



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, Cliff	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>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 10, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Thomas Hiebert, Rick Thiessen, Vern Kratz and others requesting the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

* * *

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of John Matychuk, Glen Eggie, Alex Eggie and others requesting the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) to consider conducting a plebiscite of Manitoba farmers as soon as possible on the issue of removing barley from the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board.

* * *

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Glenn Hosea, Phyllis Tolsma, Grace McConkey and others requesting the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) to ask for a cumulative basin-wide federal environment review of the Assiniboine River diversion proposal this fall.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Dewar). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules (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 Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

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

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health

care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

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

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

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

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Friesen). 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: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

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

WHEREAS over 1,000 young adults are currently attempting to get off welfare and upgrade their education through the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS Winnipeg already has the highest number of people on welfare in decades; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has already changed social assistance rules resulting in increased welfare costs for the City of Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is now proposing to eliminate the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS eliminating the Student Social Allowances Program will result in more than a thousand young people being forced onto city welfare with no means of getting further full-time education, resulting in more long-term costs for city taxpayers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Plohman). 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: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mrs. Carstairs). 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: 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.

* (1335)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 31—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Monsieur le président, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), that Bill 31, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

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 Ken Seaford Junior High School, twenty-six Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Rick Kraychuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

James Phillip Bridson Case Public Inquiry

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I know all Manitobans are hopeful of press reports that the incident in Flin Flon may have come to a conclusion in terms of one chapter of this event, in that both the victim and the accused have apparently been found alive. Having said that it closes one chapter, it clearly opens another chapter in the events that preceded this particular tragic incident.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General: Given the numerous questions that have been raised as a result of this incident, both with respect to the lack of services that are available in northern Manitoba and in Flin Flon, in particular, and with respect to the protocol that is used currently by police when investigating—and in this case, the RCMP—family disputes that have, over the course of a number of months, caused concern, will this minister now order a public inquiry so that we can understand the root causes of this problem and seek solutions so that we can prevent this kind of tragedy in the future?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to pass on to honourable members that at about 11:45 this morning, approximately a kilometre north of the city of Flin Flon, the two people who were the subject of the search were found.

I am very pleased to report that 13-year-old Meaghan McConnell is safe in hospital. The other individual is in RCMP custody, and this occurred without incident. By virtue of the fact that one of the individuals is in custody, we might well assume that a criminal prosecution would follow.

That being the case, we are unable to announce certainly today any immediate plans for any further type of inquiry. However, we will take the matter under advisement as to how or if we might proceed after criminal prosecution proceedings have been exhausted.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, I do not need to remind the minister that in the Pollock case, the minister did undertake to have someone with the stature of a Mr. Hughes come in to investigate.

I would argue that this case warrants a similar type of investigation. I would urge the minister to begin now to plan to put in place an inquiry which will address the questions of how so many apparent inconsistencies could have happened in one particular case, if there was not some way of preventing this by approaching the necessary agencies, and to find out whether in fact as a result of, I guess, the last couple of months of government decisions, there were in fact not adequate resources in the community to deal with this question.

My question is to the Minister of Justice: Will he consider, as he suggested he is willing to do, ensuring that such a public inquiry includes the role of government services or the lack thereof in precipitating and being unable to prevent this tragedy in Flin Flon?

Mr. McCrae: I am not disagreeing with the honourable member, Mr. Speaker, that in light of a tragedy like this, it is certainly appropriate to review what happened. The honourable member, though, refers to the Pollock case here in the city of Winnipeg. The honourable member has to be reminded that the Hughes Inquiry happened after criminal proceedings had been exhausted.

That is the appropriate way to do it. The Supreme Court of Canada has made the point that you cannot run parallel investigations. That being the case, I will keep in mind what the honourable member has said, of course.

We have to follow the criminal prosecution procedure to its conclusion before we can embark on some other kind of review, but certainly, as the honourable member suggests, we are indeed looking at what options would be available when that procedure has been completed.

* (1340)

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Minister of Justice, we are not talking about a parallel criminal investigation. We are talking about a review of protocol used by government agencies, by the RCMP themselves, which, if it had been done differently, may have prevented this tragedy. In the case of the Hughes Inquiry, the charges were laid in October and the inquiry began in May.

Mr. Speaker, Flin Flon is a community in crisis, under tremendous pressure. Families are under pressure. We cannot wait in Flin Flon for this kind of lengthy delay before we get to the root causes of this incident.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Will he begin to plan today for a public inquiry which will address those questions—and leave aside the question of criminal responsibility in any way—the question of how the system failed these two families?

Mr. McCrae: While we might like very much to "leave aside," as the honourable member suggests, the question of criminal proceedings, I think the honourable member on reflection would agree with me that we ought to do nothing that might compromise, prejudice or jeopardize a criminal prosecution. It is a long-held principle that a criminal prosecution ought to be left to carry on.

The honourable member says the other issues are not criminal, but the honourable member ought not to assume that the other matters have no bearing on the prosecution. So I think we all ought to be careful that we do not compromise those criminal proceedings.

Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre Inc. Funding Reinstatement

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, we have asked for over two months now, in both Question Period and in Estimates of Family Services, that the provincial government reinstate the funding to the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre, which served 15,000 residents of the Flin Flon area for over 10 years.

In light of the events in Flin Flon in the last five days, has the government now reconsidered its decision to close the crisis centre?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has indicated, there is an investigation ongoing and many unanswered questions involving this case. We had indicated a number of weeks ago that staff from the Family Dispute branch would be meeting with the board of the Flin Flon Crisis Centre to look at ways that resources could be used to carry on some form of service in that area.

Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre Inc. Alternative Services

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, almost two years ago in September, the mother of the young man who is, I understand, going to be charged in these events, wrote to the psychologist in Child Care and Development, Northern region, a letter which I can table, talking about her son's suicidal tendencies.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services: In light of the fact that the psychologist wrote back listing the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre as one of the resources the mother should take advantage of, what resources now exist in the city of Flin Flon for similar situations, should there be children and families in crisis, since this centre no longer exists?

* (1345)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated on Thursday of last week, I believe Thursday or Friday of last week when the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) posed questions in terms of supportive efforts and issues that relate to the nature of the question my honourable friend poses today, in the process of mental health reform, Norman region is well advanced in terms of initiation of specific community-based endeavours which hopefully we will be able to give approval to, as we have done in Winnipeg and in Westman region and Parkland region just in the last several weeks.

Mr. Speaker, there is considerable co-operation between Family Services and the Ministry of Health, our Mental Health Division, in establishing supportive services to assist individuals in the community. The critical incident team, as it is called within the ministry, is patterned off of a successful crisis intervention team that has been used on several occasions not only in Winnipeg, but in other areas of rural Manitoba.

The critical incident team has in fact been part of the community liaison group that is supporting the schools, the community, chambers, and it is in that fashion that we think the reformed and reinvigorated mental health system will provide a number of the opportunities for assistance my honourable friend calls upon.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, given that this situation is an end result of several years of problems within the families, individually and as a part of family dynamics, and the fact that there is no longer a resource which provided those services for over 10

years to families in crisis, prevention services, what services are there in the city and region of Flin Flon today that will help families in crisis, families who have long histories of dysfunctionality and individuals within those families? What is available today, since the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre was closed?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, not that it is my nature to want to provide any kind of advice to my honourable friend, but some of the preamble makes presumptions that I think no one at this stage of the circumstance ought to be stating as public fact. I mean this is a very serious incident which requires a very calm and very steady approach to understanding what happened, and in the process of understanding what happened, if you will, Sir, to attempt to provide supportive services—as I have mentioned earlier on with the critical incident team and initiatives in terms of reform and service development in mental health specific to the Norman region, Flin Flon, The Pas.

Sir, I would hope that my honourable friend would work with this government in terms of support, as we have received in the past for those kinds of community-based initiatives which have the opportunity to provide the support of services my honourable friend is concerned about.

Fatality Inquiries Act Inquest

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): My question is for the Minister of Justice. I listened closely to the minister's responses to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). I want to take issue with the minister's indication that no public inquiry or inquest can take place concurrent with the criminal process.

I want to draw the minister's attention to an act he has responsibility over, The Fatality Inquiries Act, which in Section 25 gives him the ability to direct a provincial inquest with respect to a death as a result of a homicide, and in fact mandates him to hold one where the death is as a result of an act or omission of a peace officer. Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason it can happen concurrently is because that act, at Section 7 and Section 21 specifically, indicates there shall be no finding of culpability. So it is not about a criminal conviction process, and it can happen concurrently; it often happens before a criminal process.

My question for the minister: Has he looked at using The Fatality Inquiries Act, which he has

jurisdiction over, to hold an inquest which would be an impartial review of the circumstances surrounding these deaths?

* (1350)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We fully recognize the power that the minister has under The Fatality Inquiries Act, but it is a question of when. The honourable member, of all members in this House, I think knows better than to suggest that there ought to be an inquest running at the same time as a potential criminal trial.

I think if he reflects on that—he says it has been done before. I would like to know under what circumstances. If the honourable member can provide me with that, I would be happy to look at it, but my understanding of the way these things are supposed to work is that there ought not to be an inquest running at the same time that criminal prosecutions are contemplated. We ought to remember, all of us here in this House today, that the investigation is not over. We are glad that these people have been found today, but that does not mean that charges have yet been laid or that we are in the process of a criminal prosecution.

So I ask the honourable member to be cautious when suggesting that we move ahead into these parallel types of hearings going on at the same time.

James Phillip Bridson Case Interdepartmental Committee

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, for the same minister, that is precisely why this act has two sections specifically indicating there shall be no opinions on culpability from the investigator or from the inquest judge.

Mr. Speaker, my second question for the Minister of Justice: The minister sits on the committee of other departments of government. Did the joint committee of departments involving Justice, Family Services, Education and Health, which is supposed to be set up so that the right hand knows what the left hand is doing in government—did that committee ever consider the Bridson case?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I would like the honourable member to be clear. Is he talking about the group of representatives of those departments who have been involved in working with the community of Flin Flon in the wake of this disaster?

James Phillip Bridson Case Interdepartmental Committee

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the committee that this government said they would set up in the wake of the Reid case some years ago, and that was an interdepartmental committee so we would know for sure that government departments were not working independent of each other and knew what each other knew about cases.

My question for this minister is: Did that committee that was supposed to have been set up years ago ever consider this case, especially given the fact that the Bridson case and the problems with that family were known to this government for well over a year?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of imposing information to questions which I am not sure at this stage of the game any of us should be engaging in, given the circumstances that no doubt will flow from this, I can indicate to my honourable friend that at the staff level in the Flin Flon region there was co-operation in an attempt to assist the family's request for assistance.

That is not an unusual response from ministry staff, whether they are my staff or other departments involved in programs which can assist families in dealing with perceived problems internal to the family organization and structure.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I do not believe I am at greater liberty to disclose details beyond the fact that staff, to my knowledge, were readily available to assist the family when requests for assistance were made.

* (1355)

Government Departments Service Co-ordination

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Many of the questions raised today have not been answered.

Mr. Speaker, we have had inquiries dealing with the Reid case. We have had inquiries dealing with the Pedlar report and the call for co-ordination. The Reid case had the same kinds of recommendations to the government. In April I asked a similar question to the government dealing with a report that was conducted by superintendents, trustees and school principals across Manitoba, again calling for co-ordination between the various agencies in

government so that children could be provided co-ordinated services between the agencies.

Every time we ask these questions in the House, we are given a very, very vague answer about an internal committee to deal with these issues, and then we have to come back to these same questions when another tragedy takes place, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the Premier: Would he instruct his ministers of government to implement the recommendations that flow from the school trustees and school principals in Manitoba and that have been called upon by people in the education area for the last two years; would he instruct his ministers to stop the internal co-ordination that they have in place and take an action plan, as recommended, to have co-ordination of services externally for all the people of Manitoba impacted by their agencies?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why we would want to stop internal co-ordination with respect to government services. [interjection] That is what the Leader of the Opposition asked.

It seems to me that there has been a good deal of internal briefings and co-ordinations amongst the various different agencies and departments which were in contact with the individual who has been named and is the centre of the investigations in Flin Flon. I think it is too early for us to judge as to whether or not more could have been done. I do not say, at this point, that questions in the House of a political nature are going to assist in the investigation.

Let me assure the Leader of the Opposition that we will do everything possible to ensure that a complete and thorough investigation is done, as was done in the Reid case, and any lessons that are to be learned will be learned by government and its departments.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I guess my concern is, whatever process the Premier argues he has in place, arising from the three reports that his government now has, does not seem in our opinion to be working on behalf of the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, some two months ago we raised this question in the House again. The government has had a report for some two years from their front-line practitioners. The Department of Education is the lead department. We have not been able to get the government to table an action plan to respond to

those recommendations, the recommendations on page 16 of that report, that they undertake a comprehensive review of children's services to co-ordinate the activities.

When we review the file dealing with the school division that has been in contact with this person and dealing with the family, we see no co-ordination. Will the Premier now instruct his department to implement the action plan, Mr. Speaker, forthwith?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his advice on this issue.

Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre Inc. Funding Reinstatement

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there has been other advice given to the government today. The community is in crisis. The community needs its crisis centre. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) has called for an inquiry to deal with, not only the specific causes, but also the root causes.

Will the Premier instruct his ministers to reinstitute the crisis centre for that community in time of crisis and, secondly, to have an inquiry that is broad in nature to deal with some of the root causes and resources that are lacking in that community?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite knows what the functions of a crisis centre are and probably understands that the functions of those centres would not necessarily have, in any way, been beneficial to this situation.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I know that this situation provides for this kind of illusion of connection, and politically it is good fodder for the member opposite. I suggest to him that if he looked at the case in realistic terms, this would not be the kind of situation that would normally be referred to a crisis centre.

Children's Dental Health Program Consultations

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, we are receiving hundreds of names per day from parents concerned about the loss of the Children's Dental Program. Today, children delivered to the Premier's Office several hundred letters asking for reinstatement of the program, and there are public meetings now being set up by parents and children in places like Minnedosa, Swan Lake and Arborg.

Mr. Speaker, what consultations and/or studies did this government and this Department of Health undertake regarding the 43,000 children who are going to lose this program?

* (1400)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me refresh my honourable friend's memory that this program, in terms of its service provision, was paralleled only in one other province, as my honourable friend well knows, and that is the province of Saskatchewan where I guess the program had its origin.

In the approximately 16 or 17 years that the program has operated in Manitoba, it has provided very good service. One of the key components of that service, of course, has been the education and prevention side which has been reinforced by this government since we took office in 1988 with a number of our smaller rural communities having fluoridated water supplies.

Mr. Speaker, it was with regret that we did curtail the treatment part of the program in Manitoba. A similar decision, Sir, was made in Saskatchewan on the program. Although my honourable friends believe they have the wisdom of governments from opposition, the reality is that the program of treatment does not exist anywhere in Canada for children of school ages six to 14.

Preventative Services

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows over 20 dental nurses are being maintained in the program in Saskatchewan, and here we have a measly four.

How will those four dental nurses deliver the preventative programs to the 63,000 children who take part in the preventative program, since he has cut it back from about 49 to four?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend might want to avail himself of the fact that in the Saskatchewan program, I am advised that they never did have a school fluoride rinse program, which was the major prevention component that we are maintaining in our program in Manitoba. Without any doubt, it is that aspect of prevention that studies have shown will yield the greatest opportunity to give children of Manitoba excellent quality teeth to serve them throughout their lifetime. That in-school fluoridation rinse program will be maintained. I do not believe a

similar program ever did exist in the Saskatchewan program.

Hence my consistent answer to my honourable friends as they question this program, that we have maintained the most valuable components of it, that being the education and prevention side which, in the long run, Sir, are not only the most cost-effective, but the most beneficial to the children.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer any of my first two questions.

I would like to ask the minister again in supplementary: How does the minister talk to the families out there, the 43,000 who received treatment as a result of this program? What alternatives are they putting in place to deal with these children, 43,000 who received treatment and 63,000 who received prevention? What programs are in place to deal with those children, the increased expenses and the cost to their parents?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan program, for instance, was discontinued as a school-based program and, as I understand it, made an insured service. That was the status of the Saskatchewan program up until this current budget round of decisions wherein that insured service of provision in Saskatchewan was deinsured, if you will.

My honourable friend has to understand that what we are calling upon parents to do in rural Manitoba is to access the regular dental care system instead of having the reliance for treatment of the school-based system.

Mr. Speaker, I fully recognize that will change the mode of access dental care, but it makes it consistent with every other province in Canada, including Saskatchewan.

James Phillip Bridson Case Education Department Involvement

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey).

Mr. Speaker, the young man who had been subject to the investigation in the Flin Flon area has a long history of violent behaviour as well as difficulties within the school system. The government has been aware of that for some time. The former member for Crescentwood wrote to this Minister of Education in January of 1992. I wrote to

this Minister of Education in February of 1992 with respect to this young man.

Even earlier than that, in September of 1991, one of the officials of her own department was aware of the fact, in information provided by this young man's mother, that he had such suicidal tendencies, a letter tabled by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) so indicates.

Can the Minister of Education tell us what specific steps her department then took to inform the Department of Health and the Department of Family Services with regard to this particular individual's difficulties?

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, we are not particularly comfortable with the question and I will tell you why. Possibly an individual is going to be charged with the most serious of crimes, and that is a possibility.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the sub judice rule applies here or not. Under the circumstances, given the fact that an investigation obviously has not been completed, I question whether the Leader of the Liberal Party's question is in order under the circumstances.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader (Mr. Manness), in respect to the question as asked by the honourable Leader of the second opposition party, I would like to quote from Beauchesne's 505, and then I will finish off with a ruling by a former Speaker of this Legislative Assembly, Speaker Walding.

"505. Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts or tribunals which are courts of record. The purpose of this sub judice convention is to protect the parties in a case awaiting or undergoing trial and persons who stand to be affected by the outcome of a judicial inquiry. It is a voluntary restraint imposed by the House upon itself in the interest of justice and fair play."

As Speaker Walding ruled on June 6, 1983, in a section of his ruling: Members will note that Citation 339—that is from Beauchesne's 4—makes it clear that the responsibility of whether questions are proper and are to be asked and to be answered lies principally with the members involved, the overriding principle in this case clearly being that

members should not make statements which may prejudice the case. The responsibility therefore is clearly with the honourable member wishing to answer or to ask the question, and with the minister to whom it is addressed.

I will allow the question, after having made those remarks.

* * *

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): In view of the remarks that you have just made and the very complicated nature of the dynamics of the moment, I would believe that perhaps at a later date that information would be more helpful.

*(1410)

Mrs. Carstairs: Let me ask a much more generic question: When the Department of Education receives a letter from a member, a citizen of this province, saying they are aware that someone is suicidal, and the department responds to that letter giving a recommendation of a number of places where this person can seek help, does the Department of Education then also inform the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and the Department of Family Services that they should take an interest in this particular case?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do respond with great seriousness to issues which are raised, and raised finally at this office. We do work through our own staff, making sure that all the information is available so that staff then can work with the community, and to make sure that the family or the individual may seek the help that they need.

Mrs. Carstairs: Let me put it even more simply: Does the staff of the Department of Education get in touch with the staff of the other departments?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, we do work through our staff, also through communication with the school divisions and with the professionals who are involved, to make sure that the families are served within their communities and that the families at least are aware of the services that are available to them.

Manitoba Housing Authority Subsidized Housing—Students

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday last, the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) raised a question in the House which I took as notice, that question being: Can the

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

I can advise the House, Mr. Speaker, that there will be no impact; there will be no change from previous activities. I can say that Manitoba Housing Authority has charged, for at least the last five years, \$125 a month flat fee for any size unit for any family on student aid of any sort. Whether it be federal or provincial, loan or bursary, we charge a flat fee of \$125 plus the cost of hydro.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters Energy Efficiency Report

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radlsson): Mr. Speaker, I have an opportunity to bring some good news to the House today, and it sounds like we need it. It merely challenges the powers that be to choose to make our economy more sustainable, particularly in the area of energy efficiency. I have the report prepared by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, A Brighter Future: Energy Efficiency and Jobs in Manitoba, which outlines how we can create more jobs at less cost by energy efficiency.

