is \$105 a meeting, and the board chairman who has got a lot of activity beyond the board meetings is paid \$8,000 plus \$125 a meeting.

The board chairman is in constant contact with the executive. He is constantly receiving calls from producers. He is an entry point for producers who have concerns relative to the board and operations and he attends a lot of producer meetings at various places across the province, particularly in the winter.

* (1630)

So in my mind these members are absolutely underpaid for the duties that they are involved in and the activities they are involved in and the input they receive from producers individually and some various organizations. So they are really committing time and effort on behalf of the farm community that is not fully compensated for.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just on that, can the minister give us some comparison? What has happened to the salary or the remuneration? Has it stayed consistent over the past five to 10 years or has there been an increase in the chairman's salary? What has the increase been for board members and the chair?

Mr. Findlay: If the member could wait until the next day, I will get a detail. We do not have all the figures in front of us, but in general terms, the per diems have changed very little for some period of time.

I have to also remind the member that the level of activity, especially for the chairman, has accelerated with the involvement of revenue insurance, the crop insurance review, so I stand by what I said earlier that the compensation is not consistent with the level of activity, involvement and the time that they have to commit.

In addition to that, of course, they receive their transportation costs, their meals and lodging, if that is involved.

Ms. Wowchuk: If the minister could provide us with that at the next sitting, then I would appreciate that.

I just want to continue on in crop insurance. In January, there was a change in general manager of the Crop Insurance Corporation, and the reaction from some people was surprise.

I want to ask the minister, can he inform us what happened? Why was it necessary to change the general manager? What were the problems that had to be addressed? Why was there a change?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, like in operating anything, assessments have to be made, and the board made assessments over a period of time and felt that it would be appropriate to change the general manager. The previous general manager was offered another position in the Department of Agriculture which he willingly accepted.

I do not think it is constructive to get into a discussion, in the public sense, on some of the reasons why. I would hope it would suffice to say that it was a decision that was made by the board over an extended period of time, and the previous individual was offered a job that he accepted in the department.

We have a new acting general manager, who previously was in Portage in another capacity and is now fulfilling the position of acting general manager.

Ms. Wowchuk: Without getting into too much detail about this, I just want to ask the minister then, was it a difficulty dealing with farmers, or was it a difficulty implementing the program or was it difficulties—at what level were these difficulties? Was it concerns raised by farmers that were not happy with the actions of the general manager? Was it bad public relations? In what area were the problems?

Mr. Findlay: I think it is fair to say it was a general assessment and farmers had a lot of input over a

course of time that led the board to that decision. Because of the purpose, as you look in the Vision for the 1990s, the farmer is our client and he is No. 1 on our mind, and if there is a concern in any area over a period of time, they require analysis. The board did their analysis and made their decision.

Ms. Wowchuk: What interactions would the general manager have with farmers? Would he deal with farmers on a day-to-day basis or would farmers have direct contact with him? What was his role?

Mr. Findlay: Yes, the general manager is in contact with farmers on a day-to-day basis, farm organizations, direct communications and certainly different farm meetings across the province. Plus there are all the indirect contacts through the other staff. So I can assure the member that the general manager in this corporation is very much in contact with the farm public, and they can access him and his board and his executive very freely.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, the minister had indicated that this individual had been offered another position in the department and has taken it. Can you tell us where he has gone and what job he is doing now?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the individual has accepted the position of acting executive director of Manitoba Farm Mediation Board.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess I find that a concern, because if this person had difficulty dealing with farmers, and that in fact is what we have been told, that farmers could not communicate with this person in the position of general manager, now he has gone over to an area that is even—farmers who go to the Mediation Board are even in more difficult situations and need supports. If there is difficulty there, how could this person have been transferred into a position if he is not sensitive to the needs of farmers?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I do not think it is fair or right to discuss personnel issues in a public forum like this. These decisions are made by the executive of the department in consultation with the board, and it was not an easy decision for anybody. I think, from my point of view, it was ultimate fairness for the department's executive to offer another position to the member. Let us face it, there is not a whole list of positions available or open. That is the way it is.

