



HANSARD

First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

DEBATES

and

PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
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GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 14, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Dr. Clay Gilson

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement.

I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to one of Manitoba's outstanding citizens. Dr. Clay Gilson passed away unexpectedly Sunday, June 11, 2000, after a lifetime of serving his native province. Doctor Gilson was born in Deloraine, Manitoba, and was raised on a farm near Medora. His early years on the farm were during the period often referred to as the Dirty Thirties, a period where severe drought combined with great depressions caused producer hardship for many of Manitoba farm families. This experience influenced all of Doctor Gilson's life as he continued to work for the betterment of the lives of farm families.

Doctor Gilson earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Manitoba and his PhD from the Iowa State University. He joined

the Department of Agricultural Economics in 1954 and continued working out of an office in the department until the present time, following his retirement in 1992, and was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus. In fact, retirement changed little as Doctor Gilson continued to work as hard as ever with his last role as Chair of the Agriculture Research and Development Council.

In his long and distinguished career, Doctor Gilson served as the head of the Department of Agricultural Economics, Dean of the Faculty of Graduated Studies and Vice-President of Research at the University of Manitoba.

Manitoba was the leader in the development of crop insurance in Canada as Doctor Gilson designed the first program in 1959. He continued to serve Manitoba farmers during several terms as Chairman of Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. This service to farmers was a reflection of his earlier experiences of the impact that drought can have on farm families.

Doctor Gilson's expertise was called upon in many areas. He led the grain industry consultation that resulted in the Western Grain Transportation Act. He served as a member of the Canada-U.S. consultation on the transport of grain trade. He continued to act as an adviser and consultant to Manitoba credit unions. These are just a few of the examples of the public service rendered by Doctor Gilson.

He was recognized for these public contributions with many awards. He was inducted into the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame in 1996, made a member of the Order of Canada in 1993, awarded an honorary Doctorate of Law at the University of Guelph and a Fellowship in the Canadian Agricultural Economics and Farm Management Society. But in Clay's mind, his greatest rewards came from the students he taught. In a recent tribute to a retiring former student, he stated that it was in the achievements of his students that a professor sees the impacts

of his efforts, and Doctor Gilson had thousands of students both inside and outside the classroom.

* (13:35)

Manitoba and Canada have lost an outstanding citizen, and Manitoba is a better place because he lived and worked here, and we will miss him. Our sincere sympathy is extended to his wife, Jean, and his family. May they have comfort in the knowledge that their husband and father was widely respected and admired.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Chairman, it is with sadness that we rise today to pay tribute to a man that many of us that have been involved in the agricultural industry have known for many years. He was one of these people that came to you as a friend, he demonstrated to you his willingness to work with you, and he had a great belief in the farm community's ability to serve their own needs and support and organize for themselves. I will never forget the first time I met Doctor Gilson. It was at the University of Manitoba where we were touring plots of canola that one of his colleagues had developed, a new variety of canola, and he said this: Jack, the day that you organize as farmers and speak with one voice, that day you will become effective as leaders in the farm community. That thought never left me.

He was quite instrumental, whether it was a farm business organization, whether it was Canadian Federation of Agriculture, whether it was the formation of the Keystone Agricultural Producers in ensuring that farmers had a voice in policy development and direction, and in his influence and his work with young people to teach them what agriculture was all about not just the productive capacity of agriculture, but the true meaning of agriculture and what it meant to live and work on farms will never be forgotten.

His greatest tribute will be, I believe, leaving that knowledge base with us and with the children of the future and the young people of this province. He leaves a family, his wife, Jean. We want to thank his family for the contribution their father has made to our province, indeed to our country and agriculture around the

world. His memory will last forever, and we will remember him forever.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak on the Minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to pay tribute to Dr. Clay Gilson and the many contributions that he made to Manitoba. He is indeed well known, an icon for Manitoba agriculture. The contributions in many, many ways have been extraordinary over a long period of time, and we in Manitoba are very lucky to have benefited from his contributions. I would like to mention, in addition to what has been talked of so far, that he served for many years as a member of the Manitoba Round Table on the Environment which was initially the Environment and the Economy and then later became the Manitoba Round Table on Sustainable Development. Indeed, Doctor Gilson had a perspective on development in Manitoba which was sustainable and sensitive to the needs of the environment as well as the importance of agriculture itself.

His contribution and his legacy perhaps are, in part, The Sustainable Development Act, which was proclaimed in July 1998, and which we now are following through on. As we recognize, the Premier (Mr. Doer) recognized yesterday, will have a strategy forthcoming shortly, which again will continue the tributes and the remarkable memory, the remarkable contributions that Doctor Gilson has made to this province. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today from the Immaculate Heart of Mary School 22 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Debbie Whittevrongle. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

Also with us in the gallery are four students from Lester B. Pearson College of the United

World Colleges in Victoria, B.C.; Sara O'Shaughnessy from Winnipeg; Michaela Selig from Nova Scotia; Karin Geisler from Austria; Ivalo Pedersen from Greenland. The students are guests of the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) whose daughter Niki Ashton attends the United World College in Hong Kong.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

* (13:40)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Premier's Pipeline Web Site Links

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has constructed a Web site for Manitoba youth called the Premier's Pipeline. This site encourages young people to ask the Premier questions via the Internet. It also contains a number of links to supposedly youth-oriented Internet sites. To my surprise, some of the links to the Premier's Pipeline are questionable, to say the least. I would like to table, in the House today, copies of some of those links.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he is aware that children using his Web site can, within just a few clicks of the mouse, view the Wild Women of the Web, order mail-order brides and read articles titled: "I am pro life; that is why I must kill you" and "God hates fags."

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I know that the Web itself contains access to a considerable amount of educational material, and I also know the Web contains unacceptable material in terms of the values that I hold.

Having said that, when I did have a demonstration from the two young people who designed the Web in Brandon at the youth forum, I did click onto the six spots that were there and certainly the various areas that were directly in the responsibility of the provincial government, Education, other departments. Material that was suggested by the Member opposite, I certainly did not see it when I clicked

onto the specific sites that were on the Web site a couple of months ago.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This is a very serious issue, an issue that no member of government should take lightly, because it is accessed by the children in the province of Manitoba. We certainly do not condone the kind of Internet access that this Web site provides.

I would like to ask the Premier to explain to Manitobans today the hypocrisy when, on one hand, he wants to abolish YNN because it supposedly exposes school children to commercials in the classroom, but on the other hand, his government Web site, accessible to school children at school, links children to heavily sexually oriented and inappropriate material. Does the Premier see the sad hypocrisy in this situation?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, if there is any direct link—[*interjection*] No, I am not going to defend it. If there is any direct link to matters that the Member opposite indicated, we will take review of that and find a way to stop it. I pressed the six links that were on the Premier's Pipeline when I accessed it and had a demonstration from the young people. I perhaps did not go as far afield as members opposite to find this material, but on the direct links that I pressed, I did not see similar material. If I had, it would be as unacceptable to the Member opposite as it would be to me.

I have children, and if my children have direct access to this stuff, it is unacceptable.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It appears the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) certainly is not taking this issue seriously, and he should, as should all members of government, who clearly should be embarrassed by the Premier's pipeline to porno. Would the First Minister today in this House apologize to Manitoba families and to Manitoba

children and immediately ensure that he reviews, in full, the links to porno that his Premier's Pipeline has and ensure that they are no longer available to children in Manitoba?

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly willing to investigate any specific link that is indicated on the Premier's Pipeline that specifically provides the material that the members opposite bring forward. I clicked on the Message from the Premier at Brandon. I clicked on What's Going On, Your Opinion Counts, Ask the Premier, Youth Links. I did not see similar material. If there is similar material, specifically on the specific click of the mouse, I would be willing to look at it, investigate it, and obviously, if it is a direct link, stop it.

First Nations Casinos Gaming Agreement Compliance

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that some consortium members of the five successful casino proposals have a history of not being in compliance with their existing gaming agreements, including the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation, Bloodvein and the Hollow Water First Nations. After numerous faxes, verbal requests and annual independent audits that were made, these requests went unanswered to the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister responsible for privatizing gaming please advise the House if all five proponents were in compliance with their existing gaming agreements when they submitted their proposals to the selection committee, as required in the RFP?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that there are individual partners within a proponent consortium, a partnership, that were not in compliance on March 31, the deadline submitted, submitting their proposals.

Mr. Reimer: The next question is: What is he going to do about it? These were not in compliance. Were those RFPs, when they were

completed, not in order? Therefore, in all likelihood, they should have been kicked out. Is that not true?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the selection committee was not going to disqualify a whole consortium proponent because of the compliance issues around one or two partners.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I find this totally, totally mind-boggling. We have a request for proposals that have to comply by certain rules and regulations. This minister is now saying that they can bend the rules to fit the application. Will this minister confirm that that is the rule, and that each one can make up their own rules, and also that maybe the other ones that were rejected still could be in consideration?

Mr. Lemieux: All proponents, as mentioned, before they receive a go-ahead to proceed with their casino project, must satisfy all regulatory and compliance requirements of the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission. In that way, we will make sure that every proponent, before they get the go-ahead to enter into any agreements, meets all the conditions, regulatory and otherwise, with the Gaming Control Commission.

First Nations Casinos Alternate Proposals

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government has been telling Manitobans that during the election they promised to create five aboriginal casinos. Yesterday the Minister responsible for gaming was very vague and even evasive, and really we are not sure whether he did or did not rule out replacing any failed casino proposals. Can the Minister of gaming advise Manitobans if his government has investigated any scenarios of replacing casino proponents if any of the current five recommended proposals are unable to receive final approval?

* (13:50)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I thank the Member for Russell for the question. Also, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I did mention that we should not lose sight of the fact

that this is a great opportunity for First Nations people to gain employment and economic development from this initiative, and certainly an election promise that we made. I know, a novel idea; they have heard it before. I am going to repeat it again.

We made a promise before the election, and we are going to keep that promise. We said, in looking at the Bostrom report, that we would look at up to five First Nations casinos or gaming institutions or license five gaming institutions. I guess what I am telling the Member opposite is that that is what we were certainly looking at today, we looked at then, and we are certainly looking at licensing, or certainly approving, I should say, up to five First Nations casinos.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, then my question is to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. Can he explain why his department told Chief Murray Clearsky of Waywayseecappo reserve, in reference to his band's casino proposal, to "hang on."

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity of not only talking to Chief Murray Clearsky, but indeed Chief Ed Hayden, as well as some of the unsuccessful proponents of the casino initiatives that we have underway in the province of Manitoba. We have not yet determined as to what we will do if indeed the five that were selected, and if some cannot—we do not want to predetermine the outcome. We want to give these five an opportunity to go to the full extent to see that their aspirations are met. Beyond that, we have not planned for that, and we have to, of course, be realistic. We have, too, the implementation committee to consider. We have to work that out with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. So we do not want to predetermine the initial five that were selected as potential siteholders for casinos.

Mr. Derkach: The Minister responsible for gaming has told this House time and time again that it was an independent committee that was selecting the five casinos for this province.

I would like to ask the First Minister (Mr. Doer): In light of his five-casino commitment,

can he advise Manitobans what his government's policy is if any of the selection committee's five recommended proposals fail to proceed, for whatever reason?

Mr. Robinson: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat the selection committee recommended five, the five that came out on top. We want to give these people, the five successful proponents, every chance and opportunity to realize what they aspire to develop. Beyond that, we do not want to predetermine any outcomes.

First Nations Casinos Gaming Agreement Compliance

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a further question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Just moments ago he mentioned that three of the proponents in the proposals for the casinos were not in compliance under the existing Manitoba Gaming Commission's rules and regulations. It clearly indicates in the RFP that all conditions must be met as the RFP is submitted. What he is saying now, or what I believe he said, is that they will adjust after the fact that these casino proposals have been awarded.

* (13:55)

If this is the case, then what they are doing is they are making up rules on the fly in regard to the casinos. I want to ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Minister responsible for the privatization of gaming in this province, whether this is true. If this means, then, that these five have their own rules, will he also bend the rules if any that were kicked out can be brought in for consideration?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Certainly in the RFP it says a proponent and any other participants must be in compliance with all gaming laws, regulations, including the Criminal Code of Canada, and so on. The selection committee was not going to disqualify a whole consortium proponent because of compliance issues surrounding one or two. They made the recommendations, and an implementation committee certainly will ensure that no one will be receiving the go-ahead to proceed

with the casino project before they satisfy every regulatory and compliance requirement of the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission.

Mr. Reimer: I would refer to yesterday's comments by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs where he mentioned that the same laws of the land will apply to the First Nations casinos. He is clearly contradicting what he was saying. He is saying that they were approved, knowing that three of them were not in compliance, whereas in the RFP they had to be in compliance. Which way will it be? Should they be in compliance, or do they not have to be in compliance, because of the 29, they were not in compliance, and 5 casinos were approved with 3 of them not in compliance? Mr. Speaker, those are not the rules that were set out in the RFP.

Mr. Lemieux: As I mentioned, I will reiterate and repeat again that no First Nations casino will get the approval to go ahead and to enter into an agreement with the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation unless they meet all the strict guidelines of the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission. With an implementation committee in place, they will ensure that those conditions are met. If they are not met, they are certainly not going to be able to go ahead.

First Nations Casinos Minister's Awareness

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, it has been two weeks since the Minister responsible for gaming received the five casino proposals and the Nadeau and Freedman report. As of yesterday, he still admits that he has not read one of the proposals. This is a very serious issue. This expansion of gambling in Manitoba is very serious, and I would ask this minister: Will he commit today if he actually plans to read the five proposals and when he plans to accomplish that task?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): As I mentioned earlier, there will be an implementation committee put in place in the very near future. They will certainly ensure, looking at all the conditions for success, that all the proponents meet those before they are

allowed to proceed. Very clearly, that implementation committee will certainly ensure and certainly the Government, the buck stops with the Government, will ensure that that takes place.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. This is a minister that will not read. He will not let the proponents talk. I am going to ask the Minister if he will not read the reports, if he will not table the reports, what is he going to do to let Manitobans know what is coming down the pipe in terms of expanding gambling in this province?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the Member opposite for the question. Now here is a statement coming from a former government that expanded gaming on McPhillips and Regent without any consultation whatever. Here is a group of people that when a liquor licence, for example, in Cross Lake was refused to one person and then another person, a member of their party, all of a sudden gets the hotel, they issue a licence. Hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. Hypocrisy.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, we have a minister who continues to look in the rear-view mirror instead of ahead like Manitobans would like him to.

Economic Impact Study

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I would ask this minister, since he will not tell Manitobans what is in the proposals, since he will not release the proposals to Manitobans, will he commit to having an independent, thorough economic study and a social impact study prior to moving any further with the expansion of gambling in Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Norman Asselstine, John Borody, Jan Collins, Susan Darvill, Laurie Davidson, Deloitte and Touche, Mr. Eric Luke, Wilf Falk,

Dale Fuga, David Greenwood, all of these people have looked into these proposals very, very carefully, looked at the criteria and determined that these particular proposals are the best possible proposals out of the 12.

We have gone from 62 First Nations down to 12 First Nations and now down to 5. These proposals now have been given an opportunity to go forward and make the best case for successful casino projects. The implementation committee will make sure that they meet the conditions for success, and not only that, Mr. Speaker, they will have to be in accordance with the laws of the land. Before they go ahead to proceed, they will have to satisfy all the regulatory and compliance requirements before the MGCC will give them a licence to proceed.

Global Warming Manitoba Reduction Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, global warming is an important subject for the Manitoba Legislature. Perhaps today with our wet weather it is particularly relevant since recent models of global warming predict that there will be, as temperatures get warmer, more wet weather in southern Manitoba.

My question today for the Minister of Conservation deals with an important component of his sustainable development strategy, the development of a Manitoba approach to address global warming to meet the Kyoto targets for emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane, an effort that will be a major challenge for our province and will require major changes in our transportation and agricultural industries.

Can the Minister indicate what steps his government will ask industry to take in order to meet the Kyoto targets?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for that question. I want to also advise him that our government is, of course, very concerned about the risk we face here in Manitoba from climate change. Some of you, some of the members on the opposite side might be aware that Manitoba has been engaged in a

strategy to implement some of the programs that have been developed or suggested by the federal government. The federal government, as the Member might know, signed the Kyoto agreement, I believe, in 1997. When the federal government signed that agreement, it of course signalled its intention to ratify and implement the related requirements from that agreement in order to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. I want to assure the Member that Manitoba will take every step to ensure that if Canada decides to ratify the agreement, we will do our part to become part of the national solution.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Conservation: How, I ask the Minister, presuming that his government's goal is to increase production and employment in our agricultural and transportation sectors, will the Minister's plan reduce emissions even as output increases?