I would ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro and energy if he has received this report, reviewed it, and what plans there are to implement the recommendations?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I will take under advisement the question of the member and the comments of the member.

Ms. Cerilli: Pardon, I did not hear the answer. Could I ask the minister to repeat the answer?

Mr. Speaker: He took it under advisement.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I will take under advisement the comments of the member.

Ms. Cerilli: I am quite shocked that this minister has not seen the report.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a time for debate.

Ms. Cerilli: I would ask if there would be some commitment to immediately meet with the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, that the minister would meet with this group and review the report with them and make a plan of action. Will there be a commitment to do that?

Mr. Downey: I believe, Mr. Speaker, members of my department have in fact met with those

individuals, and, if they have not, I will see when it may be possible to do so.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, this has potential to create thousands of jobs, save energy and put millions of dollars back into our economy.

I would ask if the Premier's Round Table on Sustainable Development has reviewed this report and if there have been any recommendations to this government to take seriously the recommendations of—

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

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, energy conservation is extremely important and essential to this government, to the province of Manitoba and the people who live here. We will endeavour to do what we can to carry out energy efficient programs and maximize the resources that we have of that nature.

Intertribal Christian Communications PST Collection

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am responding to questions taken as notice by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) the other day from the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It was dealing with sales tax change notices. I have two answers.

The circular was distributed giving a notice of changes on April 22. The circular was not prepared prior to budget day for confidentiality reasons. The changes were made May 1. I might indicate, the Department of Finance has received thanks from many businesses, computer and cash register companies, for providing three-and-a-half weeks notice. Provinces such as British Columbia and Saskatchewan brought their tax changes into effect midnight of their budget and gave no advance notice.

The second question, the member asked how many new small businesses will have to fill out new tax forms. There are no new tax forms. Some businesses such as street vendors will now be required to register.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Taxation placed a newspaper ad on April 28 to advise vendors which may require to be registered and provide a dedicated phone number where vendors could register over the phone in a matter of minutes.

University of Manitoba Accreditation

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, at a time when one of the few avenues of hope for people of Manitoba is post-secondary education, I want to suggest to the minister that any concerns about the undermining of accreditation in professional programs at the U of M are obviously of great concern to everyone.

I did raise this issue with the minister in the House two weeks ago, and she did not seem to think it was a particular concern. I assume by now that she has had time to consult, and will she tell us now which programs are under pressure or in danger and what her plan is to deal with this?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): The issue of accreditation is always of importance and always of concern. As the member knows, accreditation is done on a cyclical basis. It is not done every year for every faculty. We are aware that perhaps two faculties may be going through an accreditation process this year.

I will also tell her that I met on Friday afternoon with the four university presidents in Manitoba, and this was not raised as an issue.

ACCESS Programs Funding Reduction

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could the minister tell the House why last year she made a commitment to maintain college and university ACCESS programs and that this year, she has cut them by over a million dollars or 16 percent?

Will she tell us what hope she is offering to those students who are not funded by bands to have some future in post-secondary education?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): As the member knows, the federal funding for the ACCESS program is where we are having difficulty and where there has been a reduction, Mr. Speaker.

In our provincial funding, we are looking to have—put in the most efficient way possible. We are meeting with the universities. We are looking to make sure that the administrative costs are reduced and that the greatest amount of funds available will actually go into the operating programming.

University of Manitoba Chancellor's Concerns

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Has the minister responded to the chancellor of the University of Manitoba, Mr. Art Mauro, who is concerned that—and I quote: "... the Filmon government has failed to realize that the world has entered the post-industrial age," and that "... to jeopardize the centres of excellence, represented by our universities, is an extremely self-defeating policy."

Will she table her response to that concern?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I see that this member has done her research only by reading the newspaper. I am not sure if she has checked with Mr. Mauro that this in fact was a most accurate quote.

Let me also speak about university funding. Let me refer to the former Minister of Education, who in 1987 said: While funding may not have been adequate, it is fair.

Anne's Care Home—Rorketon Closure

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Family Services and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) may be aware of Anne's Care Home in Rorketon. It has operated for decades in providing support to—at the present time, seven clients. The support is being withdrawn as of June 1, and it will have to close as of June 1 in Rorketon.

These seven residents are severely mentally handicapped and have received special love and care from the Sraybashes in Rorketon over these many years, Mr. Speaker. The residents now are being torn from this home and being bussed to Ste. Rose to ROSE Inc. where they are supposed to, allegedly, receive enriched services.

I want to ask the Minister of Health if he can tell this House precisely why Anne's Care Home in Rorketon is being closed June 1.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that it is the professional judgment of the workers involved that appropriate training is being accessed in a different location.

* (1420)

ROSE Inc. Funding

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Family Services then or the Minister of Health indicate to this House how much money is being poured into ROSE Inc. in Ste. Rose to take these residents to that location from the home they have shared with the Sraybashes for many years in the past? How much money is being poured into that house?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the question of funding, of course, is always very fundamental within the Department of Family Services.

The member is asking for specific numbers. I would mention to him that we are currently in Estimates, and perhaps he could join us there to get that detail. Failing that, I can look into the matter and provide that information for him at another time.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister whether he is aware that there was no government funding going for the facility in Rorketon.

If this government is interested in being efficient and saving money, why are they pouring money into another alternate facility?

Mr. Gillehammer: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that in the professional judgment of the workers involved, they want to access the most appropriate service for these individuals.

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

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Jack Reimer (Niakwa): I wonder, Mr. Speaker, may I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to recognize the commencement of Multicultural Week, May 11 to 15 in Manitoba. I ask all members of the House to join me in urging all Manitobans to participate in this observance. This celebration of our multicultural past, present and future is primarily focused in our schools, but I know that each and every one of us in our society will want to pause to reflect on the importance that understanding, accepting and building on our

cultural and racial diversity adds to our economy, our social and our community success.

Multiculturalism means being proud of our heritage and openly sharing our pride with our neighbours. It means the promotion of intercultural understanding, mutual respect, acceptance and harmony between our many cultural communities which comprise our Manitoba society.

Multiculturalism also means freedom and opportunity for each Manitoban, regardless of origin, to participate in the broader life of society. Multiculturalism has been the legacy of our past, the reality of today and the unlimited potential for our future.

May all of us work together throughout Multicultural Week and indeed throughout the entire year to promote awareness, understanding, acceptance and equality within our province and our country to enhance the quality of life for all.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to rise on behalf of our caucus and congratulate all the people in Manitoba on the Manitoba Multicultural Week that is beginning this week.

I know that we all join together in celebrating the achievements of all of us from the four corners of the world who have come to make Manitoba their home. I know we all join together in understanding the challenges and the opportunities that face all of us in these very difficult times.

I just would like to again congratulate the people of Manitoba on the Manitoba Multicultural Week.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), 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 advised the critics here the other day that they could move down to the chairs of the Leader of the official opposition and the second opposition

party. I inadvertently forgot to ask for leave of the House to allow members to move down to said benches, and, also, leave would be required to allow the members and the ministers to remain seated while asking and answering questions.

Now, is there leave of the House to allow this practice for the remainder of this session? [agreed]

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 Department of Education and Training; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Agriculture.

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) Family Dispute Services (1) Salaries on page 59 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I guess my questions follow comments that I made with respect to the Flin Flon Crisis Centre last Tuesday and Thursday, particularly Thursday, at which time we knew that there had been a violent incident in Flin Flon.

Subsequent, of course, to the committee adjourning, we have learned that there are many people, including close friends of the victim Marjorie McConnell, who have expressed the view that the crisis centre in Flin Flon may have been some help in the hour of need of the victims, who have made the comment that the victim, the mother in this case, was concerned about the closure of the crisis centre.

I know, as the minister does, that we will never know whether, in fact, this particular incident could have been prevented, had the crisis centre been there for the people involved.

I think it is clear to everyone now and, I hope, to the minister, that a community of the size of Flin

Flin, the region that it serves, needs these services. We—by that, I mean myself and the mayors of both communities, social workers, social service agencies, individuals, women, women's groups, people by the hundreds, if not thousands, have pleaded with the government to revisit this decision. Out of fairness to the community, out of acknowledgment of the difficult circumstances that exist in economic terms, the uncertainty that exists in terms of families and workers, and in the knowledge that this is likely to continue now for many months, certainly over the next 18 months to two years.

My question, therefore, is: Will the minister now agree to meet with representatives of the community and revisit the issue of providing crisis centre services in the community of Flin Flon and reopening the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as the member is aware, I have met with the board in the past. The way we left the situation is that staff had scheduled a meeting with the board that was to be held late in April. That meeting was cancelled by the board, because they felt they were not ready to proceed at that time. At this time, we are awaiting word from them when we can set that meeting up.

Mr. Storle: I understand that the board will be meeting again following receipt of their audit tomorrow evening.

Am I to take from the minister's comment that in fact the government is now willing to revisit this issue and that it is possible that, in consultation with groups in Flin Flon, including Family Services and the RCMP and the town, as well as the board of directors of the crisis centre and others, it may in fact now be possible that the crisis centre would be re-established?

Mr. Gilleshammer: What the board had indicated to the department is that they had some resources that had been accumulated as a surplus. We have indicated that the department, along with the knowledge of the services of the resource centre, would meet with the board to have discussion with them on what would be the appropriate direction in which we could go in terms of the expenditure of those resources. We have staff who are prepared to look at some areas of service that perhaps could be addressed with the use of those funds.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the fact of the matter is—and I do not want to have these questions digress into a confrontation, but I think the minister clearly knows that the Northern Women's Resource Centre would not have been able to prevent this tragedy from occurring, that the Northern Women's Resource Centre is nine to five. There would have been no one available at two in the morning, that there is no shelter available through the Northern Women's Resource Centre. Had the family in question needed or felt that the crisis centre was available to them, they may have gone to protect themselves, if they had known certainly.

My question very directly to the minister: Is he now saying that the department is prepared to consider the possibility of operating a Flin Flon crisis centre in the community of Flin Flon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: No, that is not what I said. I said that we are prepared to have another meeting with the board, or a series of meetings with them, to look at the regional services that are provided and to make use of funding that is available, given the audit supports what we have heard from board members, to look at the services that are available there, to work with them to make decisions, and to use those resources in the best possible way.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that simply is not good enough. I do not know what it would take to bring this minister and this government to its senses. How many times do we have to go through this before the minister can be convinced he has made a mistake—in this case, a fatal mistake?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister, for some reason, refuses to accept the advice of people in the community of Flin Flon, people who have worked on behalf of women and families in crisis for 10 years, refuses to accept the advice of people who live through the circumstances in Flin Flon, and continues to argue that this was a necessary choice.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, events have proved the minister wrong. No amount of money saved by the department in this instance can justify what was done. My question to the minister is: Given the continuing difficult circumstances in Flin Flon and the pressure it is going to put on other families, not to discount the additional pressure that exists in the community because of these circumstances of the last week, when is the government going to acknowledge that a mistake has been made and reinstitute funding, or work with the community to

ensure that those services can be provided in the community?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I reject the assumptions and conclusions that the member has come to. I have indicated before, as have colleagues, that we have an investigation that is ongoing, that we have many unanswered questions, that we are prepared to review those circumstances at the appropriate time. In the short term, I have indicated that departmental staff have been prepared to meet with the board, and will meet with the board when the board has deemed it is ready to proceed with those meetings.

* (1440)

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what is the point? The people of the Flin Flon area, including its representatives on the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre board, want the crisis centre to remain open, to remain in Flin Flon, to remain providing services to women and children in abusive situations, in violent situations. That is what they want.

The minister had argued that the service was not necessary in Flin Flon, that the people of Flin Flon could do without it, that we could access other services. The events of the last five weeks have proven the minister wrong. The question is, and what people of Flin Flon have a right to know is: How many incidents of this kind is the minister prepared to accept in some stubborn effort to maintain the integrity of this decision—a decision that made no sense from the beginning, that the minister has never been able to justify? What does it take to wake this government and this minister up?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have indicated the willingness of the department to meet with the board and with the Northern Women's Resource Centre to look at resources that are available and to look at some of the options that may be there. At the same time, we have indicated—I have indicated today and in the past—that we are prepared to look at the results of the investigation. I have indicated there are many unanswered questions. We have said that there was a provision for service in place. There are a number of things that we are prepared, as a department, to discuss with the board and at a later time, with the Northern Women's Resource Centre, to discuss the provision of services for that area. We are prepared to commence those meetings this week if possible.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is the minister saying, if the results of these discussions end in a

conclusion that the resources of a crisis centre are required in Flin Flon, that the minister will reinstate funding for the Flin Flon Crisis Centre?—a very direct question. Is that possible?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have not said that today. What I have said was, there are resources that are available in that area. As a department we are prepared to look at a number of options that would make use of the resources that are being put into the community by the department. We think there are options there that we can discuss with the resource centre and with the board of the crisis centre. We are prepared to enter those discussions as early as this week.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I still do not understand why the minister continues to reference the Northern Women's Resource Services group. They have said publicly at meetings in Flin Flon that they offer no similar services whatsoever to those that the crisis centre offered.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we had a crisis centre in Flin Flon that could have sheltered this family in this emergency. They have facilities to protect people in this kind of circumstance, if they are aware of it, if they are asked for help.

The fact of the matter is, this incident may in fact be the tip of the iceberg. There are pressures on the community of Flin Flon which the government seems to ignore. One-quarter of the workforce of the community is in jeopardy, facing the threat of layoff, facing the threat of losing their livelihood, facing the threat of losing their lifetime investments, facing the possibility of losing their community—tremendous pressure. At that very moment the government decides to pull out one of its key resources.

I remind the minister that the mayor of Flin Flon wrote and called this action "inhuman." I do not think it is exaggerating for the MLA for Flin Flon to agree, to concur with that assessment. The tragic results of this event—some weeks after the government made its decision, some days after the minister continued to defend it, some hours after the government refused, again, to reinstate funding—this event happens.

My question is—not another reference to some mythical service that can be provided by another group in Flin Flon, which has never provided like services, the question is: Is it possible that the

minister will reopen the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre, provide the funding that is necessary?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would tell the member that we spend considerable resources in the Women's Resource Centre in Flin Flon, and the board has indicated that they have some resources that they have indicated is a surplus from their operating.

We are prepared, as a department, to review the services that are being offered in the Flin Flon area. I have indicated that staff have made a commitment to meet with the people who are on the shelter board. We are prepared to await some of the findings of the investigation that is ongoing and to work with the community, to use the resources that we have, to use the resources that are within the community to look at the services that are provided there and to enter into discussions on it.

The member I think, will only be satisfied with one answer today, and I can tell the member that he is not going to get that answer today. We have indicated a willingness to review the services. We have indicated that we are prepared to meet with that particular board and to talk about the—

Mr. Storle: People are dead, Harold. Talk about . . .

Mr. Gilleshammer: Listen, the member wants to bring into this committee certain assumptions that are completely inappropriate. We have been asked to meet with that board, and I have indicated our willingness, through the department, to do that.

We, as a department, are prepared to look for solutions that are going to help with the situation in Flin Flon. We have, at the present time, a response team in the area working with mental health, working with Education, and certainly working with Justice. We are going to evaluate the findings of that. This is an ongoing situation, and we are prepared to review those findings.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the people of Flin Flon, particularly the women, the families who have watched the events of the last few weeks with obvious concern, are not going to take any solace from the minister's suggestion he is going to review it.

The people of Flin Flon remember the minister's words when he said he had reviewed the need for the crisis centre in Flin Flon, when there had been an internal review prior to the decision to cut 100 percent of the funding to the Flin Flon crisis centre. The minister's idea of a review is a joke.

No one has any confidence that there is going to be any kind of objective review. What would give the people confidence is if the minister gave the money back to the people who were providing the service. I am not asking the government to borrow another dime. I am saying, go back and reduce funding equally. Leave the Flin Flon crisis centre in place so that it continues to provide service.

* (1450)

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

Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, this was a traumatic incident in Flin Flon. It is not good enough for the minister to absolve himself of blame, to absolve the government of blame, to absolve the department of blame before we know the facts. I asked a question. I said, if there is reason to believe that these services could have been a help in the situation, will the minister reinstate funding? He would not even give me a straight answer on that. That is not acceptable.

Whether the minister wants to acknowledge it or not, lives are in jeopardy; lives are at stake. There is no denying that. The minister continues to baffle me, to talk about review. The time for talk is over. The time to talk was over five weeks ago. It is time for a recognition that this was a mistake. Whether the minister likes the language or not, people are dead, and the people in Flin Flon want to know whether that could have been prevented.

People of Flin Flon believe, many of them that I talked to on the weekend believe, that it may have prevented a tragedy, that it is the kind of service, the only kind of service available in the community that could have. The question is: Will the minister, after his discussions and after the "review," that we are hoping will come, the inquiry, agree to reinstate funding if there is that kind of evidence?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have indicated the willingness of the department to look for solutions, to seek answers, based on the facts that come forward. The department, I have indicated time and time again, is prepared to meet with community groups, including the board of the crisis centre, to find those answers, to find those solutions. What the member is asking is, prior to the department, prior to any conclusion of the investigation, prior to any seeking of the answers to questions that are being raised, prior to us having an opportunity to

work with community groups, to make a decision contrary to the decision we have already made.

I am indicating to the member that we have expressed a willingness on the part of government to work with the community to look for those solutions, to seek answers, and, I think it is fair to say, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that is going to take a little bit of time as the events are unfolding. I can assure you that the department and the government will be very sensitive to the information that comes forward.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am sure that the families affected will be gratified to hear the minister now talking about coming to a reasonable conclusion after we have the facts. I raised in committee on Thursday a letter that was sent March 4, 1992, to the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre, which said there would be a review, there would be an evaluation of the services before any decision was made. The chairman of the board has written to the minister and said, where is that? Why was our funding cut before that review was done? Why was the funding cut before the evaluation? Why was the funding cut before the consultation the minister now talks about in such glowing terms? Where was the consultation before the cuts were made? The minister has not answered that question.

Now the minister wants the people of Flin Flon, who have experienced the trauma of the last week, the trauma of not being without their crisis centre for women who are victims of abuse and violence—now the minister is saying, well, we can wait some other lengthy period of time. The minister is prepared to accept that.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the people of Flin Flon are not prepared to accept that. The people of Flin Flon want to know that service is there for them. This tragedy has only made it more imperative. There is no reason why they should have to wait. The minister had choices. When we met with the minister, with the chairman of board and the staff, we told him he had choices. He does have choices. Now he wants to absolve himself of responsibility. Well, I am sorry, Mr. Minister, it is not that simple. People have paid a price, not only the people directly affected, but the community. What the minister should do is reinstate funding.

Talk to the board. If there are concerns about the services, if there are concerns about utilization, the minister could talk to the board about that, but the service is required. It is obvious. It is self-evident. I do not think we should even be here discussing this. The minister should have acted on his own.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the question was not, will he discuss this? The question was, if there is evidence to suggest, from the service groups who work with troubled families, families who are dysfunctional, if there is evidence from the RCMP who have already said that they routinely report these kinds of calls to the crisis centre in Flin Flon, will he reinstate funding? That was the question. That is the answer the people of Flin Flon are waiting to hear—no other answer.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have indicated to the member before that I reject his assumptions and his conclusions, and I would remind him that there are services that were left in place within the region and that a crisis line exists. If it is an urgent matter, the operator puts the call through to the RCMP. If it is not urgent, the operator puts the call through to the number in The Pas, so that there are services in place.

I grant you that there was disappointment, and the board has put forward that particular case. I have indicated that we are prepared to review the results of the ongoing investigation to look at some of the questions that have been raised and to have the department work with the board when they are ready to come forward to discuss those issues and to work with the resources in the area to provide the best possible service we can.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, the minister is talking after the fact. Flin Flon had the best possible service. They had the services of a crisis centre, of a crisis centre staff, of a shelter for women in jeopardy. They do not anymore.