* (1640)

The executive has confidence that whatever problems might have existed before, which the member for Swan River has identified, there will probably be less in the new position because there is less contact, less complexity of contact. We have all the confidence in the world that the duties of that position will be fulfilled adequately. I would prefer if the member would leave it at that.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess I am prepared to set it aside for now but would hope that the minister would monitor it and that we would not see difficulties arising in another department that is a very sensitive department for farmers, particularly when they get into a mediation situation. We will just set it aside for now and, if it arises, we will discuss it at another time.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I want to make the member very aware that the executive of the department monitors all positions in the department on an annual basis. It is an ongoing process of evaluation and annual reports. It is standard policy of the department. No one position will be different than the other in terms of that activity.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just one follow-up question then on that. The minister says that they follow up and do a monitoring. Is there a probation period that goes with this as well when somebody moves in from one area to another, particularly in a situation like this?

Mr. Findlay: The current position of general manager is acting and will be filled by competition in due course. The position of executive director of the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board is an acting position at this time. Again, the same thing, it will be filled in due course by competition.

Ms. Wowchuk: In due course, the minister says. What time frame would we be looking at to having both of those positions advertised and filled formally, rather than an acting position?

Mr. Findlay: That is a decision that the executive of the department will make as they make on all positions that need to be filled. They will act when they deem it appropriate to act.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister tell us then, between the position of general manager and the acting position on the Mediation Board, how do the salaries compare? One carries much more responsibility than the other. Would there be a difference in salary or is this man being paid at the same rate that he was in the other position?

Mr. Findlay: Well, I want to assure the member that the department executive is following what is called due civil service process and the individual is, at this point in time, receiving the same salary as he received in the previous position. That is subject to what we call due process by The Civil Service Act.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is the minister saying the classification is much lower or the original person who was in that executive position was at a lower salary, but this person just transferred over, their salary with them, even though there is less responsibility in it? I just want to know who was in that position before, what they were making versus the acting person. Is there quite a difference in salary?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, as I said earlier, the individual is currently at the same salary he was at as general manager of Crop Insurance. He is in what is called a red-circled position. He maintains that salary until the position is advertised. After the competition—it is actually a lower category—the salary would be adjusted at that time. It is the process that is used in all such movements of people.

If she wants, we can give her specific classifications of what they are. There is nothing unusual, she can be assured.

Ms. Wowchuk: We will leave that for now.

We were on the crop insurance review. One of the areas that I want to discuss is eligibility for contracts and whether any of the recommendations are changed for eligibility for contracts. If the minister will recall, last year we raised the concern several times of women who were wanting to set up their farm operations but were not being allowed to take out their own crop insurance claims and were having to put their crops under their partner's application. In some cases, this led to difficulty because there were those who chose not—where one partner might not have chosen to have crop insurance.

I want to know whether any changes are being made in that area now and whether those women, females, who choose to farm on their own are going to be allowed to get crop insurance. I know there were some that were allowed to get crop insurance; others were not. Is there any change in this eligibility category? What recommendations are being followed in this area from the crop insurance review?

Mr. Findlay: The corporation established a questionnaire to determine eligibility for contracts, particularly for where there was a request for contracts in a family situation. This is not only what she is referring to of husband-wife. It refers to father-son, two brothers, father-daughter. Any of those kinds of circumstances.

Over the course of time the corporation in 1992 amalgamated a lot of contracts where there had been separate contracts in various kinds of family relations. They examined whether the people were really separate in their operations or really in joint partnership or a family corporation or whatever it was, and they amalgamated a lot of contracts—and we will get the number for you shortly.

But the questionnaire that is used identifies such areas as land, machinery, storage, management, finance and marketing to determine whether there is one operation or whether it is really precisely two separate operations.

This questionnaire was given to the Human Rights Commission and was asked to look at it and respond to it, and they gave the corporation the indication that it was a fair and reasonable questionnaire to determine eligibility. The corporation is in the process of putting together a new brochure to explain the process of applying for separate contracts, but I want the member to be very aware that it applies to all kinds of family relationships.

The corporation is trying its best to keep the risk level of offering insurance as low as possible therefore, so the premiums for everybody can be kept as low as possible.

I think the member must be aware that if you have a situation where you have got, say, three members in a family unit and they each have a contract, they can do what is called a risk splitting. That increases the risk for the corporation offering insurance, and they have to apply that risk to all contract holders.

* (1650)

So I think going through the process they are going through, and it is not just male-female, it is male-male, it is female-female, male-female, and I think it is fair and reasonable, there is nothing to stop a couple from having the contract in the name of the female. Nothing to stop them. There is nothing magic about having it in the name of the male. It just happens maybe most traditionally that is the way it has been.