Mr. Lathlin: I think the Member knows, and I know other people in this Chamber know that in Manitoba we have been aware for quite a while now of the rapidly growing transport and live-stock industries, particularly in the agricultural, energy and transportation sectors, which could be impacted by greenhouse gas mitigation measures. So we are continuing to work with the federal government in a co-operative way to make sure that we have an input into that federal process and so that Manitoba could benefit from such mitigation measures.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, since more wet weather in spring is predicted by the models of global warming, my second supplementary is: What are his plans to improve water management, drainage and irrigation in southwestern Manitoba where farmers are very concerned about their water-logged fields?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member is aware that we have proposed legislation to the very issue that he raises. If the legislation gets through this forum here, then we will be in a position to more properly address the problems that the Member has raised here.

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): In regard to all the wet weather that we have seen in the last

couple of days, it is very evident that the Prime Minister, when he visited Manitoba, did not recognize the importance of the disaster that had happened in 1999. It is clearly evident that there was no communication between his colleagues and the Prime Minister and that his colleagues did not inform him that there had been a declaration of disaster.

I want to ask this minister, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), whether she is prepared to go back to Ottawa to try and impress upon the Prime Minister and his staff and the Minister of Agriculture that we indeed did have a disaster and that it is indeed time that Ottawa came to the table and that the Province of Manitoba clearly indicate their support of those people who suffered a disaster in 1999 regarding the flooding.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised that the Member did not acknowledge that both the Minister of Agriculture and I did go to Ottawa. We met with Minister Axworthy, Minister Duhamel and Minister Vanclief, and I suspect one of the problems is the fact that the Minister responsible for emergency measures has now—and, by the way, I have written seven times to that minister, and he has refused to meet. Perhaps if that minister, Minister Eggleton, would actually have the courtesy to meet with the Province of Manitoba, he might then get the information to pass on to the Prime Minister who was clearly in error the other day when he spoke here in Manitoba.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister, then, would care to table those seven documents that he is referring to and the letters that he has written.

I was pleased that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said a few weeks ago that this government was prepared to put money on the table and to make it happen, and I quote: We were ready to do our part to make that happen, said the Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): A point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would you please ask the Member to formulate his question and put his question without a preamble.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Emerson, on the same point of order?

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, no, I have no point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Government House Leader, *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member to please put his question.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I will ask, then, whether the Minister is prepared to go back to Ottawa and ask for funding to support the farmers and the businesspeople in Manitoba who suffered flooding in 1999, and will she do so before the adjournment of the House in the middle of this month?

* (14:10)

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised that the Member does not seem to be aware of some of the actions we have taken. We did go to Ottawa. The federal government has said no. They have said no to 90-10; they have said no to 50-50. I want to stress again that the Province of Manitoba, this province, has had \$70 million on the table, \$50 million of which is creditable under AIDA, \$20 million of which is stand-alone. There is \$20 million, 100% provincial funding on the table.

We believe the federal government should share its responsibility for the disaster, something that was already declared by the Minister. They should be doing more, and we have already communicated that to them. They are the ones saying no.

**Fiscal Stabilization Fund
Agricultural Disaster Assistance**

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering, then, whether the Premier would table the letter that he wrote to the Prime Minister yesterday and whether he would indicate that they are now willing to go it alone and put their hand in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and put the money on the table for this Province to indicate clearly that we are committed to providing assistance to those people in this province that suffered during the 1999 flood.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Mitchelson) that we would, in fact, ensure that the Prime Minister had the letter and table it in this House. I expect we can do that tomorrow through the Minister.

**Midwifery Act
Proclamation**

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health if he will tell the House about the impact of the long-awaited proclamation of The Midwifery Act on the women and families all across the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I said at the proclamation, indeed it had been a long-anticipated and long-awaited process in Manitoba that commenced in '94, that in fact was passed unanimously in this Chamber by all members. It was steered through by three former Health ministers prior to myself and came to culmination with the proclamation of the Bill that recognized the work that women have done in the community—

An Honourable Member: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): I was wondering if the Honourable

Minister could inform the House if this is a government-paid ad or if he is answering a question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): The same point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is the Opposition House Leader rising on a matter that is in no way any point of order. All it says is that they feel bad that they never asked the question. It is an important question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Health to continue with the answer.

Mr. Chomiak: I note the Member stood up after I just commended the three former ministers, and perhaps reference to former ministers of Health is something I should not do.

But, on this point, I wanted to commend the work of the midwifery association, the steering committee and the implementation committee because it is a significant day for families and women in Manitoba. Twenty-six midwives will be available to women of Manitoba, sixteen within the city of Winnipeg, ten outside of the city of Winnipeg. We funded almost \$2 million from this year's budget for that initiative, and we look forward to positive developments and further expansion in this area in the future. I commend all members for their support and the work of the midwives of Manitoba in this regard.

**Selkirk Mental Health Centre
Crisis Unit**

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): We have raised the issue of the Selkirk crisis unit twice before in this House, and the people of Selkirk are still waiting to hear from this government when the unit will again be operating at capacity. Patient well-being has already been jeopardized with the early release of some crisis patients.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health what safeguards he has in place for patients that are released early from the crisis unit, given that one of the patients has already attempted suicide.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): As I indicated previously in this House, there are contingencies that are put in place for all those patients, and it is a concern. Of course, we are dealing with an existing contract that was entered into. We are now in negotiations with respect to the contract in order to provide provisions. But the Member must know that over the years there has been a gap that has formed as a result of difficulties, which we are now faced with trying to overcome, a decade of difficulties. But we have put in place contingencies.

It is unfortunate that, because of the nursing shortage and demand that was built up the past 10 years, we are faced with this situation. We were faced with this situation last year, Mr. Speaker. The only difference this year is we are negotiating, and we have put in place a plan for nurses. But with respect to the specific patients, there is collaboration with the various facilities as well as the crisis intervention to ensure that all of the difficulties—and it is a serious problem—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: The crisis centre has been closed for eight days already this month. Can the Minister tell us what he is doing to provide alternative care for these patients who have been turned away from the crisis stabilization centre?

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated in my previous response, special provisions have been made with the acute care facilities as well as with the crisis intervention teams in this regard. It is not a good situation. It is a problem. There are problems throughout the province as a result of gaps that have grown and contracts that were entered into previously. We are negotiating. We have a plan in place. I hope as our nursing plan—which is not supported by members opposite and I wish they would give us their support; it might help it along. As we move through this, we will be able to deal with these issues so that we are not faced with that situation.

We dealt with the crisis stabilization at Sara Riel in Winnipeg. We are dealing with the situation here as the contract is winding up, Mr. Speaker, but there are contingencies that are in place for patients. It is not the optimum situation, but we are doing—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: Can the Minister of Health tell the residents of Selkirk—this was an award-winning mental health crisis centre—when will this unit have the nurses that it needs to remain open?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I want the Member to understand the reason there is a problem with nurses is there is a gap. The nurses have left the centre because there is a gap between the wages that the nurses, in a contract they are involved in that was negotiated by the previous government, was entered into, and the situation now. We are facing that shortage across the province. It is a result of 10 years of neglect, but we are going to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Speaker is standing.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, As I have indicated, we have put resources in place and contingencies in place, and we are involved in negotiations to try to negotiate a collective agreement that will see retention of these nurses. But I have to add that 10 years of neglect by members opposite is a problem that is confronting all Manitobans. Fortunately, we have a plan in place, our five-point plan, and I wish members opposite could support that plan instead of continuing their obstruction in that regard.

Highway Construction Program Budget

Mr. Harold Gilleshamer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Highways released some information on the 2000-2001 Highways construction budget. His news release states that the provincial Highways construction budget for 2000-2001 is \$201 million. This seems like a highly inflated figure. Can the Minister confirm that the actual Highways

construction budget is only \$100 million, actually \$10 million less than the previous year?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I realize the Member is the newly appointed Highways critic, so I think we can all forgive him if he fails to recognize that we are following the same procedure that has been followed for a decade and that the Highways capital program for this year includes both this fiscal and next fiscal year. That has been the case for the last 10 years, so I suspect the Member, who is the new Highways critic, was not aware of that. But we are following the same process. I might say a very well received capital program; I was in Winkler yesterday, Lac du Bonnet, Thompson, and Dauphin, very well received by the people of Manitoba.

Previously Approved Projects

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicated in his press release that 75 percent of previously approved projects will be proceeded with. Can he advise which ones have been deleted or delayed?

* (14:20)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): I can indicate there are a number of projects that will not be proceeding. There are a number of projects in the program, by the way, go back to as early as 1994-95, that are not completed. I can indicate a significant number of them have proceeded, and also in the new program we have brought in some very excellent new projects, including the main street in Winkler, a very excellent development just outside of Dauphin, a major program the people of Flin Flon have been waiting for for 15 years. So we have a balance of the old program and the new program as well.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Since the construction program was released after the Estimates for the Department were finished, can he forward which programs and which projects have been deleted?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think the Member once again does not understand the process. I indicated that there are a number of projects that

had been on the books well before we came into government. We have not been deleting projects from the program. The question obviously is those projects will be cash flowed. That was outlined in the information. I can also get detailed information on the program for the Member because we are very proud of the fact that we have a very good representation of all parts of this province from north to south, something that did not happen for 11 years under the previous government.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Canadian Hard of Hearing Conference

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, there has been some commentary about me getting to my feet before everybody else, so I was trying to give an opportunity to other honourable colleagues to be first today, but seeing as how they have been so gracious, I would like to bring an event that was hosted in my constituency to the knowledge of the honourable members.

I was proud to attend the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association provincial conference in Southport conference centre near Portage la Prairie on May 12 through 14. It was my pleasure to bring greetings to the delegates of this conference. By choosing to host their annual conference outside of Winnipeg, the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association hoped to attract more rural people who may not be aware of the services available to the hard of hearing and the late deafened.

It is estimated that 10 percent of Canadians have some form of hearing loss significant enough to interfere with their daily lives. Some of the topics discussed at the conference include the impact of hearing loss on individuals and families, hearing responsibilities, medical aspects and research, and advances in hearing aid technology.

In addition to informative workshops, the conference included the banquet, entertainment and awards presentation at the Manitoba chapter

of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association annual general meeting.

I would like to thank the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association for choosing Southport's fine facilities to host their annual provincial conference. I would also like to commend them for the important and valued work they do for Manitobans who suffer from hearing loss. We who suffer from hearing loss appreciate their efforts so that we can continue to live active and fulfilling lives. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Arborg Bifrost Summer Games

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of the House to an event I attended last week in the community of Arborg referring to the opening ceremonies for the Arborg Bifrost Summer Games. Sports to be hosted by the communities of Arborg and Riverton are softball, archery, beach volleyball, soccer, the triathlon, water skiing, golf and special-olympics soccer.

The winning participants of these events are to move on to the next level to be held in Neepawa later this summer. On behalf of the communities involved and the organizing committee, I would like to thank the title corporate sponsor, Manitoba Telecom Services, and the presenting sponsors, Summit Stitchwear & Promotions, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Lotteries Corporation, Manitoba Public Insurance and Arctic Ice.

The ceremonies included an entertainment component in the form of the Ashern Jazz Band and the locally based Icelandic Youth Choir.

Mr. Speaker, we live at a time when people in general are becoming more sedentary as our world becomes more technologically based. With the genesis of the Internet and more user-friendly computer systems, our youth are given the opportunity to live in a virtual cyber world, which is very rewarding and stimulating from an intellectual perspective but detracts from time spent developing their physical attributes.

On this basis I congratulate the athletes and coaches for participating in this particular event

in that it sets a good example for youth in general and develops in the athletes personally characteristics such as good sportsmanship and fair play which will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Physical development in the formative years is a sound foundation upon which to base one's life and is also beneficial to society as a whole in terms of reduced public health costs in later years.

To the athletes, the organizers and the sponsors, I say well done. Thank you.

Dr. Clay Gilson

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Dr. Clay Gilson passed away this weekend. Today I want to take a few moments to praise the life and contribution of Dr. Clay Gilson to not only agriculture in Manitoba but all of Canada. Doctor Gilson was a great inspiration to many of us, and he will be forever remembered.

He was born in 1926 in Deloraine, Manitoba, which is now part of my Arthur-Virden constituency. Doctor Gilson grew up during the Depression years of his family's farm. The experience of the Great Depression led him to academics, to pursue the causes of hardship for his people and his industry. He would eventually earn his PhD and begin his long and successful career in the study of agricultural economy. In his roles as professor and administrator at the University of Manitoba, Doctor Gilson always worked tirelessly to prepare Canadian agriculture for transition to the new century. He was and continues to be widely recognized for his talents as a scholar and a teacher. Later in his career, he served on a large number of boards and committees of agricultural agencies, returning his substantial knowledge to the industry, as has been announced in this Legislature today.

Doctor Gilson touched many people during his lifetime, and I am proud to say that I am one of those. Doctor Gilson chaired the Agricultural Research and Development Initiative, a diversification initiative of which I was a member and had the opportunity in the last two years to be a part of, and I was extremely proud to have worked under him as the chair of that committee in trying to promote diversification in our

industry. That was the tireless efforts of a retired gentleman who wanted to do more for his province and probably had already done more than many will ever dream of.

One of the opportunities that I had, though, that I was proud to be associated with, as I look back, and I can tell by the rust on these pages, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity as Vice-President of the Manitoba Farm Business Association, in 1984, and the date is January 11. We asked Doctor Gilson at that time to speak about agriculture at the end of the century.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member, but the time has expired. The Honourable Member could ask leave to continue. Does the Honourable Member have leave to continue? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will just be a moment. I had the opportunity of asking Doctor Gilson to speak about the future of the agricultural industry in Manitoba, and because this is so pertinent to the things that have happened over the last 16 years, I went back and looked at this, as I have many times.

One of the things that he said is: The impetus for accelerated technological change in agriculture will come from genetic engineering laboratories, earth-orbiting satellites, laser beams or fifth-generation microcomputers. No one can predict with any confidence at this time where this impetus will take us, but it is inevitable that rural people will be confronted with a complex and staggering array of innovations and new possibilities in their farming operations.

He went on to say, Mr. Speaker, that at times changes in monetary policy or the international exchange rate or a crisis around the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf can have more impact on a farmer's revenue or his expenses than anything he might do on the farm. The individual farmer will have to be very well informed about national and international events in terms of his day-to-day management decision making. The chief decision maker in the modern corporation has at his disposal an array of professional and technological staff to assist him with his business decisions, and he went on to say that farmers will need that kind of expertise

in the future. In addition to his own formal training and management experience, the farm businessman, during the next 10 to 15 years, will have to depend increasingly on the advice and professional expertise of experts, whom he will consult in the fields of accounting, financial management, commercial law, computers, insurance, estate planning and marketing. How true these have all become.

Just in closing, I want to say that his last statement to that convention was: Farming by the end of the century should be an exciting business. It will not be a business for the timid or the faint-hearted. For those with the proper qualifications and a sense of adventure, the rewards will be substantial.

Mr. Speaker, he was a loving family man, a professional of true integrity and someone this province can always be proud of. We will all miss him. Please join me in offering my sincerest condolences to the Gilson family. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Midwifery Act

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize an important event for Manitoba women, the proclamation of The Midwifery Act and the legalization of midwifery.

Midwives and their supporters have waited many years for this. With this proclamation, our government has broadened the care-of options available to women and their families at this important and exciting time-life-changing time, of childbirth, pregnancy, and the transition to motherhood and, indeed, parenthood.

Midwives, as part of the health system, will offer specialized education and support to those who want to enhance the level of care before, during and after the birth of their children. To provide midwifery care, we have approved almost \$2 million this year to support the implementation of 26 fully funded midwifery positions in Manitoba. Sixteen of these positions are allocated for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and ten to the rural and northern health authorities.

Throughout the world, midwifery is recognized as an autonomous health care profession. Canada is one of the last industrialized countries to regulate midwifery service, and midwifery is now regulated in several provinces, including Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Québec. We believe that Manitoba is set to have one of the best midwifery care models in all of North America.