Some five weeks after the closure of that centre, based on a ministerial decision that appears to have no objective rationale, the minister—in hours and hours of questioning, in hours of meetings—has failed to provide one objective piece of evidence which would have justified the closure of that centre as opposed to other decisions which he could have made, the only centre in the province which was closed. Why cannot the minister now acknowledge that it was a mistake?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have heard what the member has said today and last Thursday when we met. I indicate to him that we have an investigation that is ongoing and we are prepared to look at the results of that.

Mr. Storle: Then we would like to know, what would precipitate a change in the minister's view on the matter of funding to Flin Flon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am not going to prejudge the results of the investigations that are going on. We are prepared to look at the results that are brought forward, look at the services that are being offered, and at that time, make any appropriate decisions.

Mr. Storle: It begs a question, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. If it is all of a sudden now, after this tragedy, the minister is conceding before committee that in fact a review of the services that are provided and the necessity for a crisis centre and a shelter in Flin Flon, if it is justifiable now, then the question is, why was it not necessary, this review, why was it not done before the crisis centre was closed?

That is the question that has been plaguing the minds of people in Flin Flon, the people at the crisis centre, for the last five weeks. Where was the justification? Why was this done at all? Why is the minister now, after a tragedy, saying well, gosh, we are going to go and look and see whether it is necessary? Does that not seem a bit twisted?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have acknowledged the honourable member's skill with doing some twisting of words that I have used. I have indicated that there is an ongoing investigation, that we are prepared to look at the results of that investigation, also to look at the services that we are providing in the community and in the region, and work with the community to make any decisions after that investigation is completed.

Mr. Storle: Can the minister explain to committee why it took this tragedy before the minister will acknowledge that this kind of investigation should have been done? Why was it not done in advance—before the decision to close the centre in a major community, in a community that is struggling?

Mr. Gilleshammer: What I have acknowledged is that there has been a major tragic incident in the community which is under investigation by the police force. There are other service providers who are involved at this time, including the school division, including the Department of Health, as well

as our regional office there. We are going to be prepared to look at the ongoing results of that investigation.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we still have not heard from the minister whether after this review, I assume again it is an internal review, if there is evidence to suggest from the RCMP, from other service providers in Flin Flon—in fact, I met on Friday with representatives of the minister's department—that the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre is a valued and a needed service, that the money will be reinstated to allow for the operation of the crisis centre and the shelter in Flin Flon.

* (1500)

Is the minister prepared to accept the verdict from this review should it indicate that that is necessary? Will the money be made available?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would say to the member that we have made a commitment to the board to explore options, and this has been discussed with the board at the end of March and again in April. Now the member is asking that we accept the outcome of an investigation that is ongoing before the scope and the outcome have been determined. What I am saying to the member is that we will give very serious consideration to any information that is brought forward through the course of an investigation of this incident.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I honestly would like to accept the minister's suggestion that somehow, if there is evidence to support a decision to reopen the crisis centre, to reinstate funds, that would actually happen. Unfortunately, because of the way this was done, there is no sense that that is possible in the community unless this minister is forced as a result of having to take some responsibility, however minor, for this event, or for at least the failure to prevent this event.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the fact of the matter is that people in Flin Flon want this centre. They want these services. The fact of the matter is that the government over the past four and a half years or 5 years, have successively removed services from the community. The fact of the matter is that there are existing positions with the minister's own department that are currently unfilled in the community services department. I am not sure whether they are the minister's or the Department of Health, but there are positions unfilled which may

have had a bearing as well on services that are available.

The fact, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is that the community is in a vulnerable position, and if the minister is going to consider the question of service provision, will he also consider the needs as are assessed by the community, by the company, by those who are familiar with the economic circumstances, and the pressure that is likely going to bring to bear on families in the Flin Flon area?

This is not simply a question of a departmental budgeting exercise. The minister's department is a crucial one in terms of providing protection for families, for women, for children. Right now the people of Flin Flon feel that that trust has been violated because of the callous and apparently thoughtless decision to remove funding from the crisis centre.

They do not want weeks and months of review and study. They want some assurance that this service is going to be provided, if there is evidence of need as determined by the citizens and the people who provide those services or like services in the community. That is all. Is that going to happen?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think it is important that government does work with the community, that the government does seek answers to questions that have been raised, that we seek solutions to those questions and that we are prepared to meet and work with the community and look at the broader parameters that exist with this investigation. If there is a better way of providing services, then part of our responsibility will be to work with community groups to find those answers.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, perhaps as an early indicator of the need for that service in Flin Flon, the minister can tell us whether the volume of calls to The Pas crisis centre from Flin Flon has changed significantly, given the hundreds of calls that came into the Flin Flon Crisis Centre on a weekly basis.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I can advise the member that for the month of April there were four families who were accessing services in the shelter at The Pas, and that there were 14 calls that were made during that period of time. I know that the member is aware that the shelter in Flin Flon was closed for a number of months for other reasons in 1992, and that it is

difficult to compare that to numbers that, of course, were not available for a full year.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister has not indicated whether the four families were from Flin Flon.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes.

Mr. Storle: The numbers, I think, indicate the need. I think the minister is also aware that the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre had a doubling of the number of bed nights year over year, excluding the period of time during which they were closed.

The minister keeps ignoring, as the government has from the day this issue was raised, the increasing pressure on the community. Everyone has acknowledged, studies have shown, that the economic circumstances of a family bear a direct relationship to the number of violent incidents in families. The more uncertain, the more unstable, the more poverty in a family, the more difficult maintaining reasonable family relations becomes.

The problem here is the future. Maybe the minister will continue to shirk whatever share of the responsibility should be his. The question is, what happens from this point on? For the people in Flin Flon, it simply is not acceptable that that service not be available. We know there are going to be incidents of assault and violence against women and abuse of children. It is inevitable.

The fact that four families from Flin Flon in the month of April, while the crisis centre was closed, while the people may have been searching for some place to go to deal with their problems—that this number of families needs to receive support is indicative of the need.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am not sure that we can wait while this minister follows some political agenda. It is not fair for us to ask. It is not fair to ask the women and children in Flin Flon to bear that kind of pressure.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that this committee urge the Minister of Family Services to reconsider the decision to withdraw funding from the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I would like to advise the committee, I will be taking it under advisement, and I will get back shortly.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Bearing in mind the ruling of the

Speaker earlier—and I do not want to deal with that—I want to know from this minister, however, what co-ordination is taking place at the present time with regard to individual cases between the Department of Education, the Department of Family Services and the Department of Justice.

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

Mr. Gilleshammer: Just responding on the service level, at the staff level, that will vary from one jurisdiction to another. In the southern part of the province where we have Child and Family Service agencies, they are in contact with officials in Health, Education and Justice directly from those agencies.

* (1510)

In other areas of the province, we share regional offices with staff who are a part of the Department of Health. I think it is fair to say that the decisions made on that sharing of services occurs on a case-by-case basis with regional staff and with the knowledge that school division officials or Justice officials can communicate with our regional offices and vice versa where they have cases that are common to all departments of government.

Mrs. Carstairs: What would be the protocol, for example, if a worker for Child and Family Services learned that an individual was not attending school or that such an individual was suicidal or that such an individual might be in possession of a weapon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think it is incumbent upon that worker to do a case conference of all of the service providers that are involved with the case. I know from my own experience at the school level that frequently case conferences are called where all of the individuals who are working with a particular student or particular person are brought in to do a conference on it and to co-ordinate the planning that takes place for the services provided for that individual.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister then tell us if the Department of Family Services had contact with this particular family? Were they providing any form of family service counselling or family dispute counselling within this family unit?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would have to advise the member that I am under substantial restrictions by law of what I can discuss about individual cases.

Mrs. Carstairs: I respect that particular barrier which the minister has.

Is it normal for the department, with department staff here in Winnipeg, to receive information with regard to difficulties encountered by an individual within the school system, or would that be left only at the Child and Family Services level?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The school, as the member knows, has substantial resources and access to services over and above what the school division is able to access. However, if the child is also involved with the Child and Family Services system, there is again a case co-ordination that takes place between the agency and the school. It can be triggered by either of the two service providers, either the agency or the school division.

Mrs. Carstairs: To get back to the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre for just a moment, the minister gave the figures for April, but can the minister give the figures for an average month of clients receiving service at that particular shelter?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told the annual projection was 75 visits and that includes, of course, as we have indicated before, covering a portion of Saskatchewan. It also indicates some of the clients who may have had two, three or four visits to the shelter.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can you tell me how that compares with other shelters that are operating in the province outside of major cities, for example, Brandon and Winnipeg?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it is very low compared to our other centres outside of the city of Winnipeg.

Mrs. Carstairs: Perhaps we can have some more specific figures. For example, how does it compare with The Pas?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We do not have the exact figure that I would want to use here, but the bed nights number into the thousands.

Mrs. Carstairs: Excuse me, I do not understand. How many were there at The Pas, and how many were there at Flin Flon?

* (1520)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the member is asking for a comparison with The Pas. I gave you the number of individual visits to the shelter before, and I am going to change that to bed nights in Flin Flon of 1,080 and at The Pas it was 2,153.

Mrs. Carstairs: For how many months was Flin Flon open that would have given them a bed night count of 1,080 as opposed to The Pas for 2,153?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That was a forecast at full year.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister give me the same figure for the Parkland region?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Parkland one is one that just opened last fall, I believe, and the projected bed night forecast was just around 900.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell the committee why a crisis centre would be closed with a count of 1,080, but open one which had a projected count of 900? What would be the rationale of closing one that had a larger bed night count?

Mr. Gilleshammer: As I have indicated, from the beginning we have looked upon this on a regional basis. The Parkland region had not been served by a shelter before, and we had two of them in the Norman region.

Mrs. Carstairs: But it is also true that you have a great number of people who live in the Norman region and Flin Flon happens to be a city. The Parkland area does not have a designated city. Why would you, for example, close down a shelter in one of Manitoba's few cities? We only have five. Why would you choose to close one down in one of those cities?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, again, as I have indicated, we looked on this in a regional basis. We have a shelter in that region, and we have, I believe, the only Women's Resource Centre outside of Winnipeg also in that region, and we felt that we could provide those services with the existing services of one shelter and one resource centre.

Mrs. Carstairs: In the Department of Family Services: Payments to External Agencies, there seems to be a change from 1992-93. There was one referred to as the Lundar. Has that got a new name, or has that just also disappeared?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am advised that they have changed their name to the Lakeshore Women's Resource Centre.

Mrs. Carstairs: I rather assumed that on the funding basis. What is the extent of the crisis office in Swan Valley?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am informed that there is a crisis centre office, that there is second-stage housing and also some community safe homes.

Mrs. Carstairs: It is my understanding that these places where the resource centres and the crisis centres are located, which are designated in your listing as crisis offices, do not have bed nights. Is that correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct as far as operating as a shelter, as we know it, goes, but they do have, and have developed, what we call safe homes.

Mrs. Carstairs: Was there any consideration given to establishing such a centre in Flin Flon in light of the fact that the shelter itself was going to be closed down?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is exactly what we would like to work with the crisis centre board on and will be the subject of our discussions with them.

Mrs. Carstairs: Has any money been put aside in this budget for such a centre?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We feel that, with the resources that the crisis centre has and the resources going to the region, we can accommodate that with those two sources.

Mrs. Carstairs: What would be the extent of the dollars that the minister will be looking at in that respect?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We are still waiting on the audited financial statement of the crisis centre. I have heard numbers like \$40,000 and \$60,000. We also have, I think it is \$123,000, going into the resource centre in that particular community. We feel that, with the resources that are potentially there, we can work with them to develop an extension of services in that matter.

Mrs. Carstairs: Does the minister not think it would have been more appropriate to have put such plans in place before they closed down the shelter?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have been attempting to meet with the group for a number of weeks now. They have asked us to wait until they have completed their audited statement, and that is the situation we are at at this time.

Mrs. Carstairs: I find it difficult to understand that a government would decide to close down a shelter—I have already acknowledged that this government has made tremendous advances in terms of providing shelters and in providing additional dollars for women in crisis—decide they are going to shut down a shelter, which I consider

to be a very backward step, and then say they are going to talk about opening a crisis office.

Surely, if there was a determination that a crisis office was perhaps the way to go in the future, that should have been the step put in place prior to the closing down of the shelter.

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have indicated to the board that with the resources of government that is going into the area and with the resources they have indicated they have, we are wanting to look at some additional services that could be provided in that area over and above what the Women's Resource Centre is doing now.

* (1530)

We had a meeting set up a couple of weeks ago which the centre board asked us to delay. We are again in the process of rescheduling that meeting to discuss the services that we feel we can provide in the community with the assistance of the community.

Mrs. Carstairs: I certainly have not visited all the resource centres, but I have been at Fort Garry. I have been at North End and I have been at Pluri-elles. It is not my experience with those three that they function primarily as crisis centres, or indeed that this is even a small part of their function.

Yet the minister constantly refers to the Northern Women's Resource Service located in Flin Flon as an alternate service to those who will no longer have a shelter. Have they therefore changed the mandate of the Northern Women's Resource Service, and what is this new mandate?

Mr. Gilleshammer: No, we have not changed the mandate, but I think the member would find if she had visited all of those resource centres that their mandate has been a pretty open-ended one in terms of developing the programs which they feel are appropriate for their particular area. We are indicating that we would, as a department, work with the resource centre, with the board and with the resources they have to develop a continuum of services within that region.

I think the department has brought forward the idea that there is a willingness to take a look at the services that are provided in that area to come up with the best possible service we can, given that we have withdrawn that particular funding for the crisis centre.

At the same time, we have an ongoing investigation, as I have indicated earlier. We are prepared to look at the recommendations that are brought forward by that investigation. I can tell you that the department is prepared to seek answers and to look for solutions that would provide a service in that particular area of the province.

Mrs. Carstairs: Has the minister met with the Northern Women's Resource Service and asked them to pursue a new mandate with respect to providing crisis service to the women living in Flin Flon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have not met with them personally, but senior staff have done so.

Mrs. Carstairs: Have they accepted this new mandate?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think it is fair to say that there is a willingness to co-operate with the department in looking at service provision in that area.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): I understand that we are past Community Living and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, but if the minister and his staff would prefer to have it dealt with under Minister's Salary when there are not any. I just ask, which is more appropriate?

I would like to ask him a couple of questions about the home in Rorketon that I was discussing with the minister during Question Period today.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, we are prepared to enter into discussions at the present time, and I have staff from Rehabilitation, Community Living coming to the table at this time.

Mr. Plohman: Thank you. Could I just ask the minister, first of all, how many clients are being serviced at the Anne's Care Home in Rorketon at the present time?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told there are seven clients who are living there. Four of them have a new day program site.

Mr. Plohman: The four are being bussed to Ste. Rose for a different program. Can the minister tell me why that is and exactly what the difference is in activities?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that four of the clients have been transferred to Ste. Rose and the per diems for the day program have been transferred with them and enhanced to reflect the programming that they are now receiving. The clients are also

having work placements with local businesses in Ste. Rose.

Mr. Plohman: Can the minister tell what level or class of handicap these people have?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that these were individuals who are what is called or termed a Level IV.

Mr. Plohman: Level IV being the most severe as opposed to Level I?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Level IV being more severe than I.

Mr. Plohman: Would it go further? Would there be Level V, VI? How far would it go?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It goes up to Level V.

Mr. Plohman: So we are talking about one level from the most severe mentally handicapped people in terms of these classifications.

Mr. Gilleshammer: These are individuals who would have substantial difficulties if they were to be living in the community or trying to access worker programming.

Mr. Plohman: I understand that is the case. The minister talked about enhanced day programs now, and enhanced per diems. Could he be a little more specific? My understanding is that over the years at the Sraybash's—Anne's Care Home in Rorketon, they received training in woodworking and other tasks as well as a home setting that they were experiencing. This was not deemed to be good enough for Level 4 people in terms of their potential, I would understand. I guess that is why the department wanted to have them moved. I would like a little bit better understanding, and so would the people in the area who are concerned about this move, a little better understanding of what we are talking about here in terms of experiences.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The whole thrust of community living has been to have individuals not only live within the community, but also to access work placements and to normalize their situations as best we can. Sometimes, to find those work placements, individual clients will have to access that work experience in a different centre or a larger centre, and it was the professional judgment of our staff that, in the case of these individuals, a different work placement be accessed.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, how much was the per diem at Rorketon and how much is it going to be at ROSE Inc.?

* (1540)

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am informed that the per diem in Rorketon was \$8.94 a day and that the per diem in Ste. Rose is \$21.22 a day.

Mr. Plohman: That is a considerable difference, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, more than double, and my understanding is that these people are being bussed to Ste. Rose to do menial tasks like pick up garbage for the R.M. and for the village. Is this what the minister would deem to be more enriched day programs?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the member is no doubt aware that we rely on the staff and the community to provide day programming and training for individuals. In some cases it involves working in restaurants, it involves working in the community, and in some cases it may mean working with municipal levels of government to provide work that other people in the community handle. The placement from time to time is rotated so that the individuals get experience in a number of things.

Some of the tasks that clients may be involved with could be regarded as menial. The challenge that is before the staff of the department is to find the most suitable work experience placements that they can and to give them that variety of experience within the community that other individuals are experiencing.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Plohman: So as not to take any more time than is necessary, can the minister provide some additional information on the placements of these four individuals at the present time as to their current activities? I have received reports, as I indicated, that basically this is the extent of their activities, and I would like to assure myself that is not the case.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would be pleased to have staff look into that and to provide the member with an update.

Mr. Plohman: Also, I would like to know whether there was any capital money from the department ever put into the Anne's Care Home in Rorketon? In that same question, also whether it is his department that is providing capital funding to ROSE Inc., or is this coming from a different source?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would point out to the member that we do not have a capital budget within our department, that we flow the fundings on a per-diem basis.

Mr. Plohman: So, again, we get back to this co-ordination thing. Surely, the minister or staff could tell me then, which department is providing the funding for the housing that is going to be provided to these people by ROSE Inc. in Ste. Rose? I understand as of June 1, they are going to be moved there and no longer bussed from Rorketon

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am reminded that community groups often access money through the Community Places programming, through the Community Services Council, and that some of our per-diem money is sometimes translated into some of the upgrade that will take place in community residences.

Mr. Plohman: Then, to get more specific in this instance, can the minister provide any indication of how much of the per-diem money has been translated into capital and as well any other sources of revenue that are coming into ROSE Inc. for the purposes of providing these facilities for these residents?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I will be happy to provide that information that we do not have with us today on Community Places and Community Services Council and get an answer for the member.

Mr. Plohman: Can the minister tell us how many residents are expected to be housed by ROSE Inc. from Ste. Rose and how many from Rorketon?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am advised by the departmental staff that there are four members to be housed there.

Mr. Plohman: From Rorketon, but how many from Ste. Rose, local?

Mr. Gilleshammer: My understanding from department staff is it will be the four from Rorketon.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, who supervises the construction, the work done by an organization wanting to incorporate and get into the business of providing these services such as ROSE Inc.? Is that done through the minister's department or is that done through Housing or some other department?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Our regional staff is responsible for the overview of the programming. We also have a licensing function within the department that licenses facilities for that purpose.

Mr. Plohman: That is for the programming once it begins, but in terms of the establishment of a facility, the capital costs, the minister indicated, may come

from other sources, but who supervises, for example, the tendering and the procedures that are followed?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is done by the community group that are the proponents of any program. Our responsibility is to license the facility and then, through the regional staff, to monitor the ongoing programming that exists.

Mr. Plohman: So there is no special role for the department in the initial stages then. There is no overseeing of the procedures followed.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that we receive the application and provide any assistance that we can through either our regional staff or through the licensing branch.