The corporation has gone through a fair bit of analysis on this over the last two or three years as a few particularly celebrated cases have come forward, but the corporation ultimately has to make decisions to the betterment of all contract holders. I think this questionnaire that has been put together and reviewed by the Human Rights Commission is as fair and reasonable as they can be.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister had indicated there was a questionnaire, I believe he said, being put together, or is it being used now?

Mr. Findlay: It is being used now.

Ms. Wowchuk: The other one. I just want to ask about one specific case that got a lot of coverage last year. I want to know whether that one has been resolved, and that is the case of Pat Roth, I think, who took her case to the Human Rights Commission, and at what stage is that? Has she been able to establish herself as an individual farmer or are they still considered a couple? Could the minister just fill us in on where that case is?

Mr. Findlay: The board's decision on it has been no, and it is currently in litigation, so we will just leave it at that.

In terms of amalgamation of contracts, in 1991, 720 were amalgamated; in 1992, 56 were amalgamated. A committee that was two members of the corporation staff and two members of the department staff reviewed these contracts. In 1992, they also reviewed 34 existing conditional contracts and amalgamated four; in 1993, 150 new application reviews were completed and 14 were amalgamated. So it has been an ongoing process of analysis by a committee involving the department and the corporation.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that this goes across the board, whether it is husband-wife or father-son. I want to ask him, are there many young families, not as many as we would like to see, trying to get started in farming right now? Because of the high costs of equipment and facilities, many times when young individuals start up their operation, they cannot afford to buy all their equipment, and they do share equipment with their parents, with the other generation. Does this policy make it more difficult for young people, for young men, to get started in farming?

I am not opposed to the idea. I understand why these contracts have to be amalgamated, and I understand that there should not be abuse of the

system as there was in some cases. My concern is whether this is making it more difficult for young people, whether there is recognition of the fact that, because of the difficult financial situations, they cannot buy all the equipment that they need up-front, they have to share some of the equipment. Are these people able to get their crop insurance, or does it have to be combined with their father or someone else?

Mr. Findlay: Equipment can often be shared. As I mentioned earlier, of the information areas that are in the questionnaire, and there are six of them, machinery is only one of them. Provided there is a demonstration of adequate separation in the other categories, sharing machinery in itself is not going to cause a person to be turned down.

In other instances, people will be granted conditional separate contracts over the course of two or three years. They have the opportunity to prove their separation, that they operate separately in terms of management and decisions and various other factors.

I want to remind the member that she is looking at it, maybe it is a negative for the young person getting started. I am a farmer too, and I say it is a positive for the son to get the benefit of the father's previous experience. I think in many cases you will find that fathers, if they are successful, they would not be able to help the son, and if they are successful, I guarantee they are more likely to be above the average in terms of their IPI. If the son comes in as in a partnership with the father, he is subject to higher coverage technically than he would be able to on his own if he had to start right from scratch and prove himself.

The father's experience I think will gain you a few bushels per acre higher yield than the son being all by himself. So there are some positives for the joint relationship. Once the son gets his feet under him, you know, two, five, whatever years later he may want to apply for separate contracts and set up a separate operation. So there is a positive side, too, to work with dad or mom.

Ms. Wowchuk: And do we not all know it. I mean, many of us have gone through that.

I guess just an example, and there are cases where of course you take advantage of the knowledge that the parents have, and parents are very good at supporting, but also there are instances where for whatever reason these people may want

to set up their own contracts. I guess I want to use an example, and I want to know whether this person would qualify, without using names.

If a young man was getting started in an operation but worked away from home, coming back on weekends to work on the land, but was working out to supplement his income or get established, would that be something that would be considered not a separate operation even though he had his own land and was working along with his father, but was working off the farm because, as many farmers do, needed that extra money to get started? Would that contract have to be tied in with the parents or would that be a situation where he or she, whatever, would be able to get a separate contract?

Mr. Findlay: It is impossible to answer in terms of generalities. The only way that the corporation could look at it is to fill out the questionnaire and in balance, if there is adequate separation, there will be separate contracts; if in balance there is not, there cannot be. There is no generality that that can be used, because every situation is different, and the corporation has the responsibility, the staff, to analyze it and make an ultimate decision on the basis of all the information on the questionnaire.