I want to take a moment to recognize all of those who have made midwifery care a reality in Manitoba, including the Midwifery Implementation Council, practising midwives and their supporters and all of the members of the Legislature who unanimously supported midwifery legislation when it was introduced in 1997. I also want to congratulate those midwives who have completed the certification process and will soon be catching babies across the province of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sustainable Development

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few words about sustainable development in Manitoba, and I do this to pay tribute to the late Dr. Clay Gilson who was a long-time member of the Manitoba Round Table on the Environment, first as the Environment and the Economy and then as the Round Table on Sustainable Development.

Doctor Gilson played an important role in contributing to an understanding of sustainable development and, indeed, in contributing to the development of what we have now, The Sustainable Development Act, which came into force almost two years ago. Sustainable development is a central and core component of what we need for the future of Manitoba as we expand the economy, as we grow traditional and new industries, ensuring that we, in fact, have an approach which is sustainable, which takes into account the needs of environmental concerns, the environmental potential problems and plans for them and mitigates them, then the sustainable development process is tremendously important.

I was pleased earlier this week when the Premier (Mr. Doer) acknowledged and committed that he would bring forward the sustainable development strategy, for indeed the

Act says very clearly that within two years of the coming into force of the Act, the Province will establish the sustainable development strategy in consultation with the Manitoba round table.

Indeed, we look forward to the development not only of the strategy, but of the component strategies which are part of the strategy; component strategies which the Act clearly says will lay out the strategic plans for achieving sustainability in specific economic, environmental, resource, human health and social policy sectors identified in the sustainable development strategy. There is a commitment to a strong future for Manitoba, a sustainable future. We await, with considerable eagerness, the strategy to be presented within the next few weeks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism. Yesterday the Committee agreed to not pass lines 2.(b) and (c)(1).

When the Committee last sat, it had been considering item 2. Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs (e) Arts Branch (2) Other Expenditures \$139,600 on page 52 of the Main Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): We were discussing the Capital line, I believe, under (2)

Other Expenditures yesterday, and my question is: What constitutes the increase year over year?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Now, I believe that we addressed this yesterday and it was the purchase of art? *[interjection]* From 28 to 30.4, I understand it to be the increase required for office equipment.

I wonder while I have the mike if I could address one other matter, and that is, as you have pointed out, Mr. Chair, yesterday the Committee agreed to defer passing 14.2.(b) Grants to Cultural Organizations and 14.2.(c) Manitoba Arts Council, the Manitoba Arts Council line, because the critic indicated she wanted to consult with her colleagues as to whether they had further questions. I would like to ask the Member if she has consulted with her colleagues, and can we now pass these lines?

Mrs. Dacquay: I believe there will be further questions, and I am not prepared at this time to pass those lines.

Ms. McGifford: I would also like to add that the lines relating to Capital Grants, which are on page 68 of the Estimates supplement, have traditionally been considered following the lines for Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs division, and this is because it allows department staff to be present for areas for which they are responsible so that they do not have to return later. I wonder if I can ask the critic if he can agree to follow this traditional practice and deal with Capital Grants, lines 14.6.(a) Cultural Organizations, 14.6.(b) Heritage Buildings, and 14.6.(c) Community Places Program while the staff are present.

Mrs. Dacquay: The Minister is wanting to have discussion on other areas, and I assume it is under Historic Resources on page 37 of the Supplementary Estimates. Is that correct? One of the considerations?

Ms. McGifford: No, indeed, it is not on the page that the Member indicated. It is on page 68 of the book that the Member has.

Mrs. Dacquay: Just for clarification, again I now have the appropriate reference number, 6.

Capital Grants, and the reasoning is that the Minister would like that discussion to follow this section, Other Expenditures, because the staff that is here now is also responsible for that?

* (14:50)

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It can come after the discussion of the entire Culture, Heritage and Recreation branch.

We would like it to come not only before Tourism but before Information Resources, Business Services, Translation Services, Provincial Archives, because that requires new staff, whereas if we can do it right after, we can work with the staff who are here, and therefore we will impinge the least on the time of the staff.

I wonder also if the Member would agree that we could deal with the Arts Branch by the end of the day, so that her members have the opportunity to participate and staff can get back to their regular jobs by the end of today.

Mrs. Dacquay: At this point in time, I cannot specifically respond because I have no idea how many questions and how long it might take. I think it is within the purview of the critic to be able to take time to thoroughly examine every aspect of the Budget document that he or she wishes.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave following the completion of 14.2.(k) to skip ahead and do all of 14.6. Capital Grants? *[Agreed]*

Ms. McGifford: Since the Member opposite does not feel at this point she can indicate when her members might be here in order to discuss the Arts Branch and allow us to complete our discussions of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, I wonder if the Member would agree to our revisiting this subject before we close proceedings this afternoon.

Mrs. Dacquay: I am not quite certain I fully understand the Minister's question, but if she is asking if I would entertain—*[interjection]* No, I cannot. I cannot guarantee passing all of these lines by the end of today. I am sorry. I cannot make that commitment.

Mr. Chairperson: I understand there is not leave.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I wonder if the Member opposite could give any indication as to how long this particular branch might be here? Again, I am thinking of the staff and their need at some point to get back to their regular jobs?

Mrs. Dacquay: Well, I personally feel that the Minister is putting undue pressure on. I recognize everybody is very busy, but this is the only opportunity afforded the critic to question the current budget, and I am not aware that there has been quite as much pressure as I interpret the Minister is implying in trying to put time lines on discussion of the Estimates.

I am willing to co-operate as best I can, but for me to make a specific commitment at this time, I am just not able to do that because I have no idea how many of my colleagues will be joining me shortly to ask questions on some of these lines in this particular section. I would assume that I will make every effort to try to complete the discussion on this by the end of the day, but I am not prepared to put on the record a specific commitment.

If I also just might add, we are wasting an awful lot of valuable time and staff time by debating this and arguing it. I have made a commitment that I will do my utmost best to move this along expeditiously, but I am not prepared to put on the record that I will specifically finish with any section by the end of today.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I do want to point out to the Member opposite that during the five years I was the critic the need never arose, because I proceeded line by line and passed a line before we moved into the next. If my colleagues wanted to ask questions, they were expected to be there when I was on the line. Given that this department is willing to be flexible, I thought that the Member might urge her members to come in and ask the questions while the staff is here, but if she chooses not to, as she points out, there is very little I can do about it, so let us get on with it.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Seine River, shall we begin our questioning?

Mrs. Dacquay: Yes. I asked a question previously on the capital and was led to believe yesterday that that figure, 30.4, represented acquisition of art. Today, when I asked for the difference year over year, I am told that the reason for the increase is because there was an acquisition of office equipment.

Ms. McGifford: The explanation is that 28 is for art and the bump-up to 30.4 is for office equipment, but while we are on the subject of art, perhaps I could take the opportunity to address some of the matters that were raised yesterday with regard to art.

People here might remember that yesterday the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) spoke about the art inventory in the Legislature, and in my opinion put some questionable points on the record. I suppose if she wishes to behave that way, that is certainly her prerogative. Personally, I would like to leave this particular kind of questioning and move on to a more professional and informative approach, one that might be truly useful to the critic, that might give her some information.

But let me return to some of the questions that the Member for River East put on the record. First of all, the Member for River East asked about a news release and inferred, pardon me, implied that there was a news release under my signature, and indeed, there was no news release under my signature. There was no news release issued in my name. There was no news release from government regarding the art bank or the art inventory.

* (15:00)

My understanding of what transpired is that, as I explained yesterday, I considered it my duty when I was appointed Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism to undertake an art inventory, and the inventory was in the fall shortly after elections. At that point, two women were conducting the art inventory, and I understand that they are going about the Legislature with pen and pencil making notations, et cetera, encouraged some interest, or

the press became interested in it and asked them what they were doing. They said they were doing an art inventory. The Arts Branch was contacted and the Arts Branch gave some information about the numbers of pieces which at that time we could not account for.

There was certainly never any insinuation that people had hijacked them, stolen them, mistreated them or anything else. Information was given; information was filtered through the media; and information appeared in a certain manner in the press. I remember being interviewed in my office by I cannot recall which television channels they were, but I do remember speaking and describing what the art bank was and talking about how pieces of art are numbered and how the number is on the back of the art. Obviously, it is not going to be on the front, where it would compromise the piece of art. I remember very clearly pointing out that pieces of art could go astray. They could have been put in cupboards. In fact, I think some of them eventually showed up in washrooms, where I suppose the initial inventory people felt that they did not look initially in washrooms. I cannot really explain that. It probably does not need any explanation.

I spoke about four pieces of art that had not been located yesterday. The Member for River East said that the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) had in fact said all of the materials had been found. Indeed in *Hansard* the Minister of Highways said: I am pleased to report that we have traced virtually all of the paintings and other materials. So indeed the Minister of Government Services did not say that they had all been found. He said that we had virtually traced all of the paintings.

Now, as I pointed out, in fact we had traced all of the paintings. The materials that we had not traced were three pieces of ceramic and one wooden wall hanging. I think that yesterday the former Minister of Urban Affairs identified that he may now have one of the pieces that we thought was missing. So this is the way these things turn up, quite accidentally, and in some cases when we are least looking. This is what I have always maintained, that the pieces would eventually turn up.

I spoke to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton). He assures me that he never offered an apology because there was no need to. He did not do anything. So I do not know how the Member for River East determined that the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) offered an apology for misdemeanours.

Also, the Member opposite appeared to be very curious about the occupants of room 226. I would like to indicate that up until 1988, room 226 was a room used by Government Services; from 1988 to 1996 by the Liberal caucus; from 1996 to '98, Tom Carson; from 1998 to 1999, Hugh Eliasson; after which point it was taken over by Communications.

The piece in room 226, I am informed, was not in 226 in 1998. I would just like to give that information. I might add as well that the Arts Branch does not know when the prior inventory took place. We cannot tell from our data bank. The photos are on the Internet, just to give that information.

But I know that members are undoubtedly very curious about the art bank. I wanted to give some details of our recent art purchase tour. As we indicated, the department purchases art on an annual basis for the Government of Manitoba collection. The budget is approximately \$27,000. There are several sources of purchase: regional juried art exhibitions across the province, for example; the annual juried Manitoba Society of Artists exhibition; a tour to commercial galleries in Winnipeg; the art rental and sales outlets at the Winnipeg Art Gallery; and the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba.

Recently I attended one of the juried Manitoba art shows, I guess it was a week ago, the 3rd or 4th of June, opening in Eaton Place. In fact I attended with a staff member who is an expert on art. She made several suggestions as to pieces that we might purchase. The most recent tour to galleries took place in mid-March. The commercial galleries visited included the Site Gallery; Warehouse Artworks, located in the Exchange; the Art Collectors Club at 421 McDermot; Gallery 757; the Stoneware Gallery on Corydon Avenue; Craftspace, which is of course the retail outlet of the Manitoba Crafts Council on Academy Road; the Canadian Plains

Gallery featuring art by Aboriginal artists—it is on Higgins Avenue; the Upstairs Gallery on Edmonton Street; the David Rice studio on Osborne Street; the Winnipeg Art Gallery's art rental and sales; La Boutique and retail outlet at the Franco-Manitoba Cultural Centre; and the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, who sent in slides of artists' work for our consideration.

The art purchasing committee consisted of the following people: Linda Asper who is the MLA for Riel and acts as legislative assistant for me, Dr. Sarah McKinnon, who is the Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Winnipeg and also the art curator at that university; Dale Amundson, who is the Director of the School of Fine Art at the University of Manitoba; James Patten, Curator of Contemporary Art and Photography at the Winnipeg Art Gallery; and Judith Baldwin, who is my special assistant. We also had a staffperson go along with the group in order to provide advice as to what materials were currently part of our art bank.

As a result of this tour, 21 new works were purchased: an acrylic, *Hills at Night* by Karel Funk; another acrylic, *Night Wound*, by Colleen Cutschall; two silk aluminum panels by Aurora Landin; a silk screen by Bill Lobchuk; a raku pot by Bud Gillies; another acrylic painting, *Lucy helps dad build a fence* by Marya Zajac; a silk screen by Len Anthony; a beige ceramic pot by Dwane Perkins; a ceramic dish with caribou by Maryann Gopalkrishna; an acrylic painting, *Winter Wind*, by Ilona Stanley, a photograph of the burning of the Leland Hotel by Jacques St. Goddard; an acrylic painting by Tony Tascona; three wood panel paintings from Louise Jonasson's *18 knots*; an abstract landscape by Wanda Koop; a ceramic sunflower by Bud Gillies; a stoneware lidded jar by Kevin Conlan; and lastly, a red patch porcelain bowl by Kevin Stafford.

One of the important criteria in the selection of art for purchase is, of course, to achieve a variety of subjects in media, while recognizing the limitations of ongoing public display. Priority is placed on assuring that the collection represents the best of Manitoba artists and artworks within the bounds of our available

resources. Other criteria may include the art work's capacity to reflect the character of Manitoba and its diversity in form, style or content and to depict Manitoba themes or Manitoba subjects.

When visiting galleries, the committee, which includes a strong representation of professionals in the visual arts community, as I have indicated, visits art galleries which have a history of showing and promoting professional Manitoba artists and which host an annual program of exhibitions. So, in this purchase tour, we support not only the artists in Manitoba but galleries in Manitoba.

* (15:10)

The works purchased have to be by a living Manitoban—at least that was the decision that we made this year, and I think it is the decision that has generally been made in the past. The artist resides here now or has completed a major body of work while living in Manitoba. In making the final choices, the committee's deliberations cover many factors, including how the works will complement or complete the existing collection or representation by that particular artist.

So that is basically the information that I wanted to put on the record with regard to the Manitoba art bank. I am sure that members opposite agree with me that the purchase of art and the maintenance of this art on behalf of the public is important not only in that we promote art but that we preserve art for future generations.

I know that, in a past life, I have studied art, not visual art but literary arts, and I have always been of the opinion that art is a great healer, a great promoter of well being. I think if we study art, if we return to basically very primitive societies, we will find that the whole notion of shamanism, for example, begins with art. One book that I certainly recommend to members opposite as very important in understanding the history of art is a book by a writer called Andreas Lamo [phonetic]. It is called *Shamanism, The Beginnings of Art*, and it talks about art as a healer and a promoter of

psychological health, as well as physical well being.

I know that shamanism is still practised in many areas of the world today and that art continues to be produced by shamans. I suppose we might see the artists who are practising in contemporary society as promoters of health and healing and modern equivalents of shamans, or, as James Joyce called them, the priesthood of artists. So with those remarks, I will end.

Mrs. Dacquay: I want to thank the Minister for her very lengthy explanation of the process for the acquisition of art. I do have two questions relative to the process. Do the galleries submit their interest in having their facilities visited, or does the committee make a selection?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am advised that it is generally a combination of the committee making a decision to visit a particular gallery and particular galleries voicing interest in having their galleries visited. But the important criterion is that the galleries that are visited are galleries that have held exhibitions throughout the year, that have an exhibition program. So, by doing this, by exhibiting Manitoba art throughout the year, these galleries have shown their commitment to Manitoba art and Manitoba artists.

Mrs. Dacquay: I am somewhat familiar with this, although I think maybe the process has changed just a little bit, because in my former life, when I was first elected, I had the honour and privilege of serving on the art acquisition committee. I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed it, so I was just trying to refresh my memory in terms of the process.

I have one further question relative to process. Does the committee have the autonomy to make the final decision? Do they outright buy the art, in other words, when they visit the establishment, or do they catalogue it, make recommendations, then the Department goes through the various pieces that the committee recommends, and then a final decision is made after that?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, my department is following the same process as the previous administration. That is, the committee makes

recommendations to the Minister and the Minister approves or disapproves the recommendations. I would like to tell the Member that I follow the recommendations of the committee in every case.

Mrs. Dacquay: I will defer now to my colleague from Fort Whyte.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions. Yesterday, when I attended the committee later in the day, the issue regarding the missing works of art that was broadcast not only locally but certainly picked up by national papers was discussed at this committee. I guess I would just like to start off with some clarification from the Minister.

As I understood it yesterday, there was originally thought to be 104 pieces that were unaccounted for. Is it correct now that all but two have been accounted for?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, now we are seeing one of the problems that arises when members pop in and out because I already addressed this question in detail this afternoon. Originally, when the inventory was taken in October, November, December of this year, it appeared that there were—now I do not want to use the word "missing" and I have never used the word "missing"—104 pieces unaccounted for.