Mr. Plohman: Can the minister indicate whether he has reviewed this situation personally with regard to the four residents that are being moved to Ste. Rose with his staff as a result of petitions and letters that were sent in earlier? Is he satisfied that the care they are going to receive is superior, considering what they have been offered at the previous residence over many years?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have received some letters and responded to those letters of concern. I have asked the senior staff responsible for both the regional delivery of the program and the licensing to look at the situation to be sure that we are doing the best for the individuals concerned.

Mr. Plohman: I just want to close—to indicate to the minister and draw to his attention that the couple, the Sraybashes, who have been offering the service over the last number of years, have no desire to retire from this service. They have been providing all of their own financial resources towards the capital costs and have received no government funding for that other than the per diems of, I guess, \$8.94 a day and whatever they might have been over the years, and have been functioning as a mom and dad to these residences.

Everyone in the community that I have talked to feels that there is a very close relationship, a loving relationship. They are referred to as mom and dad. Considering their handicap, their disability of a Level 4 classification here, I would ask the minister to consider the impact that this is going to have on those people. They cannot continue to open with three people left of the seven. They cannot continue to operate. It is not financially viable for that residence to remain open, that care home, with

the remaining three. So they have to close as of June 1, and I understand their per diems are being pulled. I think that decision should be reviewed. It is going to impact on these four individuals very seriously.

Sometimes we look from a program point of view or a bureaucratic point of view, which might look to be more ideal for them, has to be considered in light of their own personal condition and situation that they have experienced over those years. I do not think that that human touch is necessarily being reflected as the most important in this situation. So I ask the minister to review that, and I will leave that with him at this particular time with the understanding that he will be providing me the additional information that I have asked for.

*(1550)

Chairperson's Ruling

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Earlier today, I took under advisement a motion moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), which reads:

That this committee urge the Minister of Family Services to reconsider the decision to withdraw funding from the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre.

This motion repeats in substance a motion moved by the member for Flin Flon last Thursday, which was defeated by this committee. Therefore, I am ruling that the motion is out of order because it contravenes our own Rule 31, which states in part: "No member shall revive a debate already concluded during the session"

* * *

Mr. Storie: I had intended the motion to be a different motion, but I recognize that there are similarities, and I accept your ruling.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, a question to the minister: In the House earlier today, it was referenced that this government has received a number of reviews of the issue of domestic violence of support services for families in crisis. In reviewing some of the comments made by the Pedlar report on domestic violence, one of the comments made in the report, and I quote: In particular, the justice system must work toward effective training, protocols and policies that will promote commitment, consistency in communication, within and between components of the system

so that safety and sensitive treatment for women is ensured.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, earlier today, I asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) whether he would instigate a commission of inquiry to look into the incidents and the events leading up to the incident last Thursday morning, and look at the question of co-ordination of services in particular, but also the larger question which we have been discussing here, and that is the question of services generally to northern Manitoba and the community of Flin Flon in particular, both with respect to the victims of family violence, but also with respect to the issue of mental health, psychological and psychiatric services. Can the minister indicate whether he would support such an inquiry?

Mr. Gillehammer: The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has responded to the member in regard to the timing of the initiative that is being requested, and I respect his concern about that.

I think that in the area of co-ordination of service between government departments or between any other group that is working together, this is something that has to be constantly reviewed and monitored, and I can say that that is a concern of mine, that we continue to work diligently in that area to be sure that service providers are communicating on a regular basis.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the last number of months, the last year and a half, perhaps, there have been three other incidents of women victims being stalked. The more we learn of this particular incident, the more it looks like a result of stalking, that in fact there is evidence being revealed as we speak that this event is a result of a premeditated, in effect, plan to harass.

I am wondering if the minister is prepared to tell us what the Department of Family Services is doing to deal with these kinds of insidious threats against women and children and families.

Mr. Gillehammer: The member indicates that there is evidence being revealed as we speak, and I respect that in many ways this investigation is just in its very, very initial stages. The whole area of combatting criminal activity is first and foremost the responsibility of the Department of Justice, but having said that, we will make a commitment within Family Services to co-operate and provide any information and input that we can to this larger question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 5.(e) Family Dispute Services (1) Salaries \$267,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$90,500—pass; (3) External Agencies \$5,037,200—pass.

Resolution 9.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100,791,600 for Family Services, Child and Family Services for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994—pass.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Family Services is item 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$20,600. At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this item.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie),

THAT line 1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the reason for moving this motion is to express our dissatisfaction, our disappointment and indeed our sadness with the budgetary decisions of this minister and this government. In particular, we are very disappointed by the cutbacks to a number of social service organizations, particularly, the decision to eliminate the grant to the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization and to friendship centres. While there are many organizations that are going to survive and find alternative sources of funding, we believe that this is going to have a devastating effect on the ability of the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization to deliver services to people and also on friendship centres to deliver services to people.

We do not buy the minister's line that all of the 56 organizations were advocacy organizations, as the original press release said. We believe many of them are involved in providing service to the public, and that is very true of both MAPO and friendship centres.

We move this motion because we are disappointed with this minister and this government in his budgetary decisions and the effect that is going to have on Child and Family Services agencies, and in particular the Winnipeg Child and Family Services. We know that—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask those people in the galleries, if they want to carry

on some conversations, to do it out in the hallway. We are having a little bit of trouble hearing at the table here.

Mr. Martindale: We know that there are many existing problems with delivering service, and these budgetary decisions are going to make the problems worse. The funding cuts will prevent the staff from properly caring for abused children. The director of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services, Mr. Keith Cooper, has said publicly that he shares the staff's concerns, that he is worried about the impact of cuts, that kids in crisis might have to wait longer for a response.

In fact, he is quoted as saying: They simply cannot do the amount of work they are doing now with 10 days less work. We know that is true because of other decisions of this government, and that there will be many more fewer days of staff time. In fact, I have erroneously said 3,000 hours less staff time. In fact, it is 3,000 staff days less time to deliver service.

* (1600)

Also, the Winnipeg Child and Family Services lost a \$250,000 grant from the United Way for volunteer co-ordinators. This agency will have to make it up from elsewhere, from inside its own budget. They, in addition to having to find more money, have new responsibilities, particularly for the education and training of foster parents due to the elimination of the grant of the Manitoba Foster Family Association.

The number of children in care is increasing by 10 percent a year, so the demand on services is going up. The amount of funds available to do the job adequately are going down, waiting lists are escalating. The staff are already handling twice the number of cases as recommended. The staff are saying workers have almost no time for preventative work. A board member has said to me that there is no down time in Child and Family Services. I believe the result of the decisions of this minister will be to reduce the amount of preventative work and the amount of work at the front end of the system. It will result in apprehending more children at the back end, at the more costly end of the system.

We are condemning this minister and this government for the closure of the crisis centre in Flin Flon. If this minister intends to follow through on this decision, then I think he should, at the very least, rewrite the purpose statement in the minister's annual report and say that the crisis shelters are no

longer a community-based service but are a regionally based service. The minister should inform all women who might be potential users of crisis shelters that is now the case, particularly in Flin Flon.

We move this motion because of the increase in fees for child care, because of the reduction and capping of spaces in child care and the reduction of the job search time for parents with children in child care.

We know what the effects of this are going to be. In fact, the Manitoba Child Care Association has already surveyed their members to see what the effects are, and this minister has not done the research that we believe he should have done before making these decisions. I asked the minister several times if they had been in touch with Canada Employment Centres and asked them what is the average length of weeks that people are registered searching for work, and, apparently, the minister or his staff did not make that inquiry.

We informed the minister that the average length of time that people are on unemployment insurance in Manitoba is approximately 23 weeks. In spite of that, this minister has reduced the job search from eight weeks to two weeks. This minister has increased fees to parents, to the parents who are in subsidized spaces, the parents who can afford it the least, and the minister has reduced the job search time.

All of this is going to result in fewer children in child care and the parents who are going to pull their children out are the ones who can least afford it or the ones who absolutely need child care in order to find employment or to stay in employment. We know that parents are already pulling their children out, either because they cannot afford the new fees or because they have been adversely affected by one of these three policies.

We know from a survey that was done that seven staff have already been laid off. We also know that some family day care providers in some centres are not passing on the new fees, and the result is that staff are taking a cut in pay. The occupational group in Canada that is the worst paid, child care workers, are taking a cut in pay and absorbing certain costs themselves because their parents cannot afford to pay the new fees.

We are condemning this minister due to cuts to social assistance rates. This government has

repeatedly said that their budgetary decisions are fair. If they were fair, we would have been hearing an outcry from the rich, but instead, what we hear is that this budget is an attack on the poor, and the proof is that people who are already the lowest income people in this province, people on social assistance, are having their rates cut.

We already have the highest rate of poverty in Canada and the highest rate of child poverty in Canada. The statistics for this province are a disgrace, and this minister is taking money out of the hands of the poorest people in this province. He gave them an increase January 1. He will tell us about the increase on January 1, but he has taken it away with the April budget.

We are condemning this minister for eliminating the Student Social Allowances Program. In effect, what this government is doing is forcing these people onto city welfare and out of education. When they are on city welfare, they cannot be full-time students because on municipal assistance, you must be available for work and looking for work. You cannot go to school full time and be looking for work or available for work.

So these are students who have been in school, many of whom are going to be on social assistance and out of school, and we know that this greatly jeopardizes their chances to improve their educational status and to improve their employability and indeed their ability to obtain a job and to keep a job and to keep a decent job.

We know that, with the less education people have, the lower-paying job they have. This is denying the future of these students by taking them out of school and putting them on social assistance. We know that this government is cutting in every area—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask those members standing on both sides of the table and sitting on both sides of the table to please keep it down to a low murmur so that I could hear the honourable member for Burrows.

Mr. Martindale: We know that this government is cutting in almost every department. The budget of the Minister of Family Services is one of the few, if not the only budget, that have been increased.

The reason for that is that his social assistance budget is up. It is up from \$379,000 last year to—[interjection] Thank you for the correction: \$379 million last year to \$414 million this year. There is

only one reason why that is happening, and that is because the budgetary decisions of this government and the failure to create jobs and stimulate the economy are resulting in an increased social assistance rate. This government is doing absolutely nothing about it, and it is a disgrace.

Most of that is an increase in the municipal welfare budget, which has gone from \$76 million to \$111 million, which means that by far the greatest increase is for people on Municipal Assistance, the people who are employable.

This is very graphically displayed in the information from Winnipeg Harvest food bank, which has shown the growth in people seeking assistance from Winnipeg Harvest in the category of city of Winnipeg social assistance. Almost 50 percent of the people who are helped by Winnipeg Harvest food bank are on city of Winnipeg social assistance. Those are people who have recently been employed, whose unemployment insurance has run out, people who want to work and for whom there are no jobs.

So we believe that this budget and the decision to increase social assistance because they had to because the demand is going to go up in the next year are not only a condemnation of this minister, but a failure of his entire government to stimulate the economy, to create jobs, and to get people off social assistance.

What this minister and this government prefer to do is to pay people to stay at home and collect social assistance, instead of encouraging them and enabling them to participate in the labour market.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the motion that is before us is not a motion which I take a great deal of interest in supporting, but I must support it. I said I do not take a lot of interest in supporting it because I really think that these motions verge on the silly, and always have, but it is the only way that the opposition has an opportunity to express our dissatisfaction with the government of the day.

It is the only opportunity that we are given to talk about choices. It is the only time that we have an opportunity to tell a minister that we do not think that he fought hard enough for his department. That is what concerns me most.

Let us go back a few weeks ago when the Child and Family Services Estimates were available long before any others were. We had Agriculture and

Highways. We were not given the entire budget, but that led me to the sad conclusion that somehow or other the Minister of Family Services, along with his colleagues in Agriculture and Highways, had given up the fight, that they were not prepared to debate any longer with their caucus colleagues about resources which they require to run their department.

* (1610)

I also spent a great deal of time speaking in the House because I would not allow the Estimates of Family Services to be debated until we saw the rest of the Estimates. I wanted to know if, in fact, the cuts to Family Services were indicative of the cuts to all other government departments. Tragically, that is not true.

We have a cut to Education of 2 percent. While I may not like that cut, if it is going to be across the board for every department, and it was for Health, then perhaps one says that is the government's decision, but at least they have been fair and equitable to everybody.

But one looks at the department that we are dealing with today, we have to realize that, if this government had not merged income security with this particular portfolio some years ago, this department would see a rather massive cut because one looks at the individual sections: Administration and Finance, which does not give me a lot of concern, was cut by 4.9 percent; Registration and Licensing, by 2.9 percent; Rehabilitation, Community Living and Day Care, by 1 percent; and Child and Family Services, the big numbers in this department, by 4.7 percent. The only reason that this particular branch of Family Services looks as if it is getting an increase of 4.5 percent is because Income Security and Regional Operations, which used to be a different portfolio, got an increase of 9.3 percent.

Everything to do with children, and everything to do with the vulnerable, was cut. It was not cut at 2 percent. It was cut at figures like 4.7 percent. That is what disturbs me most about this particular portfolio. When one looks at the groups and organizations that have been cut, always it is to people who are the most vulnerable. We cut a crisis centre, 1,080 bed nights, according to the minister a few moments ago, that were available in the community of Flin Flon last year are not going to be available for women and children in crisis.

When we look at Student Social Allowances, we look at cuts to those who are trying to get their lives in order. They are the very people who said: I do not want to live on social assistance for the rest of my life. I am going to go back to school, I am going to upgrade my skills, so that I can find a job, so that I can be a contributing member to the tax rolls of this province. Those were the people that we chose to cut.

Why the minister chose to cut the Indian and Metis friendship centres I simply do not know, because, as our society becomes more and more aboriginal in content—and all the demographics show that Winnipeg and Thompson and Brandon will have larger and larger aboriginal populations—many of those people come with few skills, usually very high unemployment rates, suffer already from demographics that the rest of us do not suffer.

One of the places where they turned to for service was the Indian-Metis friendship centre. These vulnerable children who received sometimes playtime in the center, sometimes language training, sometimes just a friendly pat on the back at the end of a school day where they felt isolated—these children are not going to get the kind of service they previously had because of the cuts to this particular budget.

The minister cut support for the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization. It was such a minor amount of money in the scheme of things that one wonders why they would choose such an advocacy organization. Regrettably, I can only make the decision that it is because in their advocacy they were often antigovernment.

When your group gets all of their support from government, because people who go to the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Association are usually people who are living on social assistance, then they feel they need somebody to advocate on their behalf, and that is what the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization did.

But it did a lot more. One of the things they did that caused me some interest was the fact that they kept the daily papers available to people, so that they could come in and look at the want ads and come in and look at things that were for sale, so they could perhaps buy secondhand products to support their families.

This budget has not suffered the same scrutiny of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). It has

suffered far more because how you can cut Child and Family Services by 4.7 percent and say you are fair and equitable is beyond my comprehension.

So what I will be doing in my statement is not criticizing the minister for the way in which he manages the department. I will be criticizing the minister for not fighting hard enough for vulnerable people, and I will be criticizing his colleagues for not understanding that in tough times we have to make tough choices, but those tough choices have to be on those who can afford to provide some of the wherewithal for themselves.

Nowhere was that highlighted more for me than in the changes to the daycare fees. The minister did not choose to put up the fee for the family of professional people. He did not ask them to pay an extra \$1.40 a day for child care. He asked people who were receiving subsidy. The minister gave me a figure. A single-parent mom with two children in child care would get full subsidies for those two children; the cost to that parent now is \$650 more than last year.

How does a single-parent mother earning \$16,000 a year come up with another \$650 a year for child care? I do not know how the minister can expect her to do that, and what I am very afraid will happen is that that mother who has been working and earning, granted not much above minimum wage but living with some dignity, because she is bringing home a pay cheque and looking after her children to the best of her ability, will now choose to go on social assistance. Then she has no child care expense and probably her real income will not in any way be affected; it might even to some degree be enhanced. That is a real tragedy when we invite somebody to go back on social assistance.

We are asking students to go back on social assistance because we know that without skills they will not get employment. We are asking mothers to go back on social assistance because we can no longer give them full subsidies for their child care. We are asking women in crisis to take a bus, an hour and half, or by bus it is actually closer to two and a quarter hours to another shelter down the road. We are asking vulnerable aboriginal people to take less services from their friendship centres. I simply, quite frankly, do not understand a government that believes fairness means that those who have the least are the ones who have to pay the most.

I took a look at this government budget, and I have to say that my family is not affected by it. My family is not going to suffer anything because I have to pay a little bit of tax on items that I did not ever have to pay tax on before. Quite frankly, I do not even know what I pay for some of those items. If I need them, I buy them, pay at the checkout counter. I do not look at what a 7 percent increase on that item is going to be. People in my incomes do not, but people who are living on low incomes do. It has a tough impact on them.

That is why the minister says, well, tell us how you would do it, and I make no bones about telling him where I would do it. I would have cut the Community Places grants completely. I told the government that last year. I cannot understand a government funding golf courses, but they cannot fund a shelter. I simply do not understand that priority. I do not understand a priority that says, pretend we have not increased taxes and increase those of homeowners by 75 percent, whether you live in a \$150,000 house or a \$300,000 house or a \$27,500 house. I do not understand that kind of taxation system.

* (1620)

I have said that if people in upper incomes like mine have to pay additional taxes, then we will pay those additional taxes. Some may grump, but I will not, not if that money in turn is used to support shelters and the Indian and Metis friendship centres because those are services that I think are essential in our society.

I think the government's priorities are wrong, and so when I vote today, it will be because I think that government priorities translated into bad decision making for this particular department of government. Thank you.

Mr. Storie: I think my colleague from Burrows has done an excellent job of outlining why members of this committee should support this motion.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know it is, in part, tradition when you disagree with a minister's decisions or the direction a department is taking that you introduce this kind of a motion. I want the minister to know that, as far as I am concerned and, I think, perhaps my colleagues who have spoken on this motion already, this is more than a symbolic motion, that there are serious mistakes being made within the department in terms of priorities that are going to be damaging to the fabric of the quality of life in our communities.

While I have spent a great deal of time in my comments in the department's Estimates talking about the crisis centre, I want the minister to know of the same concern over the way decisions have been made flow from other aspects of the budget and the cutbacks in this minister's department.

I have talked at length about how Flin Flon is experiencing difficult times, and I want to tell the minister that with Lynn Lake, although it is enjoying now more stability and more security than over the past couple of years, the decision by the government to withdraw funding to the friendship centres, in particular the Lynn Lake Friendship Centre, is a devastating blow to the community.

The friendship centre is the social services centre for the community. It provides support for literacy training. It provides support and counselling for those who are plagued by addictions of one form or another. It provides support to people coming into the community for medical services. It provides translation services. It provides recreational support to a community that has lost virtually everything. I do not think this minister appreciates the damage he has done to the service infrastructure in the community by undermining the friendship centre. It is going to be a tremendous burden.

Obviously, in Flin Flon as well, the friendship centre provides tremendous support to social agencies in the community. They provide tremendous support to the community. They are an economic boon to our community, as is the friendship centre in Lynn Lake. It employs probably 4 percent or 5 percent, if not more, of all the people employed in the community.

The fact of the matter is, and as my colleague for Burrows has outlined, so many decisions have been taken in the department that appear to fly in the face of the minister's and the government's expressed concern for those who have the least. The cutbacks in this department attack those very people directly, and while we all understand the minister's refrain that tough decisions had to be made, these decisions have to be viewed in the context not only of a significant budget in his department, but in the context of government spending.

We are now attempting to understand how the government is going to spend \$200,000 in a public relations exercise for Autopac when cuts go to the crisis centre and cuts go to friendship centres. It is

going to be hard to justify to the people of Manitoba. There are like expenditures in every department, political appointees, hiring of political staff, millions of dollars that could have been diverted to save these vital services in these communities.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I want to go on record as not only supporting this motion as a symbolic indication of the minister's failure to lead this department in a way that benefits Manitobans generally, but I want to go on record as supporting this motion because of specific decisions the minister has made and justified ad nauseam because of their impact on my communities and the communities in my constituency. It is just not right.