* (1700)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., 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.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, prior to the reading of the order of bills and resolutions, I would just like to indicate there

was agreement yesterday by all parties that the resolution standing in the name at the top of the order, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), would remain in its place, and we would proceed to the next resolution, the name of the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). I realize that we have to go through bills and whatnot. I just wanted to make sure that was clearly understood. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable deputy government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would concur in the remarks of the opposition House leader that we would ask for leave of the House to ensure that member's resolution did not lose its space in the order.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow Resolution 20 to remain in its place in the event that we would get there after going through all of the order of bills as listed, and that we would just by-pass Resolution 20, move directly to 21, and that Resolution 20 would remain at the top of the list? Is there agreement?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: That is done. Okay.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with 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: Is there leave that it remain standing? [agreed]

Also standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans) who has one minute remaining.

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: 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: Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 203—The Health Care Records Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion for 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: Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 205—The Ombudsman Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion for 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 that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 208—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), Bill 208 (The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail), standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with Bill 209? No. Are we proceeding with Bill 211? No. Are we proceeding with Bill 214? No.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 20—Seasonal Job Strategy for Post-Secondary Students

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, Resolution 20 will remain standing in its place.

Res. 21—Churchill Rocket Range

Mr. Speaker: Moving right along to Resolution 21, the resolution of the honourable member for Point Douglas, the Churchill Rocket Range.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that

WHEREAS unemployment and a deteriorating economy are causing layoffs and rising costs for communities throughout Manitoba; and

WHEREAS Churchill is endeavouring to increase the economic activity that will ensure the viability of the rail line and the port; and

WHEREAS the reactivation of the Churchill Rocket Range would result in hundreds of badly needed new jobs in northern Manitoba and would secure the bayline and the port; and

WHEREAS the economic viability of Churchill is important to all of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS reactivation and upgrading of the Churchill Research Rocket Range will ensure Churchill's viability and provide a major boost to the general provincial economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba indicate its concern with the provincial government's slow positive response to Churchill's efforts to assist AKJUIT Aerospace Inc. to reopen the Churchill Research Range; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly request the provincial government to consider making the reactivation of the research range a top priority in the current fiscal year.

Motion presented.

Mr. Hickes: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased at this time, to speak on this important resolution, a resolution and issue that is not only vital to the

long-term economic future of the community of Churchill, but to the economic future of much of northern Manitoba.

As everyone knows or should know, the Port of Churchill has suffered greatly over the past few years. When I grew up in Churchill, it had a population in excess of 7,000. Sadly, the population today is closer to 1,200. We all know about the hostility of the current federal government towards utilizing the Port of Churchill for shipping of grain. The port is currently waiting with a great deal of anxiety to see the review of the port that had been commissioned by the federal government last year. It probably will not be known for sure what will happen to the port until after the federal election.

Fortunately, thanks to the consistent lobbying of supporters for the port, including Churchill member of Parliament, Rod Murphy, the federal government has confirmed that the port will be open this year. But, being open is not enough. If we can keep the port open and, with it, the bayline, then the rocket range itself can be revived. The community of Churchill, along with a private firm, have been working very hard to revive the port. Now we are in a situation which, if the federal and provincial governments will get behind the proposal, the rocket range can be revived and literally more than 200 jobs will be created at Churchill, along with several hundred more in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it really is that simple. The people of Churchill and northern Manitoba are waiting for a commitment from this government, along with the federal government, under the Western Diversification Program. This probably is the very last chance we will get to save the rocket range and, frankly, keep this industry in this country. If this opportunity is lost, then the industry will go to Alaska, which is competing for the same business. To lose this chance would be a major step backwards for this entire country.

AKJUIT Aerospace Inc. has put forward a viable plan. They, along with the people of Churchill, have been extremely patient waiting for the news on this proposal, but time is running out, and the competition is preparing their own plans. We need a commitment now. To wait until this fall will be too late. Reviving the rocket range will be a major capital investment of over \$150 million. Churchill is in an ideal location geographically for launching rockets, as has been proved in the past by the over 3,000 rockets that were launched there in the past.

The provincial government has made commitments in the past to seeing the range reopen, and I fully support what commitments they have made. We were very excited, as many northerners were, when we heard the throne speech on December 5, 1991. They stated that the reactivation and expansion of the Churchill Research Range is a provincial priority, and my government will continue to work towards the operation of this facility as a commercial enterprise. Those were spoken by the reader of the throne speech at that time.