I just would like to run through what transpired for the Member since he was not here when I did it before. That is to say that during this process, during the inventory, two individuals, one from Government Services, one from the Arts Branch were conducting an inventory in the Legislature. The press, seeing these two women going in and out of offices, writing down things, et cetera, expressed interest. The press was told that they were doing an inventory. The press contacted the Arts Branch and was told that the original go-round, the first go-round showed that we could not find 104 pieces of art.

Now, the Arts Branch gave factual information. These were the circumstances. There were no insinuations. There was no dire plot, as the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), in her high-flown rhetoric and in

her confabulations and fabulations yesterday implied, nothing of that kind, simple factual information. If I seem cross, I am cross. You know, I would really like to get through this and move on with these Estimates. So 104 pieces, as efforts continued, as people responded and said: You know, I have a piece in my washroom; I opened my cupboard and found a bowl, the list dwindled and dwindled and dwindled, and finally, it turned out there were four pieces of art that we could not account for.

Yesterday, the former Minister of Urban Affairs thought that he might have one of those pieces. I do not know if that has been verified or not. The Minister of Urban Affairs indeed does have one so now we are down to three pieces of art. So that is the story.

* (15:20)

Mr. Loewen: I thank the Minister for that answer. It was, I thought, a fairly straightforward question. I am a little confounded as to her diatribe. Certainly she has been in this House long enough to understand that there are other obligations that members have. I guess we should apologize that we are not all able to sit here every hour of every day and listen to her brilliant answers, but sometimes these things happen.

An Honourable Member: It would be worthwhile.

Mr. Loewen: I can assure you. So, anyway, now that we are here, I guess I am just trying to make sure that we have the facts right, something that obviously was not the case when a government memo obtained by the *Free Press*, contrary to what she says in terms of a couple of phone calls—I mean, we have it on record that there was a memo that was given to the *Free Press*—so I hope we can ask her indulgence if we try to get more information on the record in terms of what, to me, in particular, being a new member, is a very substantive issue.

I hope she appreciates that, being a new member to the House, I was appalled at the time to learn that, in her opinion, in her department's opinion, there was artwork missing, very valuable artwork and historic artwork, and in

particular being a new member with an office that was not able to get any artwork. I hope she can appreciate from my perspective that it would have been nice to know there were 100 pieces around somewhere in closets and in different places that maybe someone could have accessed.

But, in any event, I guess, also, maybe my understanding of the process is not clear. Maybe the Minister can give me some more information on this at some time as well, but from what I understand it is not her prerogative to determine when Estimates will end. Certainly we as opposition have the right to ask questions. It is not up to her to make the decision on whether they are matters that are serious or not. I think she should understand that if we are here asking questions it is because they are serious matters to us and to our constituents. All we are asking her to do is answer I think what are some fairly straightforward questions. I certainly appreciate learning from her that there are still three pieces unaccounted for, and hopefully before too long they will be accounted for.

I certainly hope that she has a bit of an appreciation as well for the fact that this story made the national press. I think that is of concern to all Manitobans. It certainly was indicated by a number of my constituents and other people throughout the province at the time. I think to have in the national press that members of this government, of this Legislature, regardless of what party stripe they carry, be accused of misplacing, taking, leaving the building with artwork that belonged to the Government is a very, very serious matter. I would hope she would have some indulgence to our requests for information on this.

I guess I will go back to the report in the *Free Press*, because I think that is where it started. Certainly the *Free Press* indicates that they obtained a government memo. I wonder if the Minister would table that memo.

Ms. McGifford: I want to reiterate that there was no news release under my name. I have no knowledge of this particular memo the Member is talking about or of the *Free Press*. The Member may be interested in speaking to the *Free Press*. I cannot help him out.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I ask the Minister then, because she said that she had staff from the Arts Branch do an inventory. They were going around and I know they came to my office very briefly. It is not hard to tell from my humble abode that there is not any art there, and certainly no closet to hide it in.

I guess I would find it incredible, if on asking her department to carry out such an inventory, if something was not put on paper regarding the status of it. I would ask the Minister maybe if she would consult with her staff to see if in fact there was anything in writing, either just within their working group or something that maybe was passed on to the Minister that she does not recall at this point. Whatever there is in writing, could she present it to this committee?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, having spoken to staff and consulted with staff, I am advised that there were likely a number of communications going back and forth. I would just like to reiterate that I never released any documents, that there was no news release under my name or under the name of the Department.

Mr. Loewen: Well, thank you. Just for the purposes of expediency, I will grant the Minister that there was no press release issued. We are not asking about a press release. What I am looking for is information regarding this matter. Obviously, there were internal memos within her department. Was the Minister privy to this written communication?

Ms. McGifford: Both myself and staff would have received communications. We would have seen information, et cetera. In any interview with the media, myself and my staff certainly impressed on the media the importance of this being a process, and a process that was not complete. As we know, it is still in process and still is not complete.

Mr. Loewen: I appreciate that information. If that is what the Minister and her staff have told the press, I am certainly not questioning that. I would ask the Minister: Would she share those written communications between her and her staff with this committee?

Ms. McGifford: I would certainly have staff review communications and apply the FIPPA rules and make decisions from there.

Mr. Loewen: The Minister mentioned that in all her communications with the media, she indicated that it was identified to them that this was an ongoing process and that they were in the process of taking an inventory. I will give her a quote from the paper, which comes from a source within government, presumably a source within her department, as that would be the only department that would know. The quote is: "We are still in midstream, so there may be even more items missing." Does that coincide with the Minister's last comment?

Ms. McGifford: I thank the Member for the question. I am advised by staff that to the best of their knowledge that particular comment was never made by staff. It certainly was not made by me. So I cannot really say who the source of this comment was, nor can I be responsible for the *Free Press* and what the *Free Press* chooses to write.

Mr. Loewen: I agree with the Minister that we cannot necessarily be responsible for what the *Free Press* writes, but certainly when there are quotes that insinuate that art has been stolen, and the quotes are attributed to a government source, certainly I would think, at least I would if I was a Minister want to do some investigation into where those quotes came from.

The particular memo, which I would appreciate if the Minister would table with this committee, also according to the report in the *Free Press*, identifies a former minister of the Crown who was, according to the *Free Press* report, caught taking a painting to his new office and in fact when he was asked to return it did so willingly and freely. Probably just a normal mistake that anyone could make when moving offices would be to take a picture, not something too unusual, and the fact is that as soon as the individual was asked, it was returned. Would the Minister be able to table that memo with this committee?

Ms. McGifford: I am very pleased that the former minister who was noted in the *Free Press*, whoever that individual might be, returned the work. I agree with the Member that mistakes are easily made. In fact yesterday it turned out that another former minister had made a mistake and was certainly very anxious to identify the fact that he had a piece of the missing art in his office. That was very rewarding. As I have indicated, I have already told the Member for Fort Whyte that staff will review the communications we have, apply the FIPPA principles, and determine what we can release after that. I do want to indicate to the Member once more that quotations in the *Free Press*, stories in the *Free Press*, I am not responsible for the *Free Press*. I do not write in the *Free Press*.

Mr. Loewen: I appreciate that the Minister does not write for the *Free Press* but, again, if it was my Department and a story like this appeared in the *Free Press*, I certainly would not question the credibility of a newspaper reporter who provides direct quotes from either a source or from a written memo that they claim to have a copy of. I am sure the Minister has enough regard for the reporters that cover these proceedings and cover the House, particularly Doug Nairne, who wrote this article. I am sure she has enough confidence in his abilities to know that he and, in fact, his editors would not quote a memo word for word unless they had a memo, would not quote a source word for word unless they had something to back it up.

So on the basis of the fact that this memo was quoted and, in fact, a source was quoted, I guess I would ask the Minister by virtue of the fact that the story was picked up nationally, certainly throwing question on some members of this Legislative Assembly, which at the end of the day proves through their own investigation to be totally malicious, how seriously did she take this matter?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, indeed I did not cast aspersions on the integrity of Doug Nairne. I simply said I am not responsible for what appears in the *Free Press*. I think those are two different statements. I noticed the Member said that if he were running the Department, he would do it in a different way. Well, if the

people of Manitoba wanted him to run the Department, they would have elected him to run it, but I am.

Mr. Loewen: The Minister sounds more like the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) every day. She must be taking some pretty good lessons from him in terms of answering. [*interjection*] They do sit next to each other in the House, so maybe that explains it.

We will concede to the Minister that she is, in fact, a Member of the governing party, and I would like to congratulate her for that. I hope at the same time she understands that with that privilege comes the responsibilities of overseeing her department in a professional manner. I think it is clearly her duty to respond to issues that are raised either through the findings of her department or through the press in a professional manner. So, I would ask the Minister what steps she took—this article is dated Tuesday, January 11—what steps she took after she saw this article to correct the situation and correct the impression left not only in Manitoba but also across this country that, in fact, some artwork had been stolen from the premises.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I thank the Member for Fort Whyte for his advice in what I should do and what I should not do and where I should be and where I should not be and what I should tell my department and what I should not. He is a source of excellent advice, a Magus, a wise man down at the end of the table there.

I would like to point out to the Member for Fort Whyte that there have been several newspaper stories since the one that he seems to be fixated on. I hope he did not stop reading the *Free Press* on January 11 but has continued, because he will have found that we have updated the *Free Press* on various developments and have kept them abreast when they expressed curiosity of what has been found. In fact, I do know that very recently there was a story talking about the list having dwindled down to the four pieces. Maybe we could inform the *Free Press* that we have found one, and there are only three missing pieces now.

Mr. Loewen: I think, with all due respect to the members of this House and to the people that

work in this building, she should advise the *Free Press* and *The Globe and Mail* and *The Post* who picked up on those stories, and, in fact, she should do it in a significant way. Perhaps one way she could do that is by apologizing to the people that work in this building, both the elected members, as well as, any staff who work in this building, who certainly would have felt tainted by this leak of information. Maybe by way of issuing an apology and a press release explaining that the Minister would be willing to apologize for any misconceptions that arose out of the workings of her department and that, in fact, virtually all the artwork had been found, maybe that would be something that would be well advised and appreciated by the people of Manitoba. I guess I would ask the Minister: Would she be willing to do that?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, you know, I would like to point out, if all members of the Legislature had followed with fidelity the directives of the memo from the executive Clerk of the Council, they would have never moved art as they moved their offices. I understand that Don Leitch sent out a memo, before the election and after the election, saying that the art goes with the office and not with the occupant. So, the whole process of managing the art inventory might have been made easier if members of the Legislature had simply followed the directives of the Clerk of the Executive Council. Some members did, some did not. Will I apologize? Heavens, no.

Mr. Loewen: Can the Minister tell me how many of the 104 pieces were recovered as a result of her staff finding out that somebody within this building had moved it from one office to another?

* (15:40)

Ms. McGifford: I am advised that there had been an inventory in August. The 104 pieces that we could not initially locate in the inventory in October, November, of the 104 pieces that could not be located, 100 of them were found in the building in various places.

Mr. Loewen: So I am to take it from that answer that the Minister does not have a breakdown of

how many of those 104 pieces were moved from one office to another?

Ms. McGifford: I understand that, no, we do not have that figure. In some cases, pieces were moved within the complexities of an office, perhaps from an inner office to an outer office, perhaps from a wall to a closet.

So we do not have those figures. We could perhaps provide that breakdown, but it would take the Department some time to come up with those figures.

Mr. Loewen: Then it would seem from that answer that it must be obvious to the Minister that the articles in the press, particularly the one in the January 11 *Free Press*, which I believe broke the story, was a gross exaggeration of what, in fact, the case was.

Ms. McGifford: Well, now it sounds like it is the Member for Fort Whyte who is questioning the integrity of the *Free Press*.

Mr. Loewen: I can assure the Minister I am not questioning the integrity of the *Free Press*. What I am questioning is the scope of the problem that was identified to the *Free Press*. After all, they are only reporting on a memo which was leaked to them, a government memo from her department, which she seems to think is totally inconsequential but which I would remind her cast a black eye on not only all the elected officials but all the other officials who work in this building.

So I would ask her to possibly be a little less flippant with her responses and treat this matter with the seriousness that it deserves. I would just remind her that this was a national news story. This was a story picked up not only in Manitoba but picked up all across this country which cast aspersions on the elected members of this government House as well as every hired employee, every bureaucrat who works in this building.

I am simply asking the Minister if after having an opportunity to finish the inventory, to finish their work, would she say that the article in the *Free Press*, which is based not on false information but on information gleaned at the

time, the only information that was available, that in the end this article portrays the issue of lost art as something different than it actually turned out, in fact, to be.

Ms. McGifford: You know, I am truly shocked that this member is casting aspersions on my staff by saying my staff leaked a memo. I have told him repeatedly that my staff did not leak a memo.

The Member might further consider we have no evidence as to what the *Free Press* had or did not have. I have no responsibility for what the *Free Press* had or did not have. I do not know if the Member has some special access to the *Free Press* and knows what they had or did not have, but I am truly shocked and disappointed that he is casting aspersions on very qualified, very competent, very loyal, faithful, hard-working staff people who have to sit there and listen to him do this.

I have been very much to the point and assured this member that we will review our communications, we will apply the FIPPA rules, and whatever can be released we will then consider releasing, but I would ask him to leave my staff alone.

Mr. Loewen: Well, just to clarify the situation for the Minister's clearer understanding, I have at no point in my commentary suggested that her staff leaked the memo. In fact, I am on her side in this. I know from first-hand dealings with her staff that I have had as a volunteer in this community, connected with the arts community, that she has a very diligent, a very competent staff, one that takes their job seriously and carries it through to the best of their abilities. One only has to look so far as the tremendous arts community that we have in this province to understand that her staff does a very good job.

So I want to make it perfectly clear on the record that I have tremendous respect for the staff of her department. I also want to make it clear that I have some concerns, I think some very serious concerns, that a black eye has been put on this Legislature, on this building and on everybody who works in this building as a result of a memo that was leaked. I want to make it clear I am not saying her staff leaked it, but I

think there is no doubt that somebody leaked it, quite likely for political purposes, and certainly her staff would have absolutely no reason to do that.

What I am simply asking the Minister is as a result of a leaked memo, quite likely politically driven, as there is no other reason to leak a memo like that unless it is politically driven, an article appeared in the *Free Press*. I am simply asking the Minister if she would confirm to this committee that in fact the facts of the matter, what proved out to be the actual situation at the end of the day once all the facts were known, in no way resembled the report that was written in the *Free Press* as a result of the facts they knew at the time which came from this memo and from an unidentified source.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am not quite sure what the question was there, but I do want to reiterate that whatever the *Free Press* chose to write, whatever national-international, maybe intergalactic, reputation we might have now, it was not as the result of a leaked memo from my department. In fact, in all departmental communications, my staff has stressed that we describe the art as mislocated. We never even described the art as missing. I accept the Member's apology to the staff, or I think it was an apology. I take it as an apology, earlier, but the Member did and perhaps inadvertently say that it was a memo leaked from my department.

Mr. Loewen: Just to clarify that. The report from the *Free Press* says that it was a memo that was leaked from government, which to me would indicate that it was certainly politically motivated. I guess just to try and simplify the question for the Minister: Did, in fact, her inventory prove that at the end of the day, virtually all of the art that is the responsibility of her department was accounted for in this building?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, as a point of clarification the art in the building, it is perhaps a minor matter, but the art is the responsibility of the Department of Government Services, and, yes, as we repeatedly indicated, virtually all of the art with the exception of as of yesterday four pieces and as of today three pieces have been

located, as we in this department always expected to be the case.

Mr. Loewen: Back in February, the then-Leader of the Opposition Gary Filmon wrote to the Minister and he copied other members of caucus expressing his concerns about the fact that in fact there seemed to be a large amount of artwork missing and certainly identifying to the Minister that our caucus was prepared to co-operate fully with any of her departmental staff to make sure that the pieces of art had all been found. There was a response from the Minister.

I am sorry, just to correct, that the Leader of the Opposition Gary Filmon at the time wrote on January 11. There was a response on February 18 identifying that most of the artwork had been found, and certainly the Minister expresses her appreciation for the support of the Leader and of his caucus. I was wondering if there was any follow-up written communication to the Leader of the Opposition once it had been established that in fact all but three or four pieces of art had been found.

* (15:50)

Ms. McGifford: I did receive a second letter from the former Leader of the Opposition. We have drafted a letter and the former Leader of the Opposition will receive it in the very near future.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Chairman, I believe the Minister had stated that her staff had gone around to every office in this building to locate the missing artwork.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if the Member could repeat the question. I did not get it.