I give the minister fair warning that this issue does not end here. This issue is not going to end when we vote on the minister's salary. These issues are going to be kept alive by the people in Flin Flon who remember that this government is the government that took those services away, that callously disregarded the need, that simply could not empathize with what people in those communities, in my communities, are going through. That is a serious indictment as far as I am concerned. So I will be supporting the motion.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have listened very intently to some of the things that were said. I am rather surprised by some of the comments that have been made by, specifically, the Leader of the Second Opposition, and also the person who moved the motion to eliminate the minister's salary.

I have also been part of numerous election campaigns and have listened very intently to some of the things that some people have said during election campaigns. Most of us, and I am not any less guilty than anybody else is around this table, come to this place and we say we should make changes. We should make changes in how government does business. Yet, when we have the opportunity, we revert back to the same old tactics that have been used traditionally to express either our support or our opposition.

I think there is an opportunity around this table to make those changes, to recognize those changes and make suggestions, make some serious suggestions as to how to better the political process that sees us come together on some of these issues. But to simply move a motion, to say to the minister that we will reduce your salary, does not do

anything. It simply accomplishes nothing except the satisfaction of having moved a motion, and whether that is an expression of satisfaction or disappointment or whatever you will, it simply accomplishes nothing. So it can be deemed as a total waste of time.

Those of us who sit around this table who are paid by the public, that are at the public trough, are wasting those public dollars by doing what we are engaging in here right at this time. Secondly, the member who moved the motion to decrease this minister's salary to a dollar is a member of society and serves society in another capacity. I believe that there are some social agencies that are not funded publicly, and I refer to the churches in general, that have a tremendous responsibility to society that some of them have negated.

I include my own churches in that statement, because I believe if those churches were truly carrying out their responsibility we would not be here today discussing some of the issues that we have discussed today, and we would not be blaming either the justice system or the education system or the medical system or the family services system for not being responsible and for not acting responsible, because there are some of us who carry also the responsibility of helping the healing process from another angle. We have simply negated that.

* (1630)

We walk away from it and we ask government to constantly throw more money at resolving problems, and has it got better? I ask you, I ask all people around this table, has it really become better? Have we done better by spending more money? I say to you members around this table that the answer is no. The answer is no, we have not done better by simply throwing more money at it, so there are, I believe, different ways and different means of dealing with some of these social issues.

We should not be moving motions that simply say we will throw out the minister's salary and therefore solve all the problems. I think that is irresponsible. I would ask both parties in the opposition to reconsider and ask them to withdraw the motion that would not force us to even vote on this and then sit down around the table to discuss whether there are not some means and some process that we can initiate that will get us to a different place and get us to a point where we will deal with these issues in a

different manner, co-operatively to look at ways of enhancing the processes as we sit here.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I appreciate the comments made by opposition members are consistent with what they have said over the last 25 or 30 hours that we have been debating Family Services Estimates. I appreciate that the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) would want increased services or services sustained through increased taxation and that is the manner in which the second opposition party would deal with things.

The members choose to ignore the many reforms that have been brought in by this department over the last two and three years that have enhanced social allowances. I am going to refrain from going into detail on those this evening because I think I did have a chance to put them on the record once before. I know that the member for Burrows has acknowledged the fact that many of these have been positive changes and in fact spoke glowingly one day of the leadership provided within this department. Today he has seen fit to bring forward that particular motion.

I did not have a chance to talk in any detail about Child and Family Services and the reforms in that area but we did spend, I think, maybe a couple of hours on it. I would point out that a number of the things that we have done in that area are going to enhance service immeasurably in the whole area of Child and Family Services, reforms that date back to the early '80s that the previous government chose to ignore and which have been brought in over the last couple of years. [interjection] Well, the member for Burrows, I think, wants to get into some debate on those issues. If he does, I would be pleased to engage him on that. We have covered that area before, and he acknowledges that some of those changes there have been very positive.

In the Rehabilitation and Community Living we have a number of initiatives, including some legislation before the House which are tremendous reforms in an area of the department, an area of government that has not received adequate attention during the 1980s.

So a number of these things, while the members recognize that they are positive, I want to zero in on specific budgetary items that we have had an opportunity to discuss in some detail. If it is the wish

of the group, we could deal with the question at this time.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour of the proposed motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Martindale: I request a recorded vote, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Burrows has requested a formal vote. A formal vote has been requested. This section of the Committee of Supply will now proceed to the Chamber for the formal vote.

* (1430)

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 2.(a) Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation, page 14 of the Estimates manual. Shall the item pass?

Will the minister's staff please enter the Chamber?

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Chairperson, I would like to go back and ask a few more questions on the Crop Insurance Review that was held last year. We talked briefly about the recommendation by the Crop Insurance Review Committee on the structure of the board and that the board be based on representations from different geographical areas and different risk areas and that these positions be rotated and that they be representatives of farm groups.

When I asked the question previously the minister indicated that would be very difficult to implement, but I think that it would be a fair way to go. Just as with other boards, there should be farm representation and they should have the ability to have input; it would be a better representation if there were more farmers in the group.

Now the minister named the people that were on the committee, I believe, but those representatives

are not put there by farmers. As my understanding is, these are not all farmers that are on the board or people who are involved in the farming business.

I do not see what the difficulty would be in implementing this change. I do not think it would be that difficult to have more farmer representation on the board. If that happened, farmers would maybe have more confidence, and it would more reflect the needs of farmers if they could have more input into it.

I just want the minister to comment on that, if there would be any way that we could have more—if he sees any way for more farmer representation, as there are on many other committees. When we have boards, there are employee representatives on it. Why would it be so difficult to have farmer representation on this board and representatives that would rotate?

Also, on the whole section on the annual meetings, that was another recommendation, that there be annual producer meetings held in each of the directors' districts. This seems like a fair recommendation. It is something that producers want. I believe it would be to the board's benefit, to the corporation's benefit if people would go out to the various districts and hear the concerns of farmers and, by doing so, perhaps encourage more people to use crop insurance rather than have people drop off from using that insurance.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Chairperson, four out of the five representatives on the board are farmers, I would like to tell the member, and the fifth person represents the insurance industry.

We are running an insurance corporation. As I said the other day, farm lobby groups have an open-door opportunity to meet with the board, to meet with the minister, to meet with staff to do the lobbying for the various interests that they have. I think it would be very difficult to run a crop insurance program if the various individuals were appointed by the farmers and came there feeling they were to lobby the management and the executive for certain changes. It would put the whole ability to financially manage that corporation into some degree of difficulty.

The member says that she thinks the people should be appointed by farmers. Well, if anybody thinks that I appointed them, then they are obviously

appointed by a farmer in consultation with a lot of other people who are farmers, too.

The representation we have, I think, broadly covers the province of Manitoba from Elkhorn, which is the southwest; Ste. Agathe, which is certainly the Red River Valley; Dugald, which is certainly the eastern area of the province; and Portage is certainly the central part of Manitoba.

The member will say, well, there is nobody from the northwest. Well, the act only allows five and we cannot cover everything all the time.

We also have people that are in the special crops, people that are in forage, people that are in cereal grains, people that are in livestock, so we have I think a pretty broad cross section.

In terms of having more farmers, I do not know how you could do it, when four out of five really are actively farming. The fifth person, as I say, represents the insurance industry. I think it is important to have somebody there with that sort of understanding.

In terms of annual meetings, I think it is a good idea. I think the board also believes it is a good idea to meet on a more formal basis with people that are interested. I will also have to tell the member that the chairman particularly has gone out to a large number of farm meetings over the course of the last couple of winters. Different board members have met at different locations around the province with interested groups, and certainly the staff are constantly available for any organization that wants to have a meeting on any specific issue related to crop insurance.

I can assure the member that the idea of keeping an open door and the constant consultation with the producers will be an ongoing process. It is the way it has been evolving over the last couple of years. Certainly right at this point in time there is significant consultation going on with the corn growers as individual coverage is evolved. So it is not a closed-door relationship between the board and the farmers or between the staff and the farmers.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do recognize that the Minister of Agriculture is a farmer, but his appointments are being done as the Minister of Agriculture, not as a farmer, and I do not think that covers up what the Crop Insurance Review Committee was suggesting. I would hope that the minister would give—the crop insurance people, the people who did this review took a lot of time to do it. They consulted with a lot

of people, and I think that they listened to what the producers were wanting.

I would hope that the minister would take this seriously and look at how possibly he could give some consideration to this. As I say, when there are other boards there is room for people who are in the industry, employees to put their representative onto those boards. In that way the producers have some input. If there was some way that perhaps the producers could have their representative on the board, that might be something that the minister would consider.

I would hope also that the annual meetings would be taken on. I wanted to ask the minister if that is a possibility that we will see those meetings out in the various regions carried out before the next crop year.

Mr. Findlay: The corporation is planning on having some annual meetings before the next crop year. How many and what locations are still to be determined, but I think it is fair to say that there will definitely be more than one. They will be held in a way to try to cover the majority of rural Manitoba in a fair and equitable way. Certainly, we will keep our mind open as ways and means to have representation that constantly covers a broad cross section of Manitoba farm types and the regions of the province.

Since I have been minister, we have basically revolved everybody on the boards. One of the main prerequisites was to get a very good, broad cross section of representation in terms of areas and in terms of production types around the table.

Ms. Wowchuk: We look forward to hearing about that schedule of that meeting later on in the year. As I said, we hope we will see meetings carried out through a broad area of the province, and that all people have an input.

* (1440)

Basically, the goal of this is for people to have the ability to raise concerns with the way crop insurance operates and their coverage policies. By having input we can only make the corporation more user-friendly and offer the best service possible to the producers who use the program.

Moving on, under the Crop Insurance Review, I want to ask about the coverage that is in place on wildlife damage and on waterfowl damage, whether any of the recommendations have been taken into consideration, and whether we are going to see any

changes in crop insurance coverage in those areas, and whether or not that damage is going to reflect on the coverage that an individual has. The damage, particularly with wildlife and the game damage, is through no fault of the producer.

I wonder what is happening with that. That was a concern last year by several people in my area in particular along the Duck Mountain, where the damage from big game in particular—and there was a concern that the big game damage was not compensated at an equivalent level to the waterfowl damage. In fact, I believe, last year the minister said he was going to discuss that with his federal counterparts on how we could address the big game damage. I wonder what progress has been made on that.

Mr. Findlay: Certainly waterfowl damage and wildlife damage are serious problems in those particular areas of the province where it turns out to be prevalent and particularly in a year like last year when there was a fair bit of crop left out when migration of waterfowl was taking place.

If the member remembers, last year we made a significant move to remove the impact of hail from a person's actual coverage. In terms of getting the other players to accept the same principle for wildlife and waterfowl, it is a somewhat more difficult process. It is fair to say we are still in dialogue with Ag Canada and PFRA to get them to understand that producers are vulnerable if they are located in certain locations.

I am also of the opinion that wildlife-type government agencies and nongovernment agencies like Ducks Unlimited have a role to play here too, because, you know, their interest is to promote particularly waterfowl, and they are spending a lot of money to do it, and one of the side, I guess, disadvantages of that is more wildlife or more waterfowl damage. So we are certainly asking and wanting them to play a bigger role in terms of trying to, I guess, compensate farmers when damage does occur. It is not always the taxpayer that should do that. I think if they are going to promote waterfowl, in particular, they should also play a role in compensating where damage occurs.

I know that they will say, well, we are putting in lure crops and various other things to try to minimize the damage. That is all well and good, but where that does not work and where there still is damage, we want to entertain a discussion with them to see

if they will take some responsibility. Currently, the coverage right now on waterfowl is 80 percent and wildlife is 75 percent, which in neither case do I believe, personally, is high enough.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have to agree with the minister on the fact that the coverage is not high enough in both of those cases, because it in reality is no fault of the farmer that this damage is there.

I guess I have to agree that other departments have to have a certain responsibility as well if we want to promote wildlife, which we do, and we want to have those resources there, be it for hunting or for the pleasure of other people. The government does get revenue from the licensed hunting of those various animals and birds. Then we have to look at a way that farmers who are suffering the damage from it can be compensated. I see the recommendation here says 100 percent coverage. I would hope that we could move towards that.

The question that I ask is, has a change been made of coverage as far as GRIP goes? If the farmer has his yield reduced because of wildlife damage or bird damage, is that reflected in his GRIP payment? If it is, is there any way that can be addressed?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, there are two different ways I can answer the question. I was not sure which way she was asking the question. I will find out in a few minutes I guess.

For revenue insurance payments that occur for—let us take '92 as an example. If the farmer had a Part 2 hail claim or a private hail claim, it does not affect his revenue insurance payment. If he had a wildlife claim, it does not affect the revenue insurance payment. If the person had waterfowl damage, it is in the federal-provincial agreement that the amount of the payment for the waterfowl damage is deducted from the gross payment under revenue insurance. So if the person had a \$20,000 payment under revenue insurance and \$1,000 was paid out as waterfowl damage, the net result is that the revenue insurance payment would be \$19,000.

The question I think goes further in wanting to know the impact on the person's IPI. In the future, any wildlife or waterfowl reduction in production for last year will affect IPI in the future, but for hail, not.

I was saying to the member earlier, we have the recognition that hail has to be removed from a person's experience but have not succeeded for either waterfowl or wildlife at this point in time.

* (1450)

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, that is what I was getting at was the individual IPI. So then the minister is saying that it has been addressed as far as hail goes, but it has not been addressed as far as waterfowl damage or big game damage. Then he may have said, but I did not hear, what steps are being taken to correct that so that they will not be punished or have their average lowered through no fault of their own because they really have no control on the big game or the waterfowl damage?

It is not because they are not good farmers that they have not done all the farming practices to raise up their average, but there are other things that are affecting them. What steps are being taken to address that?

Mr. Findlay: I will tell the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) that personally I feel that the impact of wildlife and waterfowl, as she has said in the majority of cases, there is nothing a farmer could do to prevent it. I think that should be recognized in terms of his IPI.

Through the national GRIP signatories committee we have been attempting to get that recognized, and so far there is only casual interest on behalf of Alberta and nobody else is prepared to support us in that direction including the feds.

So we are kind of the lone voice in the wilderness and at the national GRIP signatories committee saying that this should be done the same as hail, and so far there are about 10, 11 people around the table and the only one that is really pushing the issue.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess I would encourage the minister to keep on speaking, because sooner or later a lone voice gets heard and maybe we will make progress. I hope he can make progress on it quickly.

One other area that affects the individual averages that was a factor in the last crop year was frost which occurred through no fault of the producers. They had no control on that, but in reality has lowered the production of many producers in Manitoba and will lower the coverage, if I understand the program correctly. The farmers will see a negative impact of this.

Does the minister feel that when there is frost damage it should be treated the same way as hail damage, because again it is something that farmers have no control over? Is there any way that this can

be addressed so that farmers do not see a loss in their averages because of the frost, as occurred last year or when it may occur in the future?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, frost falls in the category of a natural peril, and normally when it happens it hits a large area. So all your neighbours for many miles around are generally hit, like last year. If you are in an area, particularly Swan River, and all the way down almost to Virden last year was all hit by frost all in the same two or three days, so everybody was hit the same.

If you are in a soil zone that has been hit by frost, you may well have a positive IPI, because the critical thing in IPI is as long as you are above the average for the soil zone. So if your yield is half of what it was, but if you are still above average, it will have a positive impact on your IPI. So the critical thing is always to follow the first line of defence—the old saying, earliest crop and manage it right—to try to prevent the impact of natural perils will keep you above the average and, therefore, you will not be negatively impacted in terms of your IPI. So it is a natural peril of which we pay both crop insurance and revenue insurance, so the impact of that has to be entered into the long-term average yield as part of the rate-setting mechanism.

I want to assure the member that as long as you are above average, your IPI will not be negatively impacted. That is the critical thing. You can manage against the impact of frost if you sow the right varieties and you sow early enough and all that sort of thing. Those of us who live in that region think of that often when we are sowing at this time of the year. Last year was one of those extremely unusual and unfortunate events that, for many farmers in the area of impact, thank goodness revenue insurance was in place, because crop insurance by itself would not have given the kind of support that they needed to survive into '93 in as good shape as they are in.

Ms. Wowchuk: There is another area that I want to move into and that is dealing with the whole issue of computerizing the crop insurance offices. I understand that there are plans in place to get the whole system computerized and there should have been computers bought. There are supposed to be two computers bought for each of the offices and everything was to be on-line by May 1.

I want to ask the minister where we are with this, whether all of these computers have been put into

Crop Insurance offices, whether they are up and running now and what the status of that is.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, over the course of the last two or three years, there were three agency offices that had computers to determine the feasibility and the loopholes of setting up the system. As of May 20, every agency office will have at least one computer, and training is now going on with staff so that all the agency offices will be fully computerized with one computer by the 20th of May.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, just to clarify further, the plan was to put two computers into each office, but that has been cut back to one, or was it the plan to put just one into each office?

Mr. Findlay: The plan right now is the one computer. Yes, we would all like more than one, but there is a certain budget feasibility. Whether it will be with buying other computers or using department computers, over time we will try to expand the computer fleet. I think it is a major move to have one in every office at this time.

* (1500)

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister tell us then whether those computers were bought out of last year's budget, or will they be bought out of this year's budget? Were they purchased before the end of the last fiscal year?

Mr. Findlay: They were bought out of last year's budget.

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): In regard to Administration, there was an overall 10-percent decrease in expenses. In this one, Section 2 here, there is an increase. Is that due to the purchase of the computers? Why the increase when you have an overall decrease of 10 percent?

Mr. Findlay: I would ask the member for St. Boniface, which figure are you looking at? [interjection] Which figure again?

Mr. Gaudry: Last year it was \$4,398,100; this year it is \$4,497,500.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, to the member for St. Boniface, we are looking at a difference here of \$99,000. It is made up of increased expenditure on MDA or Department of Agriculture secondments, clerical assistance, benefits and pension payments, and a small part of it is to do with the computerization of the agency offices and head office. So it is scattered over a number of categories.

Mr. Gaudry: Yes, Madam Chairperson, in regard to the waterfowl and wildlife damage, have all the claims been settled for the ones that were put in last fall?

Mr. Findlay: Within the next month, they expect to have all the waterfowl and wildlife damages settled. At this point in time, on the wildlife, about 75 percent of the claims have been settled, and about 90 percent of the waterfowl claims have been settled at this point. As I said, the remainder will be done within the next month.

Mr. Gaudry: What is the average number of claims in regard to wildlife and waterfowl yearly?

Mr. Findlay: I will give the member the wildlife summary first, which goes back for about six years. Go back to '87-88, the number of claims, 132, total cost \$223,000; the next year, '88-89, 130 for \$163,000; '89-90, 200 for \$266,000; '90-91, 166 claims in wildlife for \$192,000. So there were four years where it varied a little bit but not dramatically. Then in '90-91, there were 294 claims for \$356,000, and in '92-93 a drastic increase, over threefold increase over the average to 720 claims estimated for about a million dollars. So a substantive increase in the wildlife claims.

On waterfowl, I just have it for the last three years: '90-91, \$126,000 paid out; '91-92, \$137,000; and last year which we expect to be a bad year in waterfowl, about \$570,000 spent to date.

So in both wildlife and waterfowl, there is a substantive increase last year, and it is primarily due to the fact that the crop was late in maturing, late harvest and subject to all kinds of damage, of course, in that process. So they were both well above normal.

Ms. Wowchuk: In the Supplementary Estimates on page 32, under Administration, I just want clarification. Are these the various people who have been seconded from other departments to work under GRIP, the 1G, the 4G, 5F, 6F? Is that what that is, before I ask my question?

Mr. Findlay: Yes, that is what that represents. You have the Estimate for last year, \$641,900, and this year, a little over a million, and that is recovered by the department from the corporation for seconded staff. The member probably knows that the feds pay half the administration, so we recover half the cost from the feds.