Sadly, a year later, there was no such commitment in the next throne speech, and questions remain as to what actions the government has taken over the 14 months to get the range operating. The often promised \$75,000 of provincial funding to match the funds raised by the residents of Churchill has still not materialized. For this reason, we were very disappointed and, frankly, shocked that there was no mention whatsoever of the rocket range in the most recent throne speech. Despite questions in the House, we have not received any indication as to why the range was not mentioned in this throne speech or why the government has not taken a more proactive stand on this issue. This should not be a political issue. It is an issue that should be supported by all Manitobans who want economic growth in this province.

* (1710)

The rocket range should be an economic priority of this government, not just something that the government should simply pay lip service to on an annual basis. I look forward to hearing good news from this government on this issue as soon as possible because the major companies, the communications companies that want to use this rocket range, they want to be launching by the year of 1996. If that is to be a reality, we have to start acting now. We cannot keep continuing to put it off, because the longer we put it off, the better plans that their competitions will have, and they will lose faith in the ability of Churchill.

It is crucial, Mr. Speaker, that this government hopefully will support this resolution for the betterment of the community of Churchill and all of Manitoba. We need a real proactive plan here by the government, because the mayor and council and the residents of Churchill have been working extremely hard and have been very confident that

this project can go. They have been meeting with private investors. I am confident that those private investors will look very favourably to the Churchill rocket range, because the community has put in a lot of time, a lot of effort and have thought this out really well.

We have to commend the whole community of Churchill, the mayor and the council, the residents that have supported this, especially the community of Manitoba who supported this idea because they realize, Mr. Speaker, that if this project, the space board, is a success, that will also mean the success of the Port of Churchill, the success of maintaining our railroad through northern Manitoba, which benefit all the outlying communities.

When I say outlying communities, you are looking at Pikwitonei, Ilford, communities of Gillam—[interjection] The rail line does not go through those communities. It goes through Thicket Portage, and it goes on through Herchmer and all the way through to the community of Churchill.

Mr. Speaker, without that rail line going through, then we will lose the opportunity of maintaining our shipping to the Northwest Territories through the Port of Churchill, because without that rail line going through Churchill, how will they get the goods to ship up north through NTCL. The whole community of Churchill and the bayline depend on the success of the rocket range.

If we have the successful reactivation of the range, then the Port of Churchill and the rail line should follow in step, and it should make Churchill a thriving community like the community I remember when I was a child growing up, when we used to have about 7,000 people living there. We had an active rocket range at that time. We had the air force in there. We had the army, the navy. The community was thriving. We had employment opportunities for anyone that wanted to work at that time. Now there is very, very little.

An Honourable Member: And it is because of the Tories.

Mr. Hickers: No, the economy is bad, and Churchill has been very, very patient. They have continued their willingness and the efforts to try and rejuvenate their community.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House should support such actions. I hope the government, in their wisdom, will support the community and hopefully will negotiate the \$75,000 that was promised to the

community. It has been passed and everything, but the community has not received it yet and that is only the first step.

When they are talking about dealing with Western Diversification at the federal level, I hope this government will support the community in their endeavours to achieve the dollars from Western Diversification to get the spaceport reactivated.

It is very important, Mr. Speaker, because we have a community hospital there, we have good schools in there and we can get the community thriving again. We have very, very active leaders in that community. You talk to the mayor and the councils, they have nothing—[interjection]

The member says, where is the member for Rupertsland? I say, the member for Rupertsland is waiting for this government to call an election. If they will have the courage to call a by-election, you will see the next member sitting right on this side. That constituency has not had an MLA since November. I say, shame on the government. The government should have called that by-election by now, because the constituency of Rupertsland wants and needs an MLA to represent those communities. The North needs a representative that will represent the interests of the North.

I am glad that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) raised that question of where the MLA for Rupertsland is, because I say, call the by-election and you will have your—call the by-election.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the government will look at supporting this resolution and help Churchill become a thriving, enthusiastic community which the mayor and the council and residents are trying to maintain with low job levels.

I do not think this is a partisan resolution. I think all it says is that the government support the community of Churchill to reactivate their spaceport. The way I look at this resolution is that I cannot see anything negative in this. All it is asking is for all members of this House to stand up and support a community that is in need right now and that, with a little assistance and strong support from the government, will be once again thriving.