Mr. Loewen: Certainly, Mr. Chair. I believe what she said, I am just trying to clarify this, that people from her department had indeed gone to every office in the building to locate the missing artwork.

Ms. McGifford: I am advised that we have gone to every office unless there are spaces that we do not know, and if we do not know about them, we would appreciate any advice that members opposite could provide, because, of course, we would like to attend those offices, too.

Mr. Loewen: Having done that, I guess, fortunately we were able to identify one piece of art yesterday as a result from a member being here that it has been in his office, I guess, for quite some time and perhaps was missed. I just wonder what her plans are in terms of continuing the search for the last three pieces of art.

Ms. McGifford: With respect to the particular piece that the former Minister of Urban Affairs identified as being in his current office, the last time in November when the inventory people attended room 123, that piece of art was not on the wall. It was not on display. So perhaps it had not yet been hung. Perhaps it was in a box. Perhaps it was in a cupboard. Perhaps it was awaiting the legislative people to come and hang. *[interjection]* Excuse me, it is a ceramic piece that sits.

Of course, there are ceramic pieces that do hang on walls, so that is another possibility. That seems to be a strange notion to the Member for Fort Whyte, but I can assure him that I have ceramic pieces on my walls.

Mr. Loewen: And I am sure they are lovely pieces. I was asking the Minister, though, what plans she had to try and locate the other three pieces that are still missing.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, as I indicated yesterday, we will continue to work and we will continue to search for those pieces. As I indicated yesterday, there is a chance that the ceramic pieces could have been broken. I know that yesterday I cited an example of a piece that had been purchased and was in my office, a glass piece, that was accidentally knocked over and broken. We were very fortunate in being able to obtain a replacement for that particular piece. But the nature of ceramic and glass pieces is that they do break, so perhaps that has happened. Perhaps the three pieces will not be located which would indeed be unfortunate, but we are certainly trying our best to locate them.

As part of our efforts, we are trying to be more proactive. For example, I believe that Government Services has asked that there be an identified person responsible for art in all offices. I believe that we are preparing materials

on caring for the art in offices, and that will soon be available.

Mr. Loewen: I think those are all excellent plans. The Minister has already stated on the record that she did not discuss this article with a reporter from the *Free Press* and that her staff did not. I wonder, given the seriousness of the article, the seriousness of the allegations, if after this article appeared in the paper, did she take any steps to try and determine who had leaked a memo or who had been the confidential source that spoke to the paper?

Ms. McGifford: No, I did not.

Mr. Loewen: Did the Minister either verbally or through written communications communicate with the First Minister regarding this issue?

Ms. McGifford: I did not communicate with the First Minister in regard to the article in the *Free Press*, no.

Mr. Loewen: I would assume from that sort of nebulous answer that the Minister then did, in fact—it would seem only natural that she communicated with the First Minister on the issue.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I cannot remember speaking specifically about the article in the *Free Press*, as I have indicated, with the First Minister.

The Member for Fort Whyte has indicated that the story was in the *Free Press* and it was in other publications. When it was a part of the news, people talked about it. Yes, I might have talked about it with the First Minister. We were, both of us, very anxious to find the pieces that were mislocated and the Premier (Mr. Doer) was as interested as I was and as my department was in finding the mislocated pieces and, of course, expressed interest in their being relocated in the sense of found.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would ask the Minister then if she could include in the request for memos within her department and, in particular, the memo that is quoted word for word in this January 11 article, if she could also include any written communication that she had with the

Premier on this issue either before this article appeared or after or in conjunction with this memo.

Ms. McGifford: I think I have answered this question innumerable times and assured the Member that we will review written materials that are present in my department, and we will apply the FIPPA test and will get back to the Member as soon as that work has been done.

* (16:00)

Mr. Loewen: I would ask the Minister if she can recollect any conversations with the Premier where there was a plan or a strategy to correct this misrepresentation in the article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* so that it would be clear, not only to Manitobans, but to people across the country that there were not over a hundred pieces of art missing, that in fact they had just been, basically, moved within the Legislative Building and remained unaccounted for.

Ms. McGifford: You know, Mr. Chair, this is what we did immediately—went to the press and assured the press that we believed that the materials were mislocated and would be found. Our determination has always been to find the mislocated pieces.

Mr. Loewen: Just to clarify, I was asking the Minister if she had discussions with the Premier around how best to accomplish that goal of assuring Manitobans and, in fact, people across the country that the art was in the building.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I felt that the best strategy was to work with my staff to search out the mislocated pieces. No, I did not ask the Premier to run around with a pencil and paper barging into various offices, and seeing what work of art was on the wall. No, the Premier is a very busy man. I have departmental people who were doing the inventory, departmental people who were anxious to locate these pieces. That is exactly the strategy that we employed and that we will continue to employ.

Mr. Loewen: Again, I appreciate the fact that the Minister feels she has to lecture me on how an operation as big as the Government of Manitoba operates. I can tell her I certainly

appreciate that the Premier would not be the one running around from office to office, and I can appreciate that she would not be the one running around from office to office, although she might have the time. I guess that is up to her.

In any event, again that was not my question. My question to the Minister was: Does she recall conversations that she had with the Premier regarding a strategy to get to the media with the right facts, with the accurate story that in fact there had not been a loss to the Province of Manitoba from stolen art work, that the majority of it could be accounted for very, very quickly right within this building? Did she have any conversations regarding that type of strategy with the First Minister?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I have made the point several times that, no, I did not evolve a strategy with the Premier. I evolved the strategy with my department. Let me add at this point one of the things that the Department did was dedicate a particular staffperson and staff resources to the inventory. We brought in somebody for an eight-week period who participated in this inventory—a former employee of the Department who is now in retirement. So, no, I did not evolve a strategy with the Premier. I felt and continue to feel that we did the wisest thing and trusted in staff who are experts in art to provide the best guidance, to provide the best ways of relocating the pieces of art. Clearly, I was right because we found 101 out of 104 missing pieces of art.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I will agree with the Minister at the end of the day she was right. What was wrong was the approach that was taken to it. I find it unbelievable that the Minister of the Crown, given the seriousness of an issue that gave a black eye to certainly every elected official, and also to those working in this building, that there was not a communications strategy planned with the First Minister and with his communications department to remove that black eye immediately, particularly as the Minister would be well aware that this story was picked up on a national basis. So, if the Minister is saying that she did not discuss this issue with the First Minister, I would ask what Communications staff she did discuss it with.

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Chair, and I am so sorry that the Member opposite feels blackened. Personally, I do not. I do not know if my colleagues do. For example, I was recently at a meeting of ministers of Tourism, and they did not all poke their finger at me and say: art thief. I am sorry that the Member opposite feels that his reputation has been blackened, but I do want to reiterate the two points that I have been making over and over again, and that is the day after the *Free Press* article, we told the press, that is my department told the press and I told the press myself and the director of the Arts Branch told the press that we expected that all the pieces of art would be located.

As well, let me make the point again, that in our determination to locate these mislocated pieces, we hired a staff person on a temporary basis to assist us in this work, and as I said, we were very successful because we were able to find 101 out of 104 pieces of art.

Mr. Loewen: Well, again, it is simply amazing to me, if what the Minister is telling us is that after articles like this appear in the *Free Press* that are picked up nationally, I just cannot believe that she does not recognize that certainly Manitoba was given a black eye by the negative reporting of this story in the national press. Given the number of communicators that have been hired by this government since they took office, I find it even more incredible that the Minister is sitting here telling us that she did not try immediately to develop a strategy with that Communications department to correct the erroneous reports that were not only giving the wrong impression to people of Manitoba but giving the wrong impression to people all across the country. So, just to clarify, is the Minister saying that after this article appeared in the *Free Press* there was no attempt to develop a communications strategy for damage control, that she in fact did not feel that this type of article was damaging to Manitoba and to everybody who works in this building?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, how many ways and how many times can I say we did, we did, we did, we did, as I have repeatedly told this member.

An Honourable Member: They just do not have any other questions.

Ms. McGifford: I guess there are not any other questions. The day after the article, I and the director of the Arts Branch both told the *Free Press*—

Mr. Chairperson: On a point of order, the Member for River East.

Point of Order

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order, I just want to indicate that the Deputy Premier always seems to be able to hop in across the table and put comments on the record when the Government is under pressure and under a little bit of heat and when one of her colleagues seems to be having some difficulty answering the questions, and I would ask you to call her to order. I think we are listening very intently to the answers by the Minister, and I would like you to call her to order so that we can in fact hear what the Minister has to say and ask our questions appropriately.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Chairman, I think what I would like to say is that the Member, of course, does not have a point of order and had the former minister in fact been here for any length of time she would recognize that it was the first intervention that I have made, either that or perhaps the Minister really was not counting accurately.

But my comments, Mr. Chairman, I think, were quite appropriate, that the Member has been on this question for many, many, perhaps hours now, and it does seem to me that there are other questions of importance to the people of Manitoba, but they are not ones that seem to be able to come through the ranks of this particular opposition. It seems to me if this is the only question that they have when the Minister, and I want to make the point, has answered this question over and over again, that she has answered it briefly, she has answered it extensively. She has answered it in a short way, she has answered it over and over again. She has answered it to one Member who then leaves, she

has answered it to another Member who then reappears, and it does seem to me is what we have is a lack of imagination and a lack of an understanding of the whole area of Culture, Heritage and Tourism that is being reflected in this opposition.

I do feel, Mr. Chairman, that I do have to put that on the record because I think that the Minister is doing a very good job to answer what is essentially a very repetitive question and perhaps it is that the members opposite do not hear. Perhaps it is that they do not want to hear.

Perhaps they are unable to hear, but I think we should say for the record that everybody else sitting around this table believes that the Minister has answered this very competently, that she has been extremely patient, extremely patient and polite with members who are essentially, I think, not appreciating the full purpose of Estimates, and I want to commend the Minister for the kind of answers that she has been giving. I think they are very responsive to the repetitive questions that the opposition has been asking and I do wonder if the opposition does, in fact, have any other version or vision of culture, heritage and tourism in this province other than that which is reflected in this question.

I do think that perhaps having been in government for 10 years that they might have some other options to talk about in Culture, Heritage and Tourism. I would think that there would be many, many options. In fact, we certainly have not seen these in Question Period, so I had anticipated with great enthusiasm and that is why I am sitting here listening to the Opposition's critique of Culture, Heritage and Tourism policy. [interjection] Well, yes, my colleague here says that he brought a pen and he was looking for some interesting guidance on this, but I do not think that we are seeing it from this particular line of questioning. I do want to support the Minister in her answers. I think that she has done a standard and sterling job in this area.

Mr. Chairperson: On the point of order raised, there is no point of order. I just caution all members to not interrupt when the speaker speaks. Keep your comments down so that we

can proceed with our questioning. We cannot go on until we have quiet, because we cannot hear the speaker speak. I am sorry.

* * *

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize to the Chairman and to the Minister, but as a result of the interjections that were happening when the Minister was answering the last question, I have to apologize. I was not able to hear all the answer, and I wonder if I could ask her to repeat it.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I think the answer was we did, we did, we did, we did, we did.

An Honourable Member: Did what?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Loewen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, just—

* (16:10)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We have to be quiet and let the speaker speak. You will get your chance to address the Chair later, and I will recognize you if you wish to speak. Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and just in response I can assure the Minister that members on this side of the House certainly take seriously their responsibility in Estimates. We certainly have a vision and many of us have been involved in the arts community in Winnipeg and in Manitoba for a number of years. I do not think any of us have to justify to the Minister or to anybody on the opposite side of the table with regard to the questions we are asking. There are certainly lots of questions to ask. There are certainly a lot of creative questions to ask, and I can assure the Minister and assure anybody else at the table that we will get to them and we will get to them in due course.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is an extremely serious matter and I think one which I am astounded that people at this table would take lightly. We have had our reputation sullied all across Canada. [interjection] We have had it sullied as a direct result of an article in the *Free*

Press. We have had it as a result of a government memo—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Do not interrupt the speaker. I have difficulty hearing and if you wish to speak, raise your hand and I will recognize you.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Chair, you know that reputation has been sullied by a government memo which was obtained by the *Free Press*, a written memo that they quote directly from that was backed up by an unidentified source within government which we can only assume with some type of political source, and certainly the impression was left across all of Canada.

In fact, with the Internet these days, as we found out in the House today, it does not take much to go from one site to all across the world to some very undesirable sites. So, no doubt there are people outside of Canada that have seen this article. As a result, everybody who works in this building, and I include myself as one of them, at the end of the day all we have is a reputation and our reputation has been damaged by this article.

I simply find it astounding that a minister of this government, a minister of the Crown, upon seeing that there was a black mark being put against not only elected members but also a black mark against anybody who worked in this building that she did not immediately—and, in fact, with the Premier and with the Premier's communication staff—develop a communication strategy that would identify clearly that this article was wrong, wrong, wrong. In fact, what this article was leading people to believe had not happened.

So, you know, the Minister can sit there and claim that it is nothing and that nobody's reputation was damaged, but I can assure the Minister that in my particular situation I have had people all across Canada ask me about the missing artwork in this building. It is an issue that I take very, very seriously, and so I would like to hear from the Minister what strategy her communication staff and who was involved in the Premier's office in helping her to develop a strategy to help point out to people across Canada and anywhere else where they might

have seen this article that this was not accurate information.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I would like to correct the Member. I never claimed that the mislocated art was not a serious issue. In fact, I think the seriousness with which I take art in this province is quite clear in the fact that I asked for an inventory when I became the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism so that I knew what art we had in the building and the state of the art, if pieces had been mislocated, et cetera.

So I think the seriousness with which I take the Government art bank is quite clear. I would also like to point out to the Member for Fort Whyte that in opposition I was always, I think, very anxious and interested in speaking to the Minister of the day on the Government art collection. I think it is clearly something that is valuable to Manitobans. It is part of the public trust. It is a record of our living heritage, and I have great respect for the integrity of that collection and great respect for the artists who have created that collection as well as for those individuals who put their time into making selections and, as well, for the fact that it is the monies of taxpayers of Manitoba that pays for that art collection.

So I just do want to indicate to the Member for Fort Whyte that his claim that I think this matter is nothing is quite erroneous, and I do want to reiterate again that other pieces of evidence that I took and continue to take this matter very seriously are the matters that I have put on the record before and that is the very day after the initial article in the *Free Press*. the Director of the Arts Branch told the *Free Press* that we expected that all pieces of art would be located, and I as well told the *Free Press* that we expected that all pieces of art would be located.

I also pointed out to the Member that I believe I was interviewed by one or two television channels, and I cannot remember whether there were one or two, but I do remember assuring the persons that were interviewing me that I felt all pieces would be located. In fact, I did not see the coverage, but I recall the journalist who visited me in my office being more interested in the nature of the Government art bank than in what pieces had not

been located or what pieces had been located. So that individual was interested in the Government art bank and not interested in missing pieces or found pieces. So there were many different takes on the Government art bank.

* (16:20)

Now I do not know if other jurisdictions routinely buy art in the way that our province does. Apparently some do and perhaps some do not. Perhaps there was interest in the fact that we were doing this and consequently supporting our artists, supporting our galleries in this manner. But the claim from the Member for Fort Whyte that I thought the 104 pieces that we could not locate did not constitute a serious matter is fallacious. That is not true. I did think it was serious. I think it continues to be serious, and that is why we continue to work on this particular issue. That is why we acquired the assistance of another staff member to help us track down the pieces of art that we could not locate.

So yes, it is a serious issue. Yes, I take it seriously, and yes, we had a strategy to address this issue. The strategy that we chose was the day after—and let me repeat for I do not know whether it is the tenth time, eleventh time, twelfth time, I do not know, but let me repeat once more that the day after the initial article in the *Free Press*, I and the Director of the Arts Branch told the press that we expected all pieces would be eventually relocated.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would just like to point out to the Minister that, in effect, there are two issues here. One is the missing art work which certainly has over the course of time, it is unfortunate that it took so long, and it is unfortunate that the article that appeared in the paper appeared when it did, but certainly we all took the issue of the missing art work very seriously. We are cognizant of the fact that it is a piece of history that belongs to all Manitobans and that we simply have an obligation to keep it in trust. I appreciate that the Minister feels that way.

But there is another very serious issue here, and that issue is an issue of reputation. My concern with the Minister's actions is not that

they did not take appropriate action to locate the article, although one could argue that it took longer than we would have believed, what my biggest concern is that there is a black eye given to the members of this Legislature, particularly to some who were not even here to defend themselves at the time.