* (1510)

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification again, we are into the program already, and the minister indicates they are moving toward computerization. You would think you would need less staff, but when I look at these numbers it appears there are going to be more people seconded to do the work of GRIP. Why at this point would we need more people?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, what the member sees there is '92-93, \$641,900. Staff are just looking it up, but the actual expenditure was closer to what we are projecting this year. It was over a million. We will get the final figure, but it actually ended up closer to what we are projecting for '93-94. That is one of the reasons why it is high, over a million. The other thing is, of course, the computerization does not happen instantly. There is training, and until staff get up to speed with using them, additional secondments are expected to be needed at least for this fiscal year. The figures from the actual last year and what is projected this year are much closer than what appears in the budget from last year and the budget for this year.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I would want to ask the minister, then, if they have done an analysis of what the impact has been of seconding these people from various departments. I know that I have talked to people in various regions who feel that some of the services in the regional offices might not be as great as it was while people are busy working on GRIP, and, as I look at it, on ag development and marketing policy. Has there been an impact on the work or the level of activity that has been carried on in those departments? As a result of this, is the department still able to provide those services that are needed adequately with this number of people removed from their staff?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, this is one of those situations where decisions have to be made and you are damned if you do and damned if you do not. When GRIP came in, it was definitely the highest priority for the department, and the farm community desperately wanted to have the program delivered. We are obviously under financial strain as a department and as a government trying to maximize what we can do with the existing dollars.

I will give the positive side of the secondment process before I talk about the other side, but certainly on the positive was the fact that for the department's extension delivery, GRIP was No. 1 priority in '91, '92 and '93. We believe very strongly that every staff member that was seconded to do the

job got a better understanding what the program was about, and it was a complex program that did go through a fair bit of evolution. Those seconded staff are then in a much better position to actually answer questions of the farm community when they were back on their regular job because they had actually been there and saw how it was done. So that was about the best training program they could have possibly had was an actual secondment to work in the program for two-week or four-week periods of time.

The other side of the coin, as the member probably has to be aware, is that if the GRIP contract which is now five years is not renewed in some fashion beyond '95, then GRIP is wound down as Saskatchewan is intending to do. If we had hired 100 people, suddenly there would be 100 people unemployed come '95. The way it has been run, no additional staff were put on, so if GRIP revenue insurance does not exist beyond '95 there should be minimal impact in terms of people losing their jobs.

Certainly in terms of delivery of other programs, we would have to acknowledge that there would undoubtedly be some impact, different times and locations. I feel that the staff are very professional and did the very best job they could to minimize that impact. Some programs they might have been doing in farm management or grassland work might have been delayed. I would not say anything was postponed or terminated, but it might have been delayed.

I am sure that there would have been occasions where there would have been bits of impact, but I think the positive side far outweighs the negative in that other department staff had a better understanding of revenue insurance. We did a better job of increasing the number of contact points throughout rural Manitoba using the Ag rep office as well as the agency office, basically doubled the number of initial contact points across the province. So I would like to congratulate the staff for the very professional nature in which they were able to do a very difficult job in '91 and '92.

I think everybody has a better understanding of the complexity of the program and can do a better job of informing producers when they ask questions about the program.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have to agree that the staff has handled the situation well.

I think one of the frustrations that producers felt and that staff had to deal with was the delay in getting information out. In fact, this year there was still that delay. There are people who have raised that issue that they are not getting information soon enough about the crop—about what their coverage is and various information like that. It is those people on the front line who have to deal with that.

I want to ask the minister, was there any specific reason that there was a delay with getting information out to farmers? Can that be addressed in the upcoming year? I look at a specific letter that I have here about people saying that they have to have information prior to or much earlier than they had it this year. Is there a way that can be addressed so that producers can go ahead with their planning? They know what coverage is at, what crops they should be seeding. Is that a possibility that information can reach the farmers' hands sooner than it did this year?

* (1520)

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, there are quite a number of factors at play here and the complexity—I will try to give the member for Swan River an understanding.

Farmers are asked to have their harvest production reports in by the end of November, and I am sure the member would realize, not a lot of people met that deadline. So there are a number of factors that the farmer had to contend with. One was late harvest and getting ready for winter. In fact, some crops were still in the field, so even 6 percent of the harvest production reports were still outstanding at the end of January. So on that side of the ledger the farmers did not meet their deadline. That delays the corporation.

It is difficult to calculate a soil zone average for each crop if you are missing a fair bit of data. Between the end of November and the end of January more and more steadily came in so that the corporation in terms of getting on with doing their business was delayed because of a lot of late reports coming in. A lot of staff time is, at the agency level, spent chasing those people to get their reports in so that the package can be complete so that they can get on with calculating people's IPIs.

In terms of other delays, certainly calculating out the impact of hail on IPI took about five weeks of time. The federal government was certainly not early in getting their numbers to us in terms of

market prices and premiums. Farmers did receive their premiums in about the middle of March, their premiums and the support prices for '93 by middle of March. Middle of April they received their IPIs and their coverages.

Although farmers like to have every bit of information they can in front of them in their planning, and I appreciate that and I am one of them, we also have to recognize that this is an insurance program, not a farming guideline. Farmers should be looking at the marketplace in terms of deciding what crops to grow, because the majority if not all of the income the farmer is going to get is going to be from the marketplace. Revenue insurance or crop insurance kicks in only if there is some sort of negative impact, some natural peril or price decline that is not predicted.

Farmers that have asked that question say, I need all that information so I can make my decision. I say, that is not your most critical bit of information. You have to know what you are going to get from the marketplace, what you can market. There is no sense in growing a crop that you cannot sell. Even if you do grow it and there is a revenue insurance payment, if it is only 10 percent or 20 percent, that is all you are going to get from the program. The other 80 percent still has to come from the marketplace. You better be able to market it and at least at the prairie average price and over the course of the next few months from November through to March you are going to get your market income. So I think it is false for farmers to look at this program in making their cropping decisions. They should be looking at the marketplace.

As the member looks at the Stats Canada seeding intentions, I am very pleased to see the farmers are shifting into special crops. They are certainly going to grow more barley and more canola, and it is really good that they are growing more canola because of the present strong prices and the demand for canola. They are going to grow more flaxseed. They are going to grow less wheat. So I think farmers are very clearly looking at the market signals and the market opportunities and the marketability in making their seeding decisions.

This is also a nice piece of information to have to know what crops you have the highest level of support on so you can determine if your production costs are in line with your IPI and coverage levels. The corporation is doing the best it can to get the information out as fast as possible. It did a better

job for the '93 crop than it did for '92, but the program has been put into gear on everybody running, and it takes time to get all the information in stream fast enough to get the information out earlier next year than it was this year.

But there are a lot of players in this. The farmers have to get their information, the feds have to get their information to the corporation before they can finalize the figures that they are going to put out to the farmers.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I agree with the minister that farmers should not be farming to farm the programs. That is not fair, but unfortunately with the situation that many people are in, they are forced to do things like that.

I guess the recommendation I have in this letter is that producers are saying they need the information before March 1, and that seems like a reasonable time, not necessarily to decide whether you are going to grow according to the program, but it is also an important part of it. They have to know what their insurance rates are; they have to make their plans. If there were a way to get this information out to the producers by March 1, I believe that is a reasonable request from the producers. I hope that the minister would give consideration to that and try to have that information to the producers by that date next spring.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, certainly the corporation's desire is to get it out as early as possible, and March 1 would be very nice. I would like to see it out by March 1, but there are a number of factors that come into play. If we have an early harvest and farmers, instead of waiting for the deadline, get their information in two weeks or three weeks earlier, it gives the corporation a running start on meeting its guidelines. There are always delays that crop up along the way that are surprises. If we get an early spring, have an early harvest and farmers get their information in ahead of time, the corporation is in a very good place to get it out some time in March, if not by March 1, for '94.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister mentioned the difficult harvest, and it was a difficult year. In fact, in our part of the province it is very frustrating right now because you can see combines going; you can see people applying fertilizer; some people are seeding and some farmers are under a tremendous amount of pressure just trying to get all that work done so that they can get ready to put the crop in.

Just on that, is there much work going on right now with farmers for those particular crops that are out in the field? Some of them are damaged to the point where they virtually have no value. What is happening? Are exceptions being made? Are the agents working along with those? Are they inspecting those fields and making decisions that the farmer does not have to go through the extra expense of taking off that crop, if there is no value to it, and in that case allowing them to burn it? Or are each of the farmers being told that they have to go through that crop and take it off, even if it is for a minimal amount?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, this past fall there were 1,665 claims for crop that was in an overwintering position. So there is quite a bit of crop out there.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

In terms of whether a farmer combines it or destroys it in some fashion, the decision to do that is ultimately the farmer's. The agent does an assessment of what is out there in the field. If it is three to four bushels, say in the case of wheat, the corporation will call it zero. The farmer can harvest it for that three or four bushels or destroy it.

* (1530)

If it is six or eight or nine bushels and the agent says that is what is there, the corporation will write it off. I said if it was below four, so he will say that there is really five or six bushels there that they have to say is the production from that crop. The farmer then decides whether he wants to go out and get that five or six bushels by harvesting it or whether he wants to destroy it and effectively lose that amount of his crop insurance—[interjection] The difference, yes.

So the farmer ultimately decides whether he is going to destroy it or whether he is going to harvest it. Before the claim can be settled, he has to do one or the other, but the farmer decides. Now he is obviously going to talk with the agent to see how much am I going to lose if I destroy it, how much am I going to gain if I harvest it. The ultimate decision is the farmer's, but something must be done with the crop before the claim will be settled.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am glad for that clarification, because my understanding was that the farmer had to take the crop off. Sometimes when there is one or two bushels there you have to look at the benefit

of it. The cost of taking that crop off can end up costing you more than—you may as well destroy it for that. My understanding was they had to remove the crop.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, it is a popular misconception that is out there that the farmer has to harvest their crop. As I said, the answer is he does not have to. He decides.

Where the misconception probably comes from is, say, they cannot settle on that crop until something is done. He does not have to harvest it. He can go out there and destroy it by burning it. That is completely acceptable. All he has to do is arrive at what the amount was that was in the field before he does that. Once that is decided, the farmer then decides what to do. It is a common popular misconception.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to thank the minister for that clarification.

The minister said that the farmer can go out and burn it if he so chooses. That leads me into my next question which is to deal with stubble burning. With the new stubble burning regulations that have come into play this year, is there any implication on farmers burning? My understanding is the regulations apply in the fall, but in our area of the province when you want to burn you have to go to Natural Resources to get a burning permit.

How do the regulations that are now in place affect spring burning and what is the process for those people who are outside the forestry area as far as applying to burn? Do they just go and burn now? Do they have to get an application? Are there any restrictions on spring burning or do the regulations apply only to burning from August 15 to November?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the member refers to park regulations. Those park regulations will stay in effect. They are not affected at all by the new regulations that we are bringing in as the Province of Manitoba to control crop residue burning.

Somebody wanted to point out to me, it is not stubble we burn, although it is a popular terminology that is often used. It is really crop residue we burn and when you stop and think about it, it is really right.

The regulations we brought in, as the member well knows, is the result of a committee that was set up with broad representation. It was a situation they were asked to come to a conclusion on an almost

impossible task really where you had on the one side people had said they did not want burning, and on the other side the people were adamant that they had to have the right to burn. The two positions were diabolically opposed really in the public in some sense.

I would have to congratulate the members of the committee who, over the course of several meetings, talked their way into a consensus position. One of the things they came to realize was that it is not the burning that is the problem. It is the smoke created that causes the problem to people in the city or people with asthma.

In terms of the regulations that we have in place, the first most important regulation is there is no burning at night any time in the year—no burning at night. In the spring, at this point in time, somebody can burn anywhere in the daytime, but they also have to keep in mind safety factors on highways and people, because if they do cause some trouble somewhere, the minister has the ability to step in and institute regulations if circumstances require.

The major regulation occurs in the fall. I believe it is August 1 to November 15. I think that is—I could be wrong in my dates there, but in that period of time, a farmer will be allowed to burn on the basis of recommendations done daily, given atmospheric information. Department officials and Department of Environment officials will make a determination before eleven o'clock of each morning as to what municipalities can burn and what hours in which they can burn.

Now if climatic conditions are good, they will be able to burn from eleven o'clock in the morning till two hours after sunset. That is the maximum, but each day they will make a call. Maybe all fires should be out by five o'clock or maybe they should be out by three o'clock if there is not sufficient air movement to clear smoke out of the air before evening sets in and the smoke conversion situation certainly rises at that time.

So it is in the fall where the primary impact of the regulations will be enacted. The desire of the regulations is to prevent accumulations of smoke that negatively impact innocent people. That is the intent. It will be done on a daily basis.

The province is divided into four areas. I would suspect that the call will be in the three areas that do not include Winnipeg will be basically burning for three or four days or a week at a time depending on

climatic conditions. In the Winnipeg region, I am sure it will be done on a daily basis.

If wind conditions allow, they will allow burning on the west side of the city, or maybe the next day it will be on the east side. It will be dependent on what the expectation is for climatic conditions to cause smoke problems when fires are burning. They may decide to let only a few municipalities burn each day—let us say 20 percent of the municipalities—just to keep the amount of potential smoke down on any given day, spread it out.

That information will be made available, we hope, by radio stations every day at 11 or before 11. Certainly, the information can be obtained from Ag reps, and we would like the municipalities to also have that information. We will send it to them, and there will be a 1-800 number that can be called by anybody who is interested in knowing what the call is for that day. In sort of a nutshell, that is the process.

Ms. Wowchuk: I agree with the minister on most of what he is saying, except he said that the majority of the problem is the smoke and that is the visible problem, but in reality there is much more damage that is done by burning. I really believe we have to look at different agricultural practices, other things that we can do to discourage the burning of crop residue, because there is a lot of damage. There is a lot of fibre that could be put back into the soil.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

I really think that is where we have to be looking at, on how we can change those practices in that we do not have to burn nearly as much. I realize that last year was an exceptional year with the amount of straw there was and with the difficult weather conditions we were facing, but in reality the smoke has been a problem, particularly around the city of Winnipeg, for many years now. I think that it has to be addressed in other ways as well.

These regulations are a good step. I am sure they will help to control the problem that we saw last year, but I would like to see more initiatives taken to discourage the practice of stubble burning, because I think the long-term damage of that is greater.

I guess I want to ask the minister just with the new regulations whether there have been many calls at his office this spring, whether people have been concerned with the burning that has gone on in the spring. Has it caused much concern? I do not know how much burning there is around Winnipeg,

but I know in the more distant areas there is a fair amount of burning. When I checked with the offices in our area, nobody is complaining about it, but I wonder whether many issues have been raised with the department with spring burning.

* (1540)

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, ever since I became minister and now starting the sixth year as of two days ago, I guess, or as of yesterday, maybe—yes, as of yesterday—we have been attempting to educate farmers, particularly in the region around the city, on the negatives on the soil if they do burn, trying to promote the positive impact of incorporating straw for tilth and for nutrients and so on.

That educational approach will continue. Certainly, there is research going on, some research being funded to look at how we can maximize the amount of short-strawed varieties and what the impact of short-strawed varieties is in terms of reducing the amount of straw. One thinks about that. Shorter-stemmed wheat does not automatically mean less straw, because often those shorter varieties stool more so you might have the same amount of bulk of straw.

Different varieties also have different kind of fibre content, and some of it breaks down faster than others. I would say Glenlea wheat is one of the most difficult to break down of the wheats, because it is a thick straw and it just does not degrade as fast as Red Spring wheat, wheat straw. There is also some work going on with flailers, things that chop up the sugar beettops, to go along after the combine has already chopped it and chop it up into almost like cut feed, little short pieces and then try to incorporate it.

Farmers around Winnipeg have decreased the amount of burning over the last few years. In terms of analysis staff have done, we have come down somewhat until last year. Last year was a very unusual year, late harvest, lots of straw, straw was green, and after harvest there was not enough heat to cause any kind of even normal degradation of the straw. We have come into this spring, and I can guarantee you many farmers are having difficulty trying to get the crop in, because they have all that organic matter that has not properly decomposed and it does not create a good seed bed.

There are unusual circumstances, and I can tell you personally we have had a battle the last week

trying to get crop in because of the straw that is there, trying to get it incorporated and trying to get the crop in. It just is a problem, a problem I have not seen for a long, long time. When you have to harrow a field three times in order to break the straw it gets expensive, so you get a little frustrated with it. I know farmers in the Red River Valley have commented often on that, that they are fearful of a large amount of straw and a late harvest in terms of the seed bed for the next year. We are all experiencing it.

Lots of people do not want to burn, but I am afraid that the experience they are having this spring is not very positive for their attitude come the fall of '93. If it is early enough and you get the crop off early and it is hot enough and there is some moisture, degradation occurs real well after you have worked the fields, particularly if you can get them worked in early September or even late September. Last year was extremely unusual, and I think the farmers that did not burn probably some of them are regretting it now, although they did the right thing last fall. I mean there are lots of agronomic reasons why they should not burn, but there are also some very compelling agronomic reasons why it is the best process if you are going to have a good crop in the succeeding year.

Every farmer has to take all that into balance. It varies by wheat variety. I mean, you will have an academic saying you just have to work it in and it will all degrade. It is not true with every variety. Canola is always quite easy. Your Red Spring wheat varieties are not too bad, but you get into your high-yielding barleys, your durums and your Glenleas, you better think twice that when you are harvesting relative to what is going to happen before next spring to make your decision.

I am not a proponent of the burning, but I have always argued it is a management practice farmers should have, because if they do not have it, it is very expensive to try to get rid of that straw and get the land ready for next year's crop. We all know farmers are going to keep their expenses down, so you are in the horns of a dilemma as to what you should be doing.

I have always advocated we should not be forcing farmers into a situation where they cannot burn, and that is why we put the committee into place to try to find a solution that would minimize, if not completely eliminate, the impact of smoke, but at the same time give the farmer some opportunity to use that

management practice where and when he believes that he has to do it based on the kind of equipment he has, the kind of crop he has, what crop he is going to grow next year on that land. I hope the member will support me in that process.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just wanted to add my comments to that because I do not agree with the practice, but I think the farmers have to have the flexibility to use it when necessary. In our farming operation we have not used the practice probably in the last 10 or 15 years, but last year we had to. We had no choice. I think that we have to leave that management practice there. It has to be discouraged to as great a degree as possible, but in particular situations, it is just impossible. You cannot, if you are going to put a crop in the following year, then you have to have that ability to make that decision, but I guess we, as farmers, should make that decision very consciously and give consideration to the other people who are affected by our decision. We have to respect those people and we have to respect the soil, but I agree with the minister that farmers have to have.

I would not like to see regulations that would say, ban the burning of straw completely. There has to be regulations to control it, but if we start to ban it, we may see that there is a dramatic decrease in some people's revenue because they just cannot deal with that.

It is just as with any other situation. Sometimes we have to leave the flexibility for those people who are making a living to make some of the decisions on their own because they best know how to operate. So I am pleased to see that the regulations do not completely ban burning, but that we also respect the other people who are affected by our practices.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I am actually really pleased with the response of the farm community after the recommendations were published from the advisory committee. Most farmers love to have uncontrolled opportunity to do their burning, but I think the vast majority realized that the conditions that happened last fall, on October 7 and 8, just cannot be allowed to happen again. It was totally intolerable and they themselves lost the opportunity for complete freedom in how to do it.

I think a lot of them realized they better be very accountable this fall and the following fall so that

they do not violate the guidelines because if they do, they run the risk of somebody else coming along and saying you are totally banned in the future. I think the response has been very positive in the farming community in the broad sense.

I would say there are 10 to 20 percent who just do not think they should have to abide by any regulations, but I think even those people realize that common sense has to prevail. I think the recommendations from the advisory committee are exceedingly common sense.