Mr. Speaker, with that, thank you for the opportunity and I welcome the response from the government.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to comment on this resolution and inform you, Sir, and

the Clerk, that it was on a cold, cold winter night that I, in the company of the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Native and Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), along with the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) travelled up to the community of Churchill.

Why were we there, Sir? We were there specifically at the call of the mayor, Mayor Webber, and a committee he had formed to do precisely what this resolution talks, to examine the possibilities, to encourage us as the provincial government to support the community of Churchill in their endeavour to reactivate the rocket site that has had and seen some great days.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Churchill is uniquely situated for this purpose of satellite launching and rocketry because of its environment. Southern Manitobans may think that strange, but in terms of sunshine hours, in terms of weather disturbances, in terms of climatic conditions, Churchill is one of the best sites that we have in North America for this particular reason.

Without even in fact jeopardizing our collective position with respect to our Treasury Board and Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness)—because honourable members, well, there are not too many members here now that have had previous Treasury Board experience, but certainly Treasury Board and former Treasury Board members on this side will understand that you do not commit public dollars without at least a passing nod to Treasury Board, least of all, the Minister of Finance. We committed dollars right on the site, \$50,000 to help that committee that was specifically working on a very exciting potential project that they were competing with other sites for the—[interjection] Was it 75,000? There it is. It was 75. I was being modest, Mr. Speaker, as is my style.

* (1720)

What are we talking about—the potential of Churchill. We are talking about, first of all, involving, dare I say it Mr. Speaker? I will whisper it to you, Mr. Speaker, because we would need the Americans involved. We would need Yankee dollars. We would need Yankee technology. They would be the major users of the space port.

It never ceases to amaze me when it comes to my good friend, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), who understandably and for every good and right reason will get up in this Chamber once in a while and chastise this minister, this government, for not

being concerned about or not developing enough with respect to the forestry industry in the North.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) will talk about attention not being paid to the North. The honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), who comes from a noble and long serving whale hunting family, talks to us about the need for and the legitimate concerns that Churchill has in this interest.

Yet these are the same people who just bridle at the idea of trade, free trade with the Americans, commercial ties with the Americans. They want us to build a big wall. I mean, what is being envisioned here is globe-circling satellites, a series and launch that could bring the rapidly changing communications industry into the 21st Century.

It may have severe implications for existing telephone companies, but surely the members opposite are not saying that these rockets should be launched at Churchill, and just when they get close to Gretna, they should do a right-angle turn and maybe go to Melita and Reston and fly over my colleagues from Virden and those places and then land back there.

Surely we are talking about the international implications, global implications, financed by international money. When we are talking international money, we are talking American money. That is what free trade is all about.

So, Mr. Speaker, honourable members cannot have an opposite. If the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) wants to see 500 or 800 or 1,000 people employed in a woodlands division of Repap in his home community, he has to understand that we in Canada only need 5 percent of it. The rest of it has to be shipped to the States where they build houses to repair from such natural disasters as Hurricane Andrew, et cetera, which has driven up lumber prices to unprecedented heights.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), representing one of our biggest mining consortiums, Inco, at Thompson—Canada only used 5 percent of all the nickel produced. Where else does the 95 percent go? It goes in trade with the world, principally with the Americans. [interjection] No, I am just saying, the kind of old-think that still pervades on the other side.

The biggest allies that you have, I say to the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) with respect to support of this resolution, is with the half a dozen

American companies who are seriously interested and who are examining several sites, one in Alaska, one in the Scandinavian countries. I understand they are also looking at a southern site in the California area, and Australia, of all places, or somewhere down under is in competition for some of the long-term plans that consultants have talked about that could possibly bring about the rejuvenation—I should never try to use these big words—try to bring back—

An Honourable Member: Renewal.

Mr. Enns: The renewal—thank you. The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) is always there when high school dropouts need her—the renewal of the rocket range at Churchill.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot have it both ways then. There needs to be a greater awareness shown by members of the official opposition that cross-border trade, working relationships with our principal customer, particularly in this area, is of utmost importance. You cannot in isolation demand international attention, international money to help develop the Churchill rocket site one day and then spend the next 10 days blasting away at your favourite phantom enemy, the Americans, free trade, NAFTA.