I am simply trying to find out what the Minister did with regard to correcting that situation with the press and what steps she took and what discussions she had with the First Minister, with his communication staff and with her communication staff to develop some type of communication strategy that would make it clear to the individual that wrote this article, to the people of Manitoba and to the people in Canada who had read about this issue in the national press what communication strategy did she undertake to ensure that this misconception would be corrected?

Ms. McGifford: The day after the article appeared in the *Free Press*, the director of the Arts Branch and I both assured the press that we expected that all pieces would be relocated.

Mr. Loewen: With the strategy, was there any effort made to determine where the document had been leaked from?

Ms. McGifford: I have already answered that question.

Mr. Loewen: I do not believe the Minister has, so I would ask her again: Did she take any steps to identify where the document had been leaked from?

Ms. McGifford: No, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Loewen: Am I to understand that the Minister did not take any action to determine who had leaked this document?

Ms. McGifford: That is correct, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I find this incredible that a minister of the Crown, and again I want to make it clear that I am not in any way trying to imply that anyone who works in the employ of the Government of Manitoba in her department that is not a political staff had anything to do with

leaking this document, but did the Minister not believe that this was a serious breach, to have this document leaked to the paper?

Ms. McGifford: I have already told the Member for Fort Whyte repeatedly that I was assured by officials in my department that the memo did not come from my department. If I could just add to that, in fact I do not know that there was a memo.

Mr. Loewen: Well, a couple of issues here. First of all I just cannot believe the Minister has just said she thought—this is incredible. The Minister has just stated that she thought that the memo might not have even existed, a memo quoted word for word in the *Free Press*. Can the Minister honestly tell this committee that she felt for one minute that maybe there had not been a memo and in fact the reporter had dreamed up this quote and had somehow got his editor to agree to print it?

Ms. McGifford: The point that I make by saying that I do not know if there was a memo is I am thinking of a memorandum in its most official sense. I do not know what official memorandum was referred to. I do not know whether the word was used generically, whether it was used loosely, whether it was used in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary definition. I simply have no way of knowing how the *Free Press* intended us to understand the word "memo."

* (16:30)

Words, as I am sure the Member for Fort Whyte knows, have very many meanings and meaning changes from individual to individual in some cases, from circumstance to circumstance in other cases. I do not know whether the *Free Press*, as I say, was using memo in the highly formal sense, whether it was using the word memo loosely, meaning any kind of written communication. The Member for Fort Whyte probably knows that the information was not shared with me, that when this article appeared in the *Free Press*—I believe the Member told me Doug Nairne was the writer of the article—Doug Nairne did not interview me. Consequently, he did not mention a memo to me. So I do not know in what context the word "memo" was used.

Mr. Loewen: Well, if the reporter did not talk to the Minister directly, is she aware if he talked directly to any of her political staff?

Ms. McGifford: No. My understanding is that Doug Nairne did not speak to any of my political staff.

Mr. Loewen: Can the Minister tell us if she is aware if the reporter spoke to any political staff involved with the Government?

Ms. McGifford: I do not know if the reporter spoke to any political staff. I wanted to just back up for a minute. When the Member asked me if the reporter spoke to any of my political staff, I have one political staffperson. I am certain, but I could check with the Member and let him know that Doug Nairne did not speak to my staffperson about this particular matter. In fact, I think I can say unequivocally that Doug Nairne did not speak to this person, because if he did, this person would have spoken to me and told me. This person did not speak to me and did not tell me.

I also know that it is not the habit of my political staff to speak to reporters of any kind, whether they be from the news, from the *Free Press*, from radio, whatever. So I can unequivocally say that none of my political staff spoke to Doug Nairne.

Mr. Loewen: Well, the Minister started her answer not being sure whether her political staff had spoken to the reporter, and certainly, by the end of the conversation she had with herself, she had talked herself into believing that there is absolutely no way that her staff had talked to the reporter. I guess, I would ask her if she would, at the same time that she is attempting to get her hands on the memo and other communications and provide that to this committee, if maybe she would take a little time and check with her staff just to make sure that there is no contradiction before where she started out on her answer and where she ended up. Certainly we can appreciate that she would need to have the opportunity to check with the one political staff who works for her, and we would grant her that. Is the Minister aware of or did the Minister have any conversations, or is she aware of any conversations

regarding this issue with other political communications staff?

Ms. McGifford: You know, I think the Member for Fort Whyte is using the term "political staff." Perhaps he could define for me what he means by political staff, and then I can answer his question.

Mr. Loewen: Specifically, I am referring to any communications staff in the Premier's office, whether it was verbal or written communication with those people, but in general, my interpretation of political staff would apply to any staff hired by the Government which not part of the civil service.

Ms. McGifford: Any communications that I, as Minister, have with any of the media outlets are filtered through Cabinet communications, and I did indicate to the Member from Fort Whyte that the day after the *Free Press* story there was at least one and perhaps two television outlets in my office speaking with me, and somebody from Cabinet communications would have come down and told me that they were coming and would have generally told me what the individuals might like to talk about. Those would have been the communications I had with political staff.

Mr. Loewen: I would ask the Minister, and I certainly believe her answer earlier on that none of her departmental staff would have leaked this memo. I hope we do not get into the conversation and start splitting hairs about what is a memo and what is not a memo. I think we can take the *Free Press* at its word when it is quoting directly word for word from a memo and goes on in some detail to describe what the memo talks about. I hope we can take it at face value at this committee, that this is a memo, and I am wondering if the Minister has any knowledge that one of those Cabinet communications staff or, in fact, somebody that was not employed in the civil service leaked this document.

Ms. McGifford: The Member opposite has been asking me questions about people who report to me and their role in the art bank inventory, namely, the people in my Department. I have assured him of the actions that they have taken,

and I have assured him that they assured me that there was no leaking of any memos for their department. He asked me about the political staffperson who I cited as working with me, and I have assured him unequivocally that that person did not speak to Doug Nairne. Now the Member is asking me to comment on individuals who do not report to me, and I just cannot do that. I think these questions of people who do not report to me and what these individuals may have done or may not have done cannot be asked of me because these individuals simply do not report to me.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I mean, it seems fairly, fairly clear to me that the Minister should understand that this is more of a political issue, and I certainly, again, concur with her that it would make no sense for her departmental staff to leak this memo, so I am purely trying to satisfy my curiosity as to what the Minister did with regard to finding out who would have leaked this memo and what their motivation would have been. So I would ask the Minister quite bluntly, did she, either before this article was published in the *Free Press* or any time after, have the opportunity to identify any of their communications staff in the Premier's office that would have leaked this memo.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I have already given the Member opposite all the information I have about the art bank and Doug Nairne and who spoke to Doug Nairne and who did not and who might have and who might not have. I have already discussed all the possible permutations and combinations and staffpeople and political staffpeople and department people and et cetera, et cetera, ad nauseum. Now the Member is asking me about matters of which I have no knowledge and for which I have no responsibility and, consequently, I have no answers.

Mr. Loewen: Well, again, it is unbelievable to me that on an issue of this magnitude that has been picked up by the national press, that the Minister would sit here and tell us she has no answer. I guess it should not be unbelievable given what we hear from her in the House. She does not seem to have answers on much.

Specifically, to what she should have knowledge of, which would be her communi-

cations and her conversations with political staff, I am asking her prior to this article being printed on January 11 or subsequently, did she have discussions with her political communications staff regarding this issue, and in particular, did she attempt to find out if any of them had leaked this memo to the *Free Press*? Did she ask them?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I have no political communication staff.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I just have to apologize for not having been here for all of this discussion, but I do want to indicate that I sense that there are some very direct answers that need to be given by this minister that she has not given. We understand, those of us who have been in government and have been in Cabinet, that there is a role for Cabinet Communications to play with ministers.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

There is an issue here that was on the front pages of the paper, and indeed in the national media, and Cabinet Communications staff would have a very direct role in briefing the Minister on the issue and providing her with advice on how to deal with that issue. The very direct question that I am asking of this minister—and I would like a very direct response—would be: Did anyone from Cabinet Communications or anyone that—I guess I would say Cabinet Communications, the Cabinet Communications staff that is responsible through the Premier (Mr. Doer) to all ministers within the government of the day in the province of Manitoba, did any one of those communicators at any time have direct discussions with Doug Nairne? I will ask, first of all, prior to the article that was in the paper on January 11?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, the Member is asking the question that has been previously asked, and I have previously answered this question. I have pointed out to the Member who asked a different—well, no, who asked basically the same question, perhaps with a little bit of a different curl or a twist here and there, that I can only speak about the people who report to me,

and I have done that. If the Member wishes to ask questions about Cabinet Communications and the actions of Cabinet Communications people, the place, I am advised, to ask that question is in Executive Council.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I did not hear a direct answer to the question from the Minister. I guess we are just wanting to get to the truth of this issue. I believe members of the media want the truth, and they want this minister to answer honestly because we do know from time to time there are things that get leaked to the media. We do know that from time to time—and I mean, I trust that Doug Nairne in his comments when he says a government source said a detailed audit of the collection is about half completed, and there are already more than a hundred pieces of art unaccounted for, and a direct quote, we are in midstream, so they may even be more items missing, the source said.

My sense would be that, as a responsible minister, the Minister would ask the question of who made those comments to that reporter and who that government source was. I am asking the direct question because it would be Cabinet Communications staff that briefed the Minister. I am asking the Minister to be honest and forthright and indicate whether there were discussions with Cabinet Communications and, in fact, whether that Cabinet Communications person briefed her on discussions that he or she had had with Doug Nairne.

If a request comes to a minister for a comment by the media or from the media, there is a person in Cabinet Communications that is responsible for meeting with that minister, for discussing that issue with the Minister and for giving advice to the Minister on how to respond. My direct question again is: Who in Cabinet Communications would have had that responsibility at the time? and what kind of advice was given to the Minister? and was that Cabinet Communications person the source that the *Winnipeg Free Press* is quoting?

* (16:50)

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, this question has been asked, I think, for the third time. I have answered it twice. I will answer it again and

advise the Member that the place to ask this question is in Executive Council. I would also like to tell the Member, as I have said several times, that if the document in question came from government, I have absolutely no idea from where it came. I have no idea who submitted that document to Doug Nairne. It is simply something I have no knowledge of.

As I said, in relationship to members from Cabinet Communications, Cabinet Communications persons report to Executive Council, and it is Executive Council where these questions should be asked, not in the Estimates of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I might just ask a question of the Minister. Who would be assigned to her as the Minister of Culture, recreation and Tourism from the Cabinet Communications staff. Could she identify who that person might be?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, my department did not have any discussions with Cabinet Communications until after the 11th of January. Cabinet Communications individuals change. It is not always the same person who deals with issues. I am not sure who the Cabinet Communication person was on the 11th of January. I am trying very hard to remember the Cabinet Communication person on the 12th of January, when I was visited by the media. I will have to check and perhaps get back to the Member when I have got that information.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess if I could just ask the Minister the question of, right now does she have a Cabinet Communications officer that is presently a support to her department, and who might that be?

Ms. McGifford: The Cabinet Communication person to my department, to Culture, Heritage and Tourism, tends to be a woman named Tannis Cheadle, but it is not always Tannis Cheadle.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, while the Minister is checking information around January 11, I sort of look back to this issue. January was not all that far passed, and it certainly was not long after this Minister became the Minister of Culture, I would venture to guess that on an

issue as significant as the story that would be on the front page of the paper, the Minister would recall who might have called her office that day, because there were several media requests to speak to that Minister, that she would not recall who spoke to her from Cabinet Communications and who briefed her on this issue.

I can remember back several years to several different Cabinet Communications people that were assigned to my department, depending on where I was. I would venture to guess that I could remember back for 10 years, if there were issues, who the person was that briefed me and made the connection with the media for me.

So I am asking this minister to sort of search her memory and inform us who in fact was the connection between her office and the media? It would be obviously someone from Cabinet Communications. I am asking her now whether in fact she recollects or recalls the conversation around this issue, the briefing around this issue that she might have had, and who that might have been with?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, on January 11, I had no communications with Cabinet Communications.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, I can ask, as a result of the Minister's response, about the 12th of January?

Ms. McGifford: That is a question that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) did ask me, and I responded at that time that it is one of two persons, but I cannot remember absolutely who that individual is. So I agreed to come back with the information when I can check with those individuals and ascertain which person it is. I am not apparently as clever as the Member for River East because she has a memory that goes back for years and years and years and apparently is never wrong and fully authenticates everything, but, well, you know, I just do not have that capacity.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I have been around this table for many years, and I have to say that I have listened to ministers defend their Estimates. From time to time, issues of this nature come up and they are more political than

they are of an administrative nature, as this one is. I have listened to ministers respond to the best of their ability to questions that have been asked, and at the end of the day, everybody goes away feeling rather satisfied.

This is an issue that really perplexes me because it is a fairly straightforward issue. I think many people have been embarrassed by this issue coming out in the paper because I do not believe that any honourable member of our Legislature in this province would simply take artwork that belongs to the Province of Manitoba and run away with it. I think we all respect the fact that these works of art are entrusted to us in our offices to decorate the offices of the Province and certainly to showcase these works of art to the people of Manitoba. So I do not believe that anyone would willingly simply remove these from the offices and take them home or sell them or whatever. As a result of the article, I believe that there was some damage done to the character of us as legislators in Manitoba and also to many good, hardworking individuals who work in this building, both in the political arena and in the administrative side as well.

Mr. Chairman, it almost appears that when the new government took office, they embarked on a witch hunt, and they tried to establish issues that they could try to embarrass the former government on. I think the first one was quite evident, and that was the calling of the audit, if you like. The Premier (Mr. Doer) called it the audit. It was actually a review of the finances of the Province, which as time went on showed itself to be a big hoax. We spent, as a Province, about a half a million dollars on this review, and at the end of the day, basically the Government had to admit that indeed they were wrong in their assumptions and in their allegations with regard to the finances of the province.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

This is another issue where a minister decided that, for whatever reason, she would try to lay blame on the former administration for missing artworks in this building. It is curious that all of a sudden a memo was leaked to the press, and a story was written pointing the finger at an administration previous to this government

for the missing artworks. But I think as time goes on, again the truth comes out slowly, but the damage is done.

So we have a responsibility, as members of the Opposition, to ask the questions that we are asking of the Minister. I know the Minister is uncomfortable, and she is squirming and twisting with regard to coming clean on the issues of the questions that are being asked of her, but that is too bad. I do not feel sorry for the Minister at all because she has a responsibility to the people of Manitoba and to this Legislature. That responsibility is that she must tell the truth to this Legislature and to the people of this province with regard to her involvement in blackening the eye of many people who are hard workers, and who work for this province, and who have a pride in this province. Unfortunately, she is having difficulty in accepting that responsibility. The non-answers that we have received in the course of just this day suggest to me that she has something to hide. Certainly if anybody were to read the transcript of *Hansard* today, I think that that would be very evident.

* (17:00)

So we will continue in our pursuit of finding out exactly how this memo was leaked, who was responsible for it. Even when we asked the Minister such straightforward questions as to whom she talked to in the communications area, she simply has not been able to give us any response, any straightforward response. I mean, if you have two different communicators from the Premier's office whom you talk to, surely you have to remember that. It is not as though it has been five years ago. This is just a few short months ago. Surely a topic of this importance—you would have to remember whom you spoke with.

Now the Minister says she will get back to us—fair enough. We will await that response when she does get back to us. But this whole issue certainly begs a lot of questions to be asked of the Minister with regard to her involvement in giving the impression, not only to people in this province, but, indeed, beyond this province, that somebody was taking this artwork, was stealing this artwork, and all of a sudden it just

coincidentally happened at a time when government changed.

Mr. Chairman, I have to tell you that there is artwork around this building that, from time to time, does get damaged, and so therefore it is taken from an office. In my own office a frame of a picture came apart over time. Nobody was tampering with it. What happened to it, nobody could explain. But that piece of artwork was taken away from my office and was away from the office for a number of months before it was returned. But, when it was returned, it was returned repaired. Now how much of the artwork the Minister says is missing could be in that category? How much of that artwork—she alluded to a piece of work that had been broken in her office. There is other artwork that could have been broken.