Even the people, the Lung Association, people with asthmatic children also, were very responsible in how they said, we do not want the impact, but we also realize that farmers sometimes have to use this practice. All we want them to do is to do it in a fashion that minimizes the impact, preferably keeps it at a very small level.

It is going to be critical this fall that farmers do not burn at night because what happened last fall could happen again so quickly, if a few people violate the no night-burning situation.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess from that we know there are some farmers who never want to change, and there will always be those.

I want to just move on a little bit and I want to talk about GRIP and abuse of the program. Earlier in the year, at the beginning of the year, there was quite a bit of discussion on abuse of the program, and in fact there was one newspaper article about a very large abuse case that we never heard the results of.

I want to ask the minister, to what degree does he believe crop insurance and GRIP, particularly crop insurance, is being abused, and what amount of time is being spent tracking these cases down?

I think when we see abuse, it is an indication of the times. People are desperate and trying to raise their income. Although I do not condone it, I can understand where some people are trying to raise their income and out of frustration have no other way to go, although I do not condone abuse of any program. It is an indication that farmers are very desperate and will do anything to increase their revenue, so I guess the question is: To what degree is the program being abused? How much staff time is being spent to track down and even further to that, how much has the corporation lost? Is there an analysis of what the abuse has cost the corporation?

* (1550)

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I can also understand what the member is saying, that some people feel so desperate that this is their last gasp at trying to survive, but when you break the law, you break the law. It is unfortunate. It is almost like robbing the grocery store. There is no way you can condone it. It is illegal.

Over the course of the last four or five years, I have certainly heard a lot from farmers about crop insurance. Two issues were constantly raised. One was, coverage levels are not high enough—I do not have enough individuality for me, so we have IPI to take care of that. The other issue is, the abuse has to be stopped, the abuse is far too rampant, there are too many people getting away with it, there are people boasting about getting away with it. I will not be part of a program where abusers are not being brought to task.

The corporation has been actively attempting to get a handle on the amount of abuse and to give a clear signal that it will not be tolerated. Certainly, cases are turned into the offices out there. They are turned in to my office. People say, check this, check that.

Over the last four months, the number of compliance officers has been increased from two to four. There are 64 contract-holder files that have been referred for final audit, intensive field investigations. Ten of those files are still under active investigation. Six contract-holder files have been referred to the RCMP, and three contract holders have been charged in criminal court with fraud. So that is the process. You see that the numbers, you work your way down from 64 investigated, 10 under investigation, six referred to the RCMP, and three have been charged, obviously, I would assume, with fraud.

It is unfortunate. The corporation does the work on the file and then turns it over to the appropriate law officials for action. Fraud is fraud. There is just no other way around it. It is illegal, and it is important to long-standing crop insurance contract holders that the most flagrant abuse be acted upon.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I guess it is no different than house insurance or anything else. It has to be addressed because I guess it has been a complaint in many areas that there are those people who collect, and then it ends up raising premiums for everybody. It should not be.

When I was referring to the desperate situation of farmers, although I do not condone what is happening, I guess what we have to look at is how can we address the needs of farmers that they do not resort to something like this. I know that there are those people who will try to abuse any system, but that is not what I am talking about.

I am talking about the desperate situation some farmers are in, and the fact that it appears that GRIP is not meeting the needs of farmers. There is not enough revenue coming to farmers, and that is part of the problem. It is the whole return from the cereal crop section that is a problem.

I do agree that these have to be looked into, the ones who are abusing it, because it is not improving the value of the corporation. But I would hope that the government department is not spending so much time on tracking down the abusers that they are not spending the time on improving services to farmers. The real area that has to be addressed is how we can improve the level of supports for farmers, offer services that are required to help them make a living.

On these people who are being charged, will this money be recovered? Will these people be expected to pay back the money to the corporation, or is it out of the department's hands? What is the point of tracking people down if it is not going to be recovered? You said there were three that were charged. It is the process from being charged. What happens then?

Mr. Findlay: It is difficult to give the member a definitive answer because the legal system and the courts ultimately decide the final disposition of a particular case, but the corporation believes that it has saved, through the audit process, over half a million dollars. A lot of that would be payments that were not made, because the fraud was caught before payments had actually occurred. Some of it is people paying back. It is a significant amount of money that could have gone out fraudulently had the compliance activities not been taking place. So it is significant, around half a million dollars.

Ms. Wowchuk: Further on audits and follow-ups that are being done, is there a system on targeting particular people? The reason I ask the question is that in our area there were a couple of people that called and said that they had been audited two and three times. There was no particular reason for them to be audited. When they called in to the crop

insurance office to find out what was happening, they said, oh, well, your name just keeps getting kicked out of the system.

I wonder what is the system that detects these? Is it just through the computer, or is there a manual way of going through to find who is being audited, or what is the process that is followed?

Mr. Findlay: In 1991, the corporation did 2,000 audits; in 1992, it did 1,364 audits. In 1992, some people were re-audited if there was a high variance in the '91 figures between what they sent in and what was found on the audit.

* (1600)

Also, agents have the right to inform head office if there are particular individuals they feel would be appropriate to audit. But the majority of the audits are done at random. But if there are discrepancies or variances found, re-audits will be done. I am not saying there is anything particularly wrong, but there is an open question as to why the variance occurred the previous time.

If somebody is making honest mistakes, it will get sorted out through the audit process. But, yes, some people can be picked up more than once, and it is primarily because of a variance the time before. I am not saying anything was wrong, just really going back, rechecking with the individual, and the process will be ongoing.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to move to the Livestock Feed Security Program. I just want to ask whether any changes have been made to that program. I recall seeing an Order-in-Council with some change in some regulations; unfortunately, I do not have those with me right now.

But I wonder if the minister could go through and explain any changes that have been made to the Livestock Feed Security Program, and why these—[interjection] Yes, in fact, I just sent them. There were some Orders-in-Council changing some of the regulations on the forage program. So what has happened with that?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, what the member is referring to is done annually. It is updating the regulation. There were a number of changes but all relatively minor and small. The deadline for entering or exiting from the Livestock Feed Security Program used to be March 31. Over the last couple of years, we have moved it ahead to January 31.

The coverage levels available for horses or for ewes or for cows, they moved a little bit. I cannot remember which way, whether it was up or down by \$10 or \$20 per animal, like from \$200 to \$220 or \$220 to \$200, something of that order. The small changes in the premium calculation process—because the corporation and all its various programs went through actuarial certification in this past year, and in order to have all the programs actuarially certified there were some small premium changes—relatively all minor, nothing major in terms of the way the program is operated for 1993.

I would just like to make the member aware of the number of contracts in Livestock Feed Security. In 1989, there were 6,600 contracts; 1990, 5,100 contracts; 1991, 3,660 contracts; 1992, 1,700 contracts; and this year about 1,100 contracts. So you see the tremendous drop off in people who are holding Livestock Feed Security contracts. A couple of reasons are obvious; one is there is lots of feed available. There has been the last two or three years, lots of feed. A lot of farmers look at, well, rather than pay a premium on a program, I may as well just spend that money to buy feed, be my own insurer, so to speak. The price of feed has been quite low because of the large supply across Manitoba. The price of feed has been quite low, so farmers have no problem buying feed at the price or in terms of the quantity.

So that is why a lot of people are opting out, and it is a serious issue. What do we do beyond here? When you get down to only 1,100 contracts with a high administrative cost of operating it, there are some open questions. Farmers, obviously, see less and less need for it. You go from 6,600 contracts down to 1,100, basically the 20 percent over the course of four years, that is quite a significant drop off. So what do you do from here on? If it goes down to 500 or 600 next year, one would have to question whether there is a need for the program, I guess, in the present form it is in. There are a number of other 4-H type programs available in addition to Livestock Feed Security.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister partly answered my next question. I was going to ask him what the costs of this program were and whether there is any analysis being done on it, whether it is worthwhile keeping or does it mean that this program is not meeting the needs of the farmers and we have to look at designing another program? Is any of that work being done right now?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, there are two other programs that farmers can partake in. One is cultivated forage program, where they can have individual coverage for alfalfa varieties or for alfalfa grass varieties for a period of time after establishment. The second one is the alfalfa hay test program, which has been in for the last two or three years. It is available in selected areas. It is more or less on a pilot stage at this stage in time.

The member mentioned, well, we should have another program. What we are running here is not government programs but insurance policies for clients if and when they need them. The Livestock Feed Security came in from a few years back when there were problems with available forage, there were reasons why crops were lost and farmers wanted an insurance program. They did enroll in large numbers and then as conditions got better from their point of view saw less and less need for insurance. Even the numbers in cultivated forage programs, there are only 200 to 300 producers, so it is not very many. The alfalfa hay test program, there are still less than 10 producers involved in that program. In my mind it is an open question as to whether Livestock Feed Security in its present form is serving the need or not.

I guess we will look for input from producers and certainly the board and the corporation will be looking for input to determine if the program is needed. If clients are not going to enroll, obviously they are giving a signal. They do not see that it serves their need at this point in time. I said earlier, the reasons are, basically, hay is cheap and there is lots of it available. That might change real quickly. We have had three or four pretty good forage production years and more and more acres are going into forage for a variety of reasons.

* (1610)

There are better and better forage varieties available and farmers are now starting to see that they can make money on growing forage for their own cattle on Class 2 land that 10 years ago you would not even think of growing forage, you would try to find your cattle feed elsewhere or you had to grow wheat on that land. Now you see you can actually make better money by growing forage. Good varieties of forage properly managed on that land, you can make as much or more money as you can growing wheat or barley.

Farmers are looking at the alternatives, and I say there are more and more acres going into cultivated forage and the forages are being managed much better. Say 10 or 20 years ago, farmers just went out to cut it. They did not make much effort to be sure they managed the crop particularly in terms of fertilization or weed control, but now farmers put a lot more effort into particularly fertilization and they find they get substantively increased yields. They turn the stand over every few years rather than leave it in forage for 20 years. So the management side, the availability and the price are all the reasons why the farmer is becoming more and more independent and seeing less need for the insurance.

We will work with the farmers and their various farm organizations as we determine what is going to be needed in the future, but from the Crop Insurance Corporation's side, we have to be cognizant of the administration costs and whether there are enough clients out there to warrant all these programs in their present forms.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I guess that would be one of the values of holding public meetings that has been one of the recommendations of the corporation. If you go out and the board meets with the farmers, we might get a better understanding of why they are not using the program and what the farmers' needs are.

There has to be a particular reason. As the minister said, it could be that it is a better crop out there now, more hay available, but maybe there is another reason why people have chosen not to use this insurance right now. I think we might learn more about that if the corporation decides to proceed with the public meetings, and that is why it is so important that we go ahead with that this fall.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, I would not, for a moment, want the member to have the impression that the corporation, the board and the minister are not constantly meeting with groups. In meetings that may not be set up specifically to talk about crop insurance, the issue comes up and we talk about elements of it with the various farm organizations.

All farm organizations and individuals have an opportunity to access agents or the corporation directly as individuals or as groups, and that has always been going on. I think it has been speeded up in the last couple of years, but it has always been going on. So do not ever think that anybody is in isolation from what farmers think, either individually

or through their various farm organizations. That is an ongoing process and lots of information flows back and forth, not just from general farm organizations but from specific commodity groups also.

Public meetings would broaden that, yes. It may increase the exposure 10 or 20 percent from what it is now. Right now the exposure is very good in the interface between farmers, the corporation staff, the board and the minister's office.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I do not doubt that there is communication, but if we can increase it and open more doors then so much the better.

Just moving on to soil testing and soil zones, one of the concerns that is raised quite often is that farmers are not happy with their soil classification, with the coverage that they get in their particular soil zone.

I wonder whether there are any plans within the corporation to deal with that issue, whether you are going to be addressing the whole issue of the classifications of land and different soil zones and coverages in those areas. As has been raised by some people, there is just a whole need to review the soil classifications.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the issue of soil zones and coverages on soil zones certainly has been an issue in the past, and producers who want to have their soils investigated to see if they should be upgraded can request a reclassification. Basically the cost is \$100 a quarter.

With the introduction of Individual Productivity Indexing, a lot of the discrepancies or variances or dissatisfactions because of being classed as too high or too low, or your yield is too high or too low on a particular soil zone, has been taken care of. If you are in a soil zone where the average is low, you think it is too low, you can raise your coverage on that soil zone through Individual Productivity Indexing because if you are better than the average, you are obviously going to do better than the soil zone average and move yourself up.

Your coverage in '93 is based 75 percent on the yields that you got on that soil zone the last three years, '90, '91 and '92. So Individual Productivity Indexing takes care of the variances, discrepancies, inadequate coverages that may have existed in the past, to a large extent takes care of it, and that farmer is in control of his own destiny in that process.

Though you can have reclassification done, that is not the critical element in terms of your future coverages. The critical element, each crop you produce as a farmer on each soil zone that you have in your farm will be determined by your production in comparison with the soil zone average. As long as you are above you keep moving your IPI up; if you are below the average it will go down. So the coverage will be sorted out on the basis of each individual's ability over time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification, has not that been limited with the removal of superior management? Does that not affect the individual's ability to raise their individual average?

Mr. Findlay: On the year in question, like for '93, your IPI is 75 percent on the basis of 25 percent from '90, 25 percent from '91 and 25 percent from '93. So your IPI is not affected by SMA. If SMA was in place this year, retroactively you could have higher coverage if you did better than 5 percent higher than the soil zone average. But SMA, for the year in question, it raised you above. The only thing that affected your IPI was the number, the actual production you had that goes into your production experience for the next year. Follow me? Starting in '94, your coverage is 100 percent on your own production for the previous four years.

* (1620)

At SMA, if you were a superior manager and if you were 20 percent above the average, in that given year you got 15 percent through SMA. But if you have been doing good, the better farmers have already moved their coverages up through IPI, and the ability to source extra support or program support through SMA is it was getting fairly limited after two years of SMA because the IPI was moving them up. If you had a good yield that goes into your production record, it affects your IPI. SMA was an annual bonus that you got because you did better and you actually paid a premium to get that bonus.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess the concern was by those farmers who were not in crop insurance. They felt that they were at a lower level. Those that were in crop insurance had a higher level of coverage. They felt that they could not catch up. When I talk to those people, there is an indication that even now that Superior Management is gone, they will not have that ability to catch up now. That could be wrong. That is what I am asking the minister. Are those people who were not in crop insurance and

still are not in crop insurance, who did not have their records prior to GRIP, were at a different level of coverage, are they now able to catch up, or have they caught up, or are they still being punished for not having been in crop insurance prior to GRIP?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, for individuals who have been in crop insurance for 10 or 20 years, they have been paying premiums. A lot of people have built up surpluses in their account. They have actually paid more in than they have taken out. For that they cannot be discredited. They have to have a credit for that.

Somebody who has not been in crop insurance has paid no indemnities, has done nothing to keep a crop insurance program in place. When they come in—if somebody came in new in '92 and said, well, the soil zone average does not reflect me, they were given the opportunity to have their IPI calculated using '90-91 data. For '93 they have '90-91-92 data. So three-quarters of their IPI is determined by their own yields, '90-91-92.

They can very quickly catch up to where they should be or where they would have been had they always been in crop insurance, very quickly. Yet they did not build up any positive surpluses in their accounts where many people did and kept the corporation solvent through many, many years.

You have to consider the people who have been in there, who paid the toll, who have been part of the program. The new ones coming in cannot instantly have everything that the guy who has been there all of the time achieved. Through IPI they very quickly are able to establish their level of coverage by their own production practices—very quickly.

I think for '93, anybody who came in in '91 or '92 for the first time is very, very close to where they would have been if he had been in crop insurance for the last 10 or 20 years.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess going back to a comment that the minister made, he said that those people who were not in crop insurance did not support the corporation but, in fact, they were probably paying for their own insurance and did not cost the corporation any money either. I disagree that they should be having to pick up the costs—not pick up costs, but be punished because they were not in insurance.

I just want to go back then because I did not hear the minister's answer. Have these people then caught up to those who were not in crop insurance

on their coverage or will they always be a little bit behind?

Mr. Findlay: What I said before was that those that have not been in crop insurance and enrolled in the last year or two this year have their coverage determined 75 percent on the basis of the production that they did in '90, '91, '92.

Next year, everybody is 100 percent of what they did over the last four years. So for next year, whether you are in crop insurance or not, prior to 1990 will have no impact on your coverage. Your coverage for '94 will be 100 percent of what you did in '90, '91, '92, '93. So there will be no discrimination or whatever you want to call it. For '93 it is basically all removed anyway through IPI, a program we brought in for '91.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, when we look at the whole GRIP, we have said continually that—I remember when the program was being implemented, we said that there were lots of flaws in the program and that it should not be rushed in and perhaps the minister and the government should have taken the time to work out more detail on it.

There were concerns on some of the things that it was based on, that it was not based on the costs of production, it was in some cases not affordable for some people. There are many concerns with the program.

The minister has indicated the program ends in 1995 and he has to decide whether it is a program that this government is going to participate in further or whether there is going to be a new program. I am sure that there will; something is going to have to be put in place.

What I want to ask the minister is: Who is analyzing the program? When you look at whether it is the kind of program that we need, who is looking at what the program should be after 1995? We have two years to do the planning and I would hope that when a new program, whatever it is, comes into place that a lot of thought goes into it, that we do consider that it is affordable and that there is only so much money that is available. I agree with the minister.

How do we use that money to best address the needs of the farming community? I guess that is where I would like to start. Is the program being analyzed, and who is doing the work on the next

step, so to speak, on designing whatever it is that will replace GRIP?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Chairperson, the member refers to the program being rushed in. It was not governments that rushed it in, it was farmers who wanted it desperately for the '91 crop. It had gone through ad hoc programs in '86 and '87, special grains programs, because of low prices, basically about a billion dollars across western Canada each time. In '88 a drought payment, '89 a drought payment, and people got fed up with ad hoc programs. It looked bad in the eyes of the public. It was not targeted. You could have a good crop and still get the same payment as the guy 10 miles down the road who got a poor crop. It made no sense at all.

It was payments in response to public pressure, political pressure created not because of low prices of '86 and '87, because of drought in '88 and '89. In 1990 there really were no payments, and the farm community saw that there was, you know, great trouble on the horizon because grain prices were not looking good and they had already had two short crops, and your gross income determined yield times price. If you do not have yield and you have a poor price you are in pretty bad shape.

A task force was set up, 33 people, 19 of whom are farmers. They went through a lot of analysis, representatives from across the country, and they came up with a basic design of principles of the revenue insurance program to be built on top of crop insurance. That was their basic recommendation, and they were adamant this has to be in place for '91. It was not an easy process to get it up and running. I mean, everybody worked extra hard—and the complexity, yes, it was complex. Yes, there were glitches, but they have basically been worked out.

* (1630)

I ask you where the farm community of Manitoba would have been after the '91 crop had they not had the \$300 million payout under GRIP? Where would the frost-affected people of '92 be without the \$175 million that is going into that area of the province basically to draw a line halfway between Nos. 1 and 16 Highways? Everything north of that got the payment.

Farmers wanted a program in Manitoba that was individualized. IPI does that. It is targeted to hurt, and if you do not meet from the marketplace your

target revenue, GRIP comes in as an insurance program. Yield times price, you get more than your target revenue, as they did in all the southern half of the province primarily last year. No payment, so the yield price offset was used. It was an integral part of the program to keep the premiums down. It was targeted to hurt.

As I said earlier to the member, we have done some case studies of four different types of farms and showed that very clearly the program worked, and it did target. The more the hurt, the more the loss of crop, or the more the crop laid out in over-winter condition, the greater the payment—exactly the way it was designed and set up. But it does not fill 100 percent of the void. There just are not enough public dollars to offset all the impacts of all the natural perils and grain price wars and this sort of thing.

So I think the program has worked very well. I think if you ask any farmer in Manitoba would he sooner have the Saskatchewan version or the Manitoba version, I guarantee that 90 percent to 95 percent of the people are very, very happy to stay in Manitoba and have the Manitoba version. Individualized, predictable and with yield price offsets, it keeps the premiums down. Saskatchewan made a terrible knee-jerk reaction, as far as I am concerned. It took away all the individuality and predictability that they had had or that GRIP was designed for.