What is maybe possible at Churchill is global international activity in rocketry and in satellite launchings that would call for a tremendous degree of integrated services being developed in the communications industry that may have very serious impacts on some of the existing facilities that we have.

I have been briefed, and I have listened to some consultants tell me that it is entirely possible with this system, with a host of satellites to be launched from a spaceport like Churchill that cellular telephone use could be available to us throughout the planet, whether you are standing on top of a mountain in the Himalayas or on the prairies of Saskatchewan or on the coast in British Columbia, that you could with a series of communication satellites access the world—Tokyo, London, Winnipeg, Ottawa—with your cellular. Technology is developing that people and engineers and the consulting firms, investment firms, manufacturing firms are in fact thinking along these lines. How that will shake up existing communications systems is a worry for us all, but we cannot worry about these things. We have to move to meet these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I have no particular problem with this resolution other than the fact that I think it needs an amendment.

I move, seconded by the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey),

THAT Resolution 21 be amended by deleting all of the words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

The community of Churchill has a number of unique geographic, demographic and infrastructure characteristics which have resulted in a varied and unique economy and economic activity; and

WHEREAS Churchill, through its unique economic activity and history, has shown that it can also play a unique role in the economy of the province through a diverse range of activities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government of Manitoba is working with the community of Churchill in the development of a common understanding of factors affecting the commercial reactivation and viability of the Churchill Research Range and has offered financial support to the community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the government's action directed at supporting community and government activities for the promotion and the reactivation of the Churchill Research (Rocket) Range.

Mr. Speaker, I have to apologize to you, Sir, and the House for my not having sufficient copies of the amendment. I beg your indulgence and with your generosity that I know you have in the bosom of your heart that you will forgive me on this occasion.

* (1730)

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable minister for the explanation. We will attempt to resolve the matter in a few moments. I believe the young Page has just taken a moment to run out and make a few copies for the honourable minister.

Motion presented.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a few comments on the record both in regard to the amendment and the original resolution. First I want to comment by indicating that I am very pleased that the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey), as a transplanted Churchillian—I believe that would be the appropriate phrase—I think it is very fortunate, given the fact the government has not seen fit to call a by-election in Rupertsland, that,

now the community sits officially unrepresented, there is someone like the member for Point Douglas who knows Churchill as well as he does to bring forward matters such as this into the Chamber.

So while there may not be a member currently for Rupertsland, because of the vacancy, we certainly have an acting member for Rupertsland in the form of the member for Point Douglas.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I find it unfortunate that the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) felt that he had to amend this resolution, because what it does, this amendment waters down the original resolution which talks about the Assembly requesting the provincial government to consider making the reactivation of the research range a top priority in the current fiscal year. There is no question, the member for Point Douglas pointed out, that there were commitments made in throne speeches, not the current one but the previous one, for funding and support for the rocket range from the provincial government in conjunction with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the point of this resolution is to ensure that it happens and that it happens as soon as possible, and that it goes beyond simply working with the community to get, as the amendment suggests, common understanding of the factors affecting the commercial reactivation. That is not the point. The community of Churchill, the people in Churchill understand the situation. They also understand that they are faced with some grave economic uncertainties in that community.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, just in conclusion, I think this is a good resolution. It should be part of a plan for Churchill, a community that, by the way, in the early part of this century—I have seen drawings that show that Churchill was going to have room for

100,000 people. It was going to be the source of pride for Manitoba, for western Canada, our own inland seaport. There has been so much potential in the community.

I have heard the member for Point Douglas talk about the days when there were 7,000 people. I remember when I was a kid in Thompson. At one point we were pretty well the same population. When I first moved to Thompson as a kid we were about 7,000 or 8,000 people. What a sad tale of two communities. Thompson now close to 15,000 and Churchill at 1,200.

Churchill should be far greater in terms of importance for us all nationally. It is of strategic importance, it is of economic importance. It is only when we start getting resolutions such as this taken seriously, and not amended into a weaker form—and I do not think it was not well-intentioned. I am saying, though, it is a weaker form, the current resolution. It is only when we get clear recognition we have to do something for Churchill that we are going to get results. So I would urge members of the House not to support the amendment.

I would suggest the government perhaps might even consider withdrawing the amendment and let us deal with the original resolution, which is fair, which is nonpartisan, which is in the best interests of Churchill and the best interests of our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, would it be the desire of the House to call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 6, 1993

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