But to leave the impression that indeed the former administration may be responsible for the missing artwork is something that is intolerable. I think that that requires an apology from the Minister, not only to the members of the Opposition, but to the people of Manitoba so that indeed an issue like this can be put to bed once and for all. I still say that we need some direct and straightforward answers from the Minister with regard to the missing artwork. Why was there a memo leaked to the *Free Press*? Why was there a memo prepared to be leaked to the *Free Press*? The Minister can say: Well, I have no knowledge of it, but it came from her department—not her department necessarily in the administrative side, but indeed from her office, from her office of her political staff or from somewhere in that area, there had to be a memo leaked to the *Free Press*; otherwise, the story would never have got out.

Now, if she says that it did not come from her office, well, is she suggesting that it came then from the Premier's communication staff? Is that what she is suggesting? Because she is the Minister who has taken responsibility for this. Therefore, we should have some answers with regard to the issues that revolve around the missing artwork.

An Honourable Member: She said that she would get back to you.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Chairman, the Member from Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) says: She told you that she would get back to you--on one issue only. But there are other issues which she has avoided to answer. She says: Well, I have provided you the answer two and three and four times. Well, she has not. She has avoided the answers. Certainly the critic for Culture, Heritage and Tourism has posed questions with regard to this issue which she has not received the answers for satisfactorily. The Leader, the Interim Leader of our party, has posed questions which she has not received answers for. I just listened to the Member of Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) pose a number of questions, almost an afternoon of questions, to which we have not had any responses. As the Minister responsible for the Department in Estimates, I think it is her responsibility to answer these questions straightforwardly. Now, if she wishes to play games, I guess we can sit here for a long time on this particular line, and keep asking the questions until we get some answers. Yes, we may ask one question two and three times to try and ensure that in fact the Minister does give us the response.

Mr. Chairman, I am greatly disappointed in the way the dialogue has gone. I am greatly disappointed that this minister who is relatively new to her portfolio, relatively new to the Department, relatively new as a minister, wants to play these kinds of games. You would think that in her first set of defending the Estimates that she would endeavour to be straightforward and truthful and ensure that all of the information is put on the table.

So, Mr. Chairman, it does give us a lot of concern. I think it gives the people of Manitoba a great deal of concern in terms of how the responses are. Indeed, perhaps she thinks that the issue has gone away and should be forgotten. Well, I can tell you it has not gone away, and it has not been forgotten.

In my own constituency, people have asked me: Well, Len, how much artwork did you take with you out of your office? It was an embarrassing situation for me because any artwork that belonged to the Province was left with the Province. It made me feel as though I had to, all of a sudden, ask people to come into

my offices and into my accommodation and show them that, in fact, I had no artwork that belonged to the Province. It is an impression that is left back home in the constituency; it is an impression that is left with the people who do not work in this building, who are just ordinary citizens of Manitoba who feel that indeed there are actions like that taking place, that it is not just. It gives all of us as politicians a black eye because it shows that, perhaps, we cannot be trusted with the property of the Province, and that is wrong. That is very wrong, and so it takes a while for us to get over issues like that.

Although the Minister may feel that it is somewhat trivial, it is not. It is not trivial at all. As a matter of fact, it even spills over into the schools. Because of my visitation of schools, I can tell you that students in our school systems were asking questions about the missing artwork. It is not something that is only contained to the city or contained to the people who are connected with this building. It is much broader than that, and, indeed, it impacts on many more people than just the people within this building or who are associated with government. I think there are legitimate questions that are posed, but we need to have some legitimate answers to those questions as well.

As I say, I think the whole intent was to try to blacken the eye of us who were in government before, and who had left government, but indeed more than that just happened. I think it gave a black eye to all legislators in this province. I think it was a bit of a witch hunt by the Government and by the Minister because she did not spend enough time in researching whether or not, in fact, this artwork was truly missing, but whether this was just a miscalculation or whether much of the artwork was overlooked.

You know, is it not curious that all of a sudden there were a hundred-and-some pieces of artwork missing, but all of a sudden they were found. They were not missing at all. Yet the report that was given to the paper said that there were a hundred-and-some pieces of artwork missing. Why did we not do our homework, if we are a new government, to ensure that, before the story went out, these pieces of artwork were, in fact, missing, or were they just not accounted

for or were they in other offices? As a matter of fact, the Minister herself indicated that there were pieces of artwork that were moved within offices, from an outer office to an inner office. Well, I am sorry. I cannot accept that as being a legitimate excuse for a story that ran and blackened the eye of many people.

I think that there was a responsibility before the Minister made any statements, before the Minister allowed this kind of a leak of a memo, to make sure that there was a double-check to ensure that in fact those pieces of art were not missing, but she did not do that.

* (17:10)

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, it seems that the Minister was almost too anxious to allow for this kind of information to get out, and for the moment it made her look like she was the absolute best steward of this kind of work in the Province. But, indeed, I think she herself today gets a black eye because of the fact that most of this artwork, except for the four pieces that she says are still missing, has been located and it did not take a trip anywhere. It is within the confines of this building and the property of the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Chairman, it is with sadness that we have to face issues like this. As I say, it is the second issue that we have had to deal with in this way. For a new government, I think, it must be somewhat embarrassing because the first issue, of course, had to do with the audit or the review of the finances of the Province. Indeed, when one read the paper, one would have thought that the former administration had really done some harm to this province in the terms of debt that it had left the people of Manitoba. When the air cleared, and when all of the information came in—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having some difficulty hearing the speaker. If you wish to carry on a private conversation, could I ask you to do so away from the table. Would you please allow the speaker to speak. Thank you.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. When the air had cleared, and when all the information was in, and, indeed, when the

audited statements of the Province were tabled, we saw how erroneous the statements of the Minister of Finance, the Premier of the day, members of government were. In fact, it showed very clearly that the books of this province were left in good order, that there was no need to call for this witch hunt of an audit, that the Premier called an audit which was simply a review, and that we had actually wasted another half-million of taxpayer dollars in the Province of Manitoba.

This is the second issue, Mr. Chairman, and I think it is a bit of an embarrassment for the Province. I think it is an embarrassment for the Minister, and I think she has shown that this afternoon in her non-response to the questions that have been posed of her by members of the Opposition. I simply ask the Minister to save a little bit of face, to respond to the questions straightforwardly and to at least apologize to the people of Manitoba that indeed the actions that were taken did not need to be taken. The actions could have been, yes, we should find the artwork. there is no question about that, where it is, but it did not need to become a media issue.

The memo did not need to be leaked and, indeed, this could have been done. If, in fact, after a proper audit of the artwork had been done and there were still some art pieces missing, it was simply a matter of communicating with all members of the Legislature on both sides of the House, and the Liberal Member, to see whether or not anyone had any knowledge of any of these pieces of artwork so that they could be returned to their rightful place.

But, in all of this, I would like to ask the Minister in her work on this issue—Mr. Chairman, apparently now we are down to just a very few items that have not been located. I would like to know from the Minister whether or not the pieces of artwork that are missing, are they pieces of artwork that may be broken which may have been taken for repair or, in fact, are they pieces of artwork that she knows are not in this building and have left the building or the property of the province?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could request a three-minute break?

* (17:20)

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the Committee to have a three-minute break? [Agreed] The Committee will recess for three minutes.

The Committee recessed at 5:20p.m.

The Committee resumed at 5:23p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Our break is complete, and our committee will proceed with their work.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I believe the Member opposite had asked me a question about numbers of pieces of art that were unaccounted for and whether some of them could have been broken. I think that the particular comments of the Member opposite, and this particular question, once again, point out the problems with somebody who pops in and out of committee as he sees fit and, therefore, is not apprised of answers that have been given earlier in the day, because I have repeatedly said that there were initially 104 pieces of art which were mislocated.

I have repeatedly said that the day after this story in the *Free Press*, for which I take no responsibility, I have no responsibility, my department has no responsibility, but, nonetheless, the day after this story in the *Free Press*, both the Director of the Arts Branch and myself assured people from the media that we believed that these pieces of art would be located and that we stressed again and again that these pieces of art were only mislocated.

I do think it is unfortunate that some MLAs, some individuals, chose to disregard the good advice of Don Leitch, former Clerk of the Executive Council. Mr. Leitch had advised everybody, I understand, before the election and then after the election, not to move works of art from their offices, that works of art went with the office and not with the individual, so that if an individual left an office, that individual left without those works of art. Those works of art were not for individuals to take with him or to take with her, that those works of art belonged in the office—not that they could never be moved from office to office, but that there is a process

and procedure, and that process and procedure should have been honoured. If it were honoured, I am sure that the quandary would not have developed, that when we did our inventory, we would not have found 104 pieces of art mislocated. If the Member who popped in late in the day had popped in earlier in the day when the same questions were asked by members from his caucus, he would not have had to take up the very valuable time of Estimates in order to ask questions that have already been asked and have already been answered. In fact, heaven knows, we might get on to some more interesting question, some questions of policy.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Russell, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I have been attempting to be very respectful to the Minister. There are members on both sides of this Committee who come and go depending on their schedules and depending on appointments that they have outside of this Committee. I do not make reference to members on the opposite side of the House who are either present in the House or are not present in the House. I think it is parliamentary custom that we respect that procedure and that protocol, but again, this member, and I am going to get a little critical of her now because she displayed that very character when she was in opposition and she continues to do that in office as a minister, when she disrespects the rules of the House and the Committee, Mr. Chairman. I ask you on a point of order to call her to order to ensure that she follows the protocol and does not make reference to people who are here and who are not.

Mr. Chairperson: On the point of order, the Member for Dauphin-Roblin.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I have been listening with a great deal of interest to the questions coming from the other side of the table, and I want to note that the Minister has been answering the questions. The members may not like the answers that they give. They may not fit into the model that they want to hear from the Minister, but to suggest that the Minister is

being anything less than up front and honest and respectful of the rights of people in Opposition, I think, is stretching it on the part of the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). The Minister has taken it upon herself to commit to the members that she will come back with answers once she consults and comes back with accurate information. I think that is a very mature way to approach this. Just because the answers do not fit into what the Opposition members want to hear, I do not think that is a reason to go on a point of order, and I think they need to understand that the Minister is being respectful and is trying her best to answer the questions.

Mr. Chairperson: On the point of order, the Member for Seine River.

Mrs. Dacquay: With the greatest respect to the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), I did not hear him speak to the point of order. The point of order raised by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was that no reference should be made to the attendance or lack of same by any member. That is a standing House rule, and I would ask that you deal with the matter raised.

Mr. Chairperson: On the point of order, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Chair, on the same point of order, what I want to point out is that the same questions that were addressed by this minister were addressed earlier in the day by another minister. I suppose, if the Opposition wants to have a series of ministers coming in, asking the same question over and over, and that is what they want to do with the Estimates of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, I suppose, that is the choice of the Opposition. In that case, I will stand corrected. It does not seem to me to be a wise use of time, but, heavens, I am not the Tory strategist.

* (17:30)

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the Member for that. On the point of order, the Honourable Member does have a point of order. Members are not to refer to the absence or presence of members. There are numerous Chairpersons' rulings on this matter, so I caution all members on this.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: Well, I thank you for your advice, Mr. Chair, and to continue with the same answer that I have made several times this afternoon, I am nearing the completion of my answer. I believe that the Member opposite asked me specifically whether a certain of the still three missing pieces of art could be subject to breakage, and I understand that two of those missing pieces of art are ceramic pieces. I think I told the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) earlier in the day that staff think that perhaps or believe that perhaps or opine that perhaps these two pieces of ceramic could indeed have been broken, and that if they were broken, somebody who did not understand that there is a stamp on the bottom that has the government art bank number, somebody who did not understand that and did not understand that he or she should probably notify the government art bank that this piece had been broken might have merely thrown the piece away and thought end of piece, end of story. Now I think I also brought to the attention of the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), and I think I brought it to the attention of the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) yesterday, that I know breakage has occurred because one of them occurred in my office. Now we did know in this case that it needed to be reported to the government art bank. Indeed we did that, and we were very fortunate to obtain a piece in lieu of the one that had been broken. I have explained this several times. I am happy to explain it several more if that will be entertaining or helpful to members opposite. I leave it to them.

Mr. Derkach: We are at a point now where there is one piece of artwork that has not been accounted for out of the alleged 104 pieces of artwork that were missing. [interjection] Initially, how many? [interjection] Oh, initially 400. Well, Mr. Chair, I think we see what kind of a sham this has been. The Member should be able to identify for us which particular piece of artwork is missing.

So I would like to ask the Minister: Which particular piece of artwork is now missing from the art collection of the province?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I will just review information once more. That is on the record, but, as I said, if members want to ask the same

question many times, I am prepared to give the answer many times. If members think this is a good way to conduct the Estimates for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, well, far be it for me to inform them otherwise. So, let me just review with the Member for Russell.

In November-December, well, let me back up one step here. Last August, there was an inventory of art in the Legislature. This was conducted before the election. After the election, in October, it seemed to me that as the new Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism—and by the way I did not know at this point, I want to advise the Member for Russell, that an inventory had been conducted in August. I felt that it would be a good idea to conduct an audit of the Government art bank, so that I had an idea—

An Honourable Member: She initiated it.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I initiated it, the Member is quite right. I initiated the audit because I wanted to know what was there, what artists were not represented, what were all this kind of thing. So, yes, I asked that an audit be initiated.

The second audit, that is the audit that was conducted in October-November, revealed that there were 104 pieces of art that were not accounted for, that the individuals conducting the audit could not locate. Now, I am advised by staff that initially there were over 400 pieces which were moved without the appropriate authorization. By the time that story appeared in the media, my staff through their diligence, through their care and presumably also with the co-operation of individuals who work in this building, had taken the list of unaccounted pieces down to 104 pieces that were not accounted for. Okay, so, we are several steps along in this saga, Mr. Chair.

So, here we are, we are down to 104 pieces. It is apparently January at this time, the audit work continues. The story appears in the *Free Press* the day after both my staff and myself are very clear in declaring publicly and to the press that we believe the pieces of art will be located, that they are at that point merely mislocated. We continue the search for pieces of art. Various MLAs and presumably other persons who work in this building now understand that the Govern-

ment art bank is not going to work. It has not worked very well for 11 years, because apparently there was not a lot of accountability or any audits or anything going on, but suddenly the message is there that it is going to work, that people just do not drag art from room to room without any kind of accountability. So, people actually respond. This is good news. By the time this process finished, we are down to four pieces of art unaccounted for. I think this might have been a date sometime in March. At the end of March, we were down to four pieces of missing art.

Now, yesterday, in this very room, we were having this very discussion at the same time of day. In fact, yesterday, at about the same time, I did in fact read the list that I am soon going to read, so let me proceed now. It is the end of March, there are four pieces—[*interjection*] Yes, the Member for Seine River is quite right. Yesterday at this time we were voting. We were not voting; we were preparing to vote.

So, at the end of March 2000, there were four pieces of work still to be accounted for. They were: one ceramic sculpture by Jordan Van Sewell entitled *Western Hour Continues*, last located in room 166 in the Legislative Building, office of the former Minister of Education. One ceramic wall piece—see, I would like to point out to the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) that ceramic pieces do indeed hang on walls. Here we have it, one ceramic wall piece by Jordan Van Sewell, *Still Life With Plums*, last inventoried in room 170, Legislative Building, office of the former Minister of Urban Affairs; one wall carving by Keith Morrisseau, [*phonetic*] *Shield of Peace*, previously located in room 170, Legislative Building, office of the former Minister of Urban Affairs; and one Kathy Koop beige vase, over 15 years old and could have been broken. We also have a duplicate of it. It was last inventoried in room 226, Legislative Building.

* (17:40)

An Honourable Member: Where is that, whose office is that?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I have that information. I have again put it on record. [*interjection*]

Heavens no, I am happy to supply that information.

But it was yesterday whilst I read this list that suddenly the former Minister of Urban Affairs popped up and declared that he thinks he has one of these pieces in his office. I think it was the Jordan—indeed, it was that ceramic wall hanging piece by Jordan Van Sewell, *Still Life With Plums*. So that piece was accounted for, addressing the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). I know he has expressed interest in the unaccounted pieces.

We believe that the Kathy Koop piece, which is over 15 years old, and that may or may not make it more valuable, but we do have another piece that could have been broken. We do not know about the ceramic sculpture by Jordan Van Sewell, *Western Hour Continues*. That was last located in the office of the Minister of Education, but perhaps it could have been broken. I do read that Mr. Van Sewell's works have an unfortunate history of breaking. The wall carving by Keith Morrisseau [*phonetic*], previously located in room 170, Legislative Building, office of the former Minister of Urban Affairs, I believe, still has not been located.