What GRIP is broken down to is each province has so many different wrinkles, there is no commonality. Really, the safety net the task force wanted, a level playing field in all of Canada but particularly western Canada, so the same program would exist everywhere, it has shaken down that there are different programs in each of the provinces. Saskatchewan has made a decision to opt out of GRIP after the '94 crop. Our contract of five years expires after the '95 crop.

What process is in place? I have tried to make people clearly aware that it is a five-year contract. Some decisions lie ahead for producers, for governments. What do we want? What will serve the need? What is going to happen in GATT? We do not know the answer to that. What is going to happen to world grain prices? We do not know the answer to that. How satisfied are farmers with the premiums they are paying for the coverage they are getting?

That process of analysis and discussion will unfold over the next number of months. I am sure it will be a major, major discussion item at the federal-provincial ministers' meeting at the beginning of July, where each province will be coming in with sort of an idea of what they would like to proceed with. The feds are 50 percent partners, so out of that I hope we come with a common approach as to how we will structure the input and the discussion.

We really have two full years to work on it. Saskatchewan has one year. I think they have a very short time line to decide what they are going to do, what they can afford beyond '94. That is the big question in Saskatchewan. What can they afford? They are so grain dependent. We are so much better off toward being less grain dependent and have technically a better capacity to afford.

I want to make producers clearly aware that it is a five-year contract. What do we do beyond '95? What is needed? Is whole farm NISA the answer? I have always advocated a level playing field in the country and whole farm stabilization, so it is not crop specific or commodity specific so that you are distorting the market in any fashion. No matter what you do, you maximize the dollars you can net at the farm gate and make it stabilization on that basis.

Maybe whole farm NISA is the way. That discussion is ongoing in various places and levels. I am sure various farm organizations will be making input as we move along. I am sure some more formal structured process to solicit input and response to ideas and principles will unfold after our federal-provincial meeting.

I can assure the member that Saskatchewan's concern, first and foremost, will be affordability. Yes, we all like cost of production, but that is not possible, just not possible. Even in supply management, the cost of production is still lonely on the top. I think it is the top 30 percent of producers. It is not whatever your costs are, you get it back plus.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chairperson, I guess I want to pick up on a couple of points that the minister mentioned. One of them is a national program. In fact, that would be much better if we did have a national program rather than different programs in each province. I think that is one of the weaknesses of the program that we have now. I guess the other problem is that the federal government has offloaded so much of its responsibility onto the

provinces, and that becomes difficult for provinces to pick up that cost.

The minister referred to Saskatchewan and whether or not they can afford it. I am glad he recognizes that. I think what we have to recognize in Saskatchewan is, yes, they have a big debt there that was created by Mr. Romanow's predecessor, and now all Saskatchewan people are paying for it. That is something that has to be addressed there.

The minister talked about GATT. We have been talking about GATT for a long time. We do not seem to be getting anywhere with it. I do not know where that process is now. I do not know whether anything is happening. I do not know how long we can continue to do that, whether there is any answer, whether GATT is the answer or whether there is another way to deal with the world prices. Canada is a small player in the whole picture, but I think we have to decide as a country whether or not we want to support our farmers, whether we want a grain industry—[interjection]

Yes, we, as a province and as a country have to decide whether or not it is the grain industry, whether the farming industry, not only grain, but the farming industry that we really want to support. It is the cereal producers that this addresses.

The minister said that we cannot go on cost of production because we just cannot afford it.

I want to ask the minister, in his analysis of the program, with limited dollars that we have, whether he has ever given consideration to capping the amount that will be paid to each producer and in that way targeting the family farm and ensuring that we do keep a base income for the farmers and that would then limit the amount of money that would have to be spent.

Has any consideration been given to that along the way as the first program was being designed and as we look into the future? Is this something that he would consider?

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

* * *

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Deputy Chairperson of Committees): Madam Chairperson, a motion was moved in the section of Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). The motion reads:

I move that line 1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced to \$1.

A formal vote has been requested.

* (1640)

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

* * *

(Concurrent sections in Chamber for formal vote)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The question before the committee is that line 1.(a) Minister's Salary in the Estimates of the Department of Family Services be reduced to \$1. All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

A COUNTED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas 21, Nays 26.

Madam Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

The hour being 5 p.m., and time for private members' hour, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

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

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I am glad to have the opportunity to rise and speak to this today. It seems to me that—[interjection] Sorry.

I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), that

WHEREAS the cost of post-secondary education is currently prohibiting many Manitobans from receiving the education they need; and

WHEREAS students need consistent, useful employment during the summer to help pay for the mounting costs associated with a post-secondary education while they gain valuable work experience; and

WHEREAS average youth unemployment rates are significantly higher than the general population; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has made substantial cuts to programs like STEP and

CareerStart, which offered seasonal employment to students and provided employers with educated staff; and

WHEREAS financial assistance programs are not keeping pace with the escalating costs that students are forced to bear; and

WHEREAS education is a key factor in the revitalization of our economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider an expanded seasonal jobs strategy to place post-secondary students in meaningful employment to enable them to meet the increasing costs of education and to gain practical skills to assist them in finding work after their schooling is completed.

Motion presented.

* (1730)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to this today.

I think we are all aware that students are at the moment lining up at job centres around the province and at the few federal job centres which are left in an attempt to find some work, any work in most cases, that will help pay for the increasing costs of their education.

It is a difficult time for students. I think every member in this House will know that. They will have had calls from people in their ridings. They will have spoken to people on the doorsteps who know how increasingly difficult it is to find any kind of job in this economy and particularly difficult for those people who are only available at certain times of the year and who so clearly need the money to pay for their next year of education.

I do not think I have to emphasize to any member of this House, either, the importance of post-secondary education in this economy. It is an obvious part, a significant part of any economic strategy of any government in this part of the 20th Century.

Every economy, particularly in North America, needs well-trained and well-educated people. They need them not just for the specifics of a new kind of information economy such as we might be facing in Manitoba and the northern parts of North America, but they need it also because they need an educated citizenship, one which is able to make the

kinds of decisions for our community, for their families, that are going to be necessary in the future.

I do not subscribe to the argument that post-secondary education is for a narrow training in a particular skill or a particular profession or a particular technology and, certainly, I know that the idea of a well-educated citizenry is one that is certainly shared by most community leaders, including business leaders, in the present-day Manitoba.

I wish that we could see a clear strategy from this government of their valuing of post-secondary education. It is unfortunately very difficult to see their plan for post-secondary education. They do have a University Review, which was scheduled at first, I believe, to report in March; now I hear it is going to be June. In the meantime, we see a minister who is making ad hoc decisions and particularly ad hoc cuts to a whole series of matters which affect post-secondary education. So in that context, it is very difficult to see what kind of place this government sees for post-secondary education in the province of Manitoba.

This is a government which has been in place since 1988, which took until 1992 to decide that it needed a University Review and which in the meantime had made a series of decisions about grants, about funding for infrastructure, about funding for students, about the number and size of a student body that there should be at each of the post-secondary institutions, which made these decisions, in effect, in the absence of any overall policy.

It is, I think, in that sense, striking to see a comparison with other jurisdictions where there have been some clear-cut policy decisions made about universities and colleges. I have commented before upon the kinds of decisions which New Brunswick has made about its post-secondary institutions, the way in which it has related its research institutions to its economic strategy and the way in which it ties those very clearly together in the minds of its own people as well as in the people whom it wishes to attract to New Brunswick.

The value of an educated and bilingual workforce is one that they stress very clearly, and I think it gives a sense of focus and a sense of purpose for students who are in school now as well as for the kind of external case that New Brunswick wants to make.

Similarly, we could look at jurisdictions like Australia, for example, which have made a very clear relationship between post-secondary education and their new economic role in the South Pacific. If we are to look, for example, at post-secondary education, we can see that over the last five to seven years, Australia has expanded its participation rate in post-secondary education from a very elitist, I believe, 5 to 10 percent, which is where it was about 10 years ago, and within the next five years it expects to have close to 80 percent of its students in post-secondary colleges and universities.

That is a very dramatic change. It is a clear point of policy and one which has given a great deal of hope to students, to young people and to families in Australia. In many ways, Australia is placed in terms of the global economy in much the same kind of position as Canada, with traditional markets disappearing, facing competition in labour from cheap labour areas and trying to find a new path in the world. One of the paths that they have chosen in a dramatic and clear-cut way has been education.

I wish that I could see some kind of indication from this government that it had any policy on post-secondary education, and one that would give hope to people of this province.

My resolution relates particularly to students, our concern for students. Since this government took over in 1988, we have seen an escalation of student fees. We have also seen an escalation of the proportion of monies which are paid by students in university expenditures. So simply by absence of decision, absence of policy, the government has been making clearly policy, continually the same policy year after year, and that is to transfer increasingly the costs of post-secondary education onto students and their families. It is a consistent pattern in policy.

It would be useful to find some indication that the government acknowledges this as its policy, but I have really given up expecting any kind of indications of those types of policies from this government.

How do we pay for education in this context? Well, I know some students, for example, who graduated a couple of years ago and are now in the position, in a very low paying job, where they are only able to pay the interest on their loans. They are on a treadmill. These are people who spent the four

to five years in university, took the full amount of loan, because they came from families who could not afford to do otherwise. They now find themselves in the low paying jobs which are available to them, with their Bachelors' degrees, that they can only afford to touch the interest on their loans.

Or talk to students who, for example, took loans of \$17,000 to pay for anything up to a Master's degree. Those students now paying at 12 percent interest at the time that that loan was negotiated, will in effect be paying \$37,000, a good portion of it to the banks, for the cost of their education.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk of student loans, we have to talk not just of what is being loaned at the time, which is essentially in the region of \$3,000 to \$6,000 per year—this is not a rich loan—but we also have to look at the burden on students and the amount of money which is then going directly into the banks afterwards.

Most students do not want loans. Students want jobs. They want to be able to pay up-front for their education. They want to be able to have the money to afford to live, even at the limited levels which the student loan program enables them to.

* (1740)

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, a government which had a policy, which had a plan for students, which had a sense of who should be going to the universities and colleges, the number of our young people who should be going to those universities and colleges, the regions that they should be coming from in the province, the representativeness of that student body, would also have some indication of where the jobs could be created by government or to be created by the universities or the colleges themselves to enable students to work, to do the work that they want to do, so that they can avoid the dreadful burden and treadmill, in some cases, that many of them are finding themselves on after graduation.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly want to mention the difficulties that rural students face in this situation. Again, I cannot believe that there is a member in this House who does not understand that a rural student or a northern student has to pay almost two to three times as much to attend university as anyone coming from the city or from living in Brandon where the university is more easily accessible.

They face the dislocation of leaving home, but they also face the added problem of an \$11,000 to \$12,000 burden that is being placed upon them every year that they are in university. Again, for them, although some jobs are available in their home areas, increasingly, there are far more students than there are jobs and people who are forced to take loans because there is no work.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that if you look at other jurisdictions, again, if we look at Ontario, if we look at British Columbia, we will find that both of those governments have moved to increase the amount of money that is available for post-secondary education students for their summer work. In Ontario recently, it was a \$2.7 million increase in funds that was available to students. I do not know what the number is in British Columbia, but similarly, a program that enables students to work and to pay for part of their program.

The University of Winnipeg, and I want to commend them, in my constituency, has itself instituted a work-study program on a very, very limited basis, limited because of the inability of the university itself to provide a large amount of funds for that. They have also, I believe, developed a program which relates the availability of work to the needs of the student. It is a commendable program, and it is one, of course, that we find much more commonly in universities in Ontario and in other parts of the country.

There have been federal programs like this. I think it was in the late '70s, early '80s, that there was an extensive federal program of work-study institutions that could be run in part by the university, in part by the government, and which were very flexible and very free and enormously creative. That is the other side of this program, Mr. Speaker, that I want to emphasize.

Yes, students need jobs. They need jobs in order to pay for their education, in fact, even to get their first step on the ladder of post-secondary education that might later on enable them to be eligible for bursaries from the universities or scholarships from elsewhere. They need that first rung on the ladder, and they need work because of that.

But also the kinds of programs which universities in Ontario, for example, and on a small scale the University of Winnipeg has run are programs which enable students to use their creativity and their energy to devise their own programs, to find a

teacher to link up with, to find a research program, to create one, to develop a daycare centre, to develop a variety of programs that they might do in community work, whether it is in theatre, whether it is in film, or whether it is in more community-based research, for example, historical walking tours. All of these things, I know, were done in universities when we had that particular federal program.

I emphasize that sense of energy and creativity because that is what our students need. That is what they need to have, is the kind of support of the government for those kinds of activities because what we are losing in Manitoba is hope. Post-secondary education is one element. For many families, it is the only element of hope that they have. Where parents have lost jobs, they see their own children losing their sense of faith, I think, in education.

If we look, for example, at a recent report in the Free Press today, it reports on a situation which most of us know is quite common in many of the large high schools, is that students are essentially becoming part-time students because they do not see the future is there for them in post-secondary education or in Manitoba.

That, I think, is a very dangerous sign, and I want the government to take account of that. Students need to have the sense that they can get to university, that they can get there with their own efforts, that they can find work, and that they will have the opportunity to sustain themselves by their own labour in education, because we are losing them. We are losing their dedication to education and to learning at earlier and earlier ages. That is what, I think, Mr. Speaker, makes me so very despondent, is the loss of that sense of the future for Manitoba.

I hope that the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), who I assume is going to respond to this resolution, certainly takes the resolution in the sense in which it is offered. It is the future of our families, the future of our young people, who want to maintain themselves with their own labour and to find a future for themselves in post-secondary education.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to have a few moments to speak on this resolution today.

I would like to begin by stressing how we do view the importance of post-secondary education on this

side of the House. We think it is so important, Mr. Speaker, that we did commission last June the Roblin commission to look into university education, and they had a very wide mandate.

They were to look into issues of assessability. They were to look into the issues of governance. They were to look into issues of funding, and they were to look into the mission and the mandate and the role of universities as we move into the year 2000. We believe that our universities are very important to Manitoba, and we wanted to make sure that we would be able, in the most thoughtful and foresightful way, to assist the universities as they move into the 21st Century.

We were concerned about the universities themselves as a system. We were also concerned about those people who would be students at the university because we recognized that university students now are not only those sequential students who move from high school into a university program, but they are also people who are returning to university. They are people of various ages, and I was one of those people who returned to university myself. I returned at 38 years old, with three children, to study law, and I was not the only one in my program. So we recognize the variety of students who are studying.

As I have said to my honourable friend before, post-secondary education is university education, but it is also education at our community colleges. Our community colleges offer a type of post-secondary education that is extremely valuable in Manitoba. Through our high school system we are wanting to make sure that our students in high school have a full sense of knowledge about what is offered at our community colleges.

When we look at a second issue of reform in the post-secondary area, our community colleges have just moved to college governance. What that allows them to do now is to operate with a board of governors. It allows them to seek and to work directly with the federal government, to work directly with industries and business and labour within the province of Manitoba and not to have to proceed through the whole system of government to make changes or to develop courses which they might like to do.

We have tried to make our community colleges much more responsive. That is a real reform

initiative, to make them more responsive to their geographic area and to make them more responsive to the labour requirements in their areas, so that when a business, industry or labour group within their community identifies a type of training that is required, the colleges may respond to that request in a much quicker way than they had been able to before.

Then I would also remind my honourable friend that post-secondary education also involves training. We have a great number of training programs within the Province of Manitoba. One of the important reforms that we have put forward in the training part of my department is that we have now been able to consolidate the training side in the post-secondary area, and we have moved programs which previously had been part of the Department of Family Services. We moved Apprenticeship, which was previously a part of the Department of Labour, into the Department of Education, so that there is available for Manitobans now a continuum of education so that they will be able to make their choices.

I want to make it very clear that in the post-secondary side of education we are very interested in that whole post-secondary range of education. We have taken a number of reforms and initiatives in each of those three areas to make sure that it maintains its importance.

Student employment is also a very important aspect, so students are able to take advantage of a post-secondary education, whichever their choice may be. This government has taken some steps to assist those students. If we are talking about universities, I will remind my honourable friend that we did direct the universities to cap tuition fees at a 5 percent increase this year. On behalf of students, we wanted to make sure that university education continued to be as accessible as possible and that students were not the ones who had to continually bear an increased tuition fee. We took that action on behalf of students and because we value post-secondary education.

We also recognize that the importance of a well-trained labour force is very important to Manitoba. Because the post-secondary side of my department is now consolidated, we also have now our labour market planning area within the same part of the post-secondary education part of my department. With that we are able to look at the forecasts of need and the forecasts of training. We

are able to integrate now the kinds of training that people would like to have, what business, industry and labour forecasts that it will need and to attempt to make a much closer match to the kind of post-secondary education that students are striving towards.

* (1750)

We would like to help students also match their interest to future employment and to future prospects as well. Because of that and because we feel it is so important, this government has initiated a number of programs of summer employment for students in Manitoba.

I will just remind the members of the House of the success of these programs. I have the statistics from last year. We have the program called CareerStart. This is a partnership with business, industry and labour within Manitoba. With this it allows students to look at what their potential, their future job interest would be and to take a summer job in that area. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, we also have students working at that summer job and able to get a course credit from their secondary institution because of that job opportunity.

In 1992-93, this particular initiative of this government helped employ 3,550 young people. I think that was really a very good number of young people who had the opportunity, and I say young people, because the people who are eligible for that particular initiative must be between 16 and 24.

We also had another program which allowed young people to work within government. Working within government, they were able in some cases to also match a future interest with a summer job opportunity and that program had 317 positions approved in '92-93.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention our Manitoba Youth Job Centre programs. We have 44 centres located across Manitoba and these centres do interview young people and they will refer them, then attempt to place young people into positions within their communities.

Last year there were 9,500 jobs attained by Manitobans through these particular centres, so that is a very large number. We have this year maintained those programs. I will be pleased to speak more about those when the member and I are able to look at that in my Estimates.

We also have the Partners with Youth program. This was an initiative between three departments.

This year it will be an initiative between Rural Development and Education. The importance of that is that Manitobans are asking government to co-operate among departments and to look at what the needs are. That is one program in which Manitobans will be able to see us look to create jobs for Manitobans and to assist them as they earn money for their post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, we are very encouraged by the fact that within Manitoba our youth labour force participation rate is at 64.5 percent. The Canadian average is at 59.5 percent. So in Manitoba, we are five percentage points higher than the national average. I mention that in response to the member's concern about a loss of hope, because we know that people move into the labour market participation because there is a sense of hopefulness and there is a sense that there is a job for them and that there is a reason to be a part of that labour force.

With that statistic, I believe, it does show that Manitoba's youth and people wishing to go onto post-secondary education are in fact hopeful. They are not the despondent people that the member across has said that they are.

Mr. Speaker, one last initiative which we have to make sure to try and assist young people and Manitobans onward into post-secondary is co-operative education. We have co-operative education programs at our community colleges. People who take part in those study for a period of time and then are able to go out and work in their area of study. These have been very successful, and we encourage them. We are looking to develop those further.

Because I also have such a strong belief on behalf of our government that post-secondary education is very important, that we wish to do everything that we are able to assist Manitobans to the accessibility and the affordability and to assist them in terms of their job strategy, I would like to propose an amendment to the member's resolution.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), that Resolution 20 be amended by deleting all words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

The government of Manitoba is committed to providing post-secondary students meaningful employment and training opportunities; and

WHEREAS these training opportunities will enable the students to gain practical skills in finding work after their schooling is completed.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the government of Manitoba for working with educational institutions, business and industry to better enable Manitoba's youth to engage in a competitive environment.

Mr. Speaker: There has been an amendment moved by the honourable minister. I will take that matter under advisement at this point in time.

Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?
[agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 10, 1993

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