Now I believe the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was also curious about the occupants of room 226, room 226 being the last habitat of the Kathy Koop vase over 15 years old, which could have been broken, and we do have the duplicate of it. Anyway, the Kathy Koop vase over 15 years old of which we have the duplicate was last inventoried in room 226 Legislative Building, and here are the occupants of that room—now I do not have names—well, no, I do in one case. Government Services was in that room in 1988. In 1988 to 1996, the Liberal caucus occupied that space. In 1996-1998, Tom Carson occupied that space. In 1998-1999, Hugh Eliasson occupied that space. In 1999, Communications occupied that space. My understanding is—I am just going to check with staff—this piece we have not seen it since—*[interjection]*

Yes, staff advised me we have not seen this piece since 1998. So, Mr. Chair, this is the story, the unfolding of the process, our slowly pinning down pieces, looking in cupboards, behind

bookshelves, wherever people may, in their relocation, have placed their art. Apparently, I understand it is possible that the Minister for Urban Affairs had his particular ceramic piece in a box and that it was part of his relocation. I think very highly of the former Minister for Urban Affairs, so it is too bad that he did not let the government art bank know that he was going to relocate this art. Then we would have known where it was. It would have saved hours of labour.

Anyway, perhaps we are all going to learn as a result of this exercise to be more respectful of the government art bank, and, if we take down a piece, to notify the government art bank; to return it posthaste to the government art bank; to just be careful with these pieces because, as members of the Legislative Assembly, we have a commitment to the public good. The art collection is held for the public. It is paid for by public money. It is a living memorial of art that has been produced in this province. I think it is incumbent on us to treat it respectfully.

Now, two of the steps that are being taken to expedite the process of the respectful treatment of all art objects are the appointment of an individual in each office to be the custodian of art in that office so that there is an individual who is responsible. So, if there is an office that decides there is a piece of art that they would like to send back to the art bank and perhaps get something else, or if, as sometimes happens, a colleague comes into a member's office and really falls in love with the piece and these members want to exchange pieces of art so that they can see something different for a while, appreciate different styles, different media, et cetera, that will certainly be possible. But the custodian of the art in the various offices will have the responsibility to contact the government art bank to notify those people of what is being done so that we will be up-to-date on where the various pieces of art are.

That is one of the measures we are undertaking. The second one is to prepare some information on how to best keep art because art, of course, is subject to decay, art is fragile. Some pieces are more fragile than others. I think it behooves us all to know that we need to treat art

respectfully. So we will be providing some materials on how art can best be treated.

In response, if I might summarize for the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), the short story is when the process was initially started, there were 400 pieces of art that had been relocated. By the time the first stage of the inventory was complete, we had gone from 400 to 104 pieces. Now apparently we are down to three, two of which we think might be broken or could possibly be broken. I do not know for sure. We will endeavour to track down all three pieces, and one piece, one wooden wall hanging. I hope that clarifies matters for the Member for Russell.

Mr. Derkach: Well, some interesting revelations in the Minister's response today as compared to yesterday. Yesterday the Minister could not remember who authorized the audit.

An Honourable Member: Not true.

Mr. Derkach: As a matter of fact, when she was asked about the news release, she said, yes, "there was a news release I believe," she says, "and what might be released and what might be construed from the release, as the Member knows from her experience, are sometimes different." Then she said to another question: "To be absolutely honest, I cannot remember, but I can check into it for the Member." Now, here is the Minister who initiates the audit and then cannot remember if she issued the news release. Now that is quite unbelievable in this day and age. This has not happened five years ago. This happened a few months ago.

Then she is quick to point to members who were in government before that they should know exactly where every piece of artwork is. She also said in her response just now that she knew in November that there were not 400 pieces of artwork missing, in fact, that number was only 104. Yet in the comments in the paper on January 12, she makes reference to 400 pieces of artwork missing.

* (17:50)

Is she really trying to be truthful with Manitobans and with the question she is trying

to leave on the minds of people who are reading the newspapers? Mr. Chairman, I am sorry, this minister has tried to mislead the people of the province in terms of the numbers of pieces of artwork that have been missing.

Now, Mr. Chairman, after this extensive audit, and it is my understanding that through our tenure of government there were periodic audits made on the artwork that is in the building. As a matter of fact, I think the Minister just alluded to the fact that it was 1988 that a piece of artwork was inventoried and had gone—*[interjection]* It does show in fact there are periodic audits that are being carried out by the department staff of artwork that is in the building, and that is the way it should be. That is the responsibility of the staff of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Mr. Chairman, we have gone through this whole charade from September of last year when the Government took office and created the impression in the minds of some that, indeed, former government ministers had absconded with huge numbers of artwork. As a matter of fact, in the paper it also makes reference on January 11 to a member who was a former minister. In another case, the memo says a departing minister has claimed the art in his office as part of his personal collection and removed it from the building. The province is still trying to determine the owner of the art.

Mr. Chairman, I have to tell you, when I was minister with the former administration, from the day I came into the office and throughout my tenure as minister, I had a total of 14 pieces of personal artwork that I had brought into the offices to decorate the offices that I was occupying. Those are personal pieces and I took them home when we were not in government, but no one ever accused me of taking provincial artwork. In this case, I am not the identified minister. It is another individual who took his own personal artwork, but yet the impression is left that this member may have taken this artwork. Now where did that memo come from? Who leaked that memo? What was the intent of the memo? Indeed, this gives the impression that somebody is taking artwork that does not belong to him or her.

The Minister says now we have identified a person in the office to look after the artwork. In my offices, while I was Minister of Education and then Minister of Rural Development, my secretary always maintained a list of the artwork that belonged to the Province. So there was an inventory of artwork that belonged to the Province and a list of artwork that belonged to me personally, so that if at any time for some unknown reason I did not return to the office, there would be a record of what belonged to me and what belonged to the Province.

This is not a difficult task. Had the Minister taken some time to investigate these issues before she ordered the audit as she has now claimed to do, she would have found that indeed there were not 400 pieces of artwork missing but indeed far fewer. Perhaps a little bit of investigation done into where this artwork was would have revealed that in some instances—and I can say this in all honesty that I did not pack the boxes in my office. Those are packed by staff in my office and removed. As a matter of fact there was an article that came to my office, when I was moved into opposition, which belonged to the office I had left. I returned it because it did not belong to me. But I did not pack it; somebody else had packed it. When I opened the box, it was there, and I returned it.

To leave the impression that something untoward was done by people who were leaving the offices as ministers and as government is certainly wrong. It is wrongheaded. It certainly embarrasses all of us as legislators, and I believe that the Minister owes an apology to the members of the Legislature for creating that impression. For her to say that, well, I think there was a news release, but I am not sure, I cannot remember, I mean, give me a break. You cannot have that bad a memory to know that you did not issue a release. You certainly had to talk to somebody about a news release. You just did not pluck it out of the air, or someone did not do it without your signature at the bottom. I do not know what the Minister is trying to say. Is she trying to say that somebody in her department issued the news release on her behalf and that is why she cannot remember? I mean, this is quite appalling.

In several instances, the article on January 11 makes reference to the memo that was leaked.

It talks about ministers taking artwork. What kind of a memo was this? Was this a memo from the department staff to the Minister? Was it a memo from political staff to the Minister? What kind of a memo was this, and who leaked this memo? Certainly, I would like to ask the Minister to table that memo. Obviously, because she ordered the audit, she must have some knowledge of the memo, and I would ask the Minister if she is prepared to table that memo.

Ms. McGifford: The Member opposite has raised several questions, most of which I answered this afternoon, and it is unfortunate that he did not hear them. I addressed the question of the press release earlier this afternoon and pointed out to members opposite that indeed there was no press release under my name. There was no press release under my name, so let me make that point to the Member.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Russell, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: So my question, Mr. Chairman, was to have the Minister really come clean as to whether or not she issued a release or not, because yesterday she said that there was a release. Today she said there was no release. Now, would she please make up her mind, whether there was or was not a release?

Mr. Chairperson: There is no point of order. There is just a dispute of the facts.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was saying, yesterday I did say I did not know if there was a press release because I did not remember, but I have checked and I can confirm that there was no press release. There was no press release on this issue under my name. Now I have heard members talk about a memo. We have also discussed the memo in a great deal of detail this afternoon. My staff are quite unclear as to what this memo could possibly be. I do not know what this memo is.

An Honourable Member: Blame it on your staff.

Ms. McGifford: Now the Member opposite is implying that I am blaming this on my staff, so I would like to be very clear that I am extremely supportive of my staff. I am very well served by my staff. I think very highly of my staff, and I have complete faith in my staff. I have spoken to my staff to see if they have any idea as to what this memo is. They do not know what the memo is, I do not know what the memo. The only place where the word "memo" is used is in a column in the *Free Press*, which appeared January 11, 2000, I believe, and apparently this particular column was written by Doug Nairne. The word "memo" appears in this column. I do not know what Doug Nairne means by "memo." We had a discussion earlier this afternoon because I think "memo" can mean various things to various people under different circumstances. To some people in some context it is a word used loosely referring to any piece of communication in writing. I do not know what Mr. Nairne meant by it, and if members opposite are anxious to know more about this memo, I think perhaps they might speak to Mr. Nairne. He seems to be the linchpin in this whole discussion. I was not interviewed for Mr. Nairne's article.

I did not issue a press release on this matter. In fact, what my department did was, and what I did was, respond on January 12 and assure the press and the public of Manitoba in our responses that we believed that the pieces of art in question were pieces of art that had been mislocated and, as we continued to look for those pieces of art, and as members and MLAs continued to respond to the situation by saying, oh, I moved a couple of pieces of art and I did not inform the art bank, that all pieces of art would sooner or later be accounted for. Indeed, what we thought, and what we said, on January 12 has come about because, Mr. Chair, as you have heard repeatedly time and time again, we are now down to three pieces of art, which have not been accounted for: two pieces, which are ceramic; and one piece, which is a wooden wall hanging.

Being here and having the mike does give me the opportunity to once again point out the importance of preserving the integrity of the government art bank, and the duty of MLAs to remind art bank people when a piece of art leaves one office and moves to another office. I do want to also say, again, repeat again, that in

September 1999, before the election, Mr. Leitch sent a communication to all MLAs reminding all MLAs who have been MLAs that they should not move pieces of art from their office without notifying the government art bank. Indeed, as I have said several times, the piece of art is associated with that particular office and not with the occupant of that office. So, if an occupant moves and takes the piece of art, that occupant—really the occupant should not do it, but if the occupant does do that, it is at least incumbent upon that person to notify the government art bank that he or she is doing so. This was part of the communication from Mr. Leitch, the former Clerk of the Executive Council, that went out to all MLAs alerting them and reminding them that they had a responsibility to Manitobans and to the government art bank. After the election, Mr. Leitch reiterated that communication so that communication went out one more time to MLAs.

I appreciate the Member for Russell's point. His point was that he had several pieces of art in his office that belonged to him, and I gather since staff packed his art inadvertently a piece of art [interjection] Well, then maybe I do not appreciate the Member from Russell's point, because I thought he was talking about a piece of art. I can appreciate that a piece of art could have been in some instances, and in many instances was, moved inadvertently because people, certain MLAs, had made an arbitrary decision, I suppose, not to take the Clerk of the Executive Council's advice seriously, or the communication had not come to them or slipped through their fingers or they had forgotten. These things happen. Human beings are subject to foibles.

So I do not quite know why members took pieces of art with them that should have remained in offices, but apparently it happened. It took a great deal of trouble to track down the pieces. Now the pieces have been tracked down, except for the three pieces that I have referred to, two of which are ceramics and could have been broken. Apparently the ceramic pieces produced by a certain individual have been known to break before. One piece of art, which is a wooden wall hanging, that piece of art, Mr. Chair, remains missing. I think my department has done spectacularly well, and I think we owe them gratitude. I would like to thank them for the work they have done and for being here

today and sitting through some of this repetitive questioning because I do not suppose it has been a lot of fun. So I think I—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The time being 6 p.m., the Committee shall rise.

LABOUR

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): 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 for the Department of Labour.

Consideration of these Estimates left off on page 129 of the Estimates book, Resolution 11.1 Labour Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$500,100. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Madam Chair, I want to go back to yesterday afternoon, because we were rudely interrupted as the bells started to ring. I would like to go back and clarify some points, if I may. I thank the Minister for the information that she was starting to attempt to give as the bells rang, and I just wanted to continue on.

I was asking, Madam Chair, would the Minister inform this committee as to whether or not every aspect of the COLA would be under the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) or the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): My understanding is that for the Teachers' Retirement Fund and the Civil Service Superannuation Fund, those two pension funds are under the Pension Commission; of course, they have to follow the legislation. But in those two cases, the employer's portion is not required, and as we know, they are not funded for the employer's portion. There is a huge unfunded liability in both of those funds. So, therefore, because they are exempt from those regulations under The Pension Act, the Pension Commission has no control or authority for those two pension plans, for any of the elements of COLA. It does not

need any minimum standard because of the uniqueness of those two pension plans in the legislation.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you very much for your clarification. Madam Chair, I want to go back to Activity Identification, if I could. I just have a couple of more questions that I wanted to ask this minister. The first one is: How many new plans are actually registered right now in the province?

Ms. Barrett: The material is being put together, and as soon as I receive it I will bring it to the Committee.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister please clarify to this committee what would cause a pension plan to go out of compliance? What are the major aspects of it that would cause it to go out?

Ms. Barrett: Yesterday, and I think the Member for Fort Garry may very well not have been in attendance at that point, a question was asked about the minimum standards that the Pension Commission looks at when they review all of the pension plans. Those would be the areas that are most likely for pension plans to be in non-compliance. Most of the non-compliance issues are issues not of overt choice to not be compliant but ignorance of the rules or regulations or oversight or those kinds of things. They deal with issues such as vesting, locking in, termination or retirement, spousal elements, solvency in funding and the investment section. So those are the major areas of minimum standards, and those are the areas that are looked at to ensure compliance.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, when going through a pension administration review, what exactly is entailed in that practice or in that process?

Ms. Barrett: I believe I answered that question again yesterday, so I will try and recall what I said yesterday. Basically, the Pension Commission staff review all of the pensions annually, because they have to file annually. Then the staff does four or five on-site audits of pension plans. They are quite intensive, as you can imagine, and what they do there is they go and look at all of the supporting documents that are not filed

with the Pension Commission but are on file with the plan administrator and the trustees, et cetera. So a plan would be audited if there was a flag that was raised in any way by basically looking at the minimum standards, basically looking at what happens in the annual report, the annual filing, and they will pick four or five of these a year to do and then go on-site to actually do much more in-depth analysis.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister explain what would cause a red flag to go up? What are some examples of things that would cause a red flag to go up in the pension plan?

Ms. Barrett: Things such as late filings, employee complaints. There are times when employees have questions about their plan. As I stated yesterday, if the person contacts the Pension Commission and they can prove that they are a member of a plan, then the Pension Commission can answer detailed questions about their plan. Sometimes those questions will lead to complaints, or, I did not know that was the situation and I do not like that. So if there is one, maybe, but if there is a pattern of complaints, that would be something that could possibly trigger a more substantial audit.

But I would suggest that the Pension Commission staff of which there are really only three project officers, they are very careful about, No. 1, monitoring those annual reports and answering the questions and talking with people ahead of time to try and alleviate as much as possible the situation getting to a point where they feel they need to do an on-site audit. Those are the kinds of things. Solvency and funding issues, as you can understand, would be another area where you would want to take a look at it further.

Mrs. Smith: Could this minister please outline the actual Pension Commission, like, who is that precisely made up of? Let us say, for instance, there was a complaint that came forward, who would be at the receiving end specifically? Would it be a number of people? Would it be a committee? Could you please clarify that for me?

Ms. Barrett: As you will see on page 31, when you look at the number of staff, there are five

staff in the Pension Commission. So it is a very small unit. The three professional/technical people are the analysts, and they each have their caseload—that is my social worker. I do not know what Pension Commission calls it, but I call it caseload of each of the plans. So, if a call comes in, the admin support person could flip through and say, well, that pension plan goes to policy analyst A. So then they would transfer the call or the complaint or the question or the letter to that policy analyst. So they each have their own grouping of pension plans that they are responsible for.

Mrs. Smith: I thank the Minister for her information. Madam Chair, could this minister please elaborate? I understand there are 75 administrative reviews to be completed by March 31, 2001. Have those reviews begun yet, and who is involved in those reviews?

Ms. Barrett: Yes. The administrative reviews are basically reviews done by one of the policy analysts looking at compliance with the locked-in provisions of the pension plans that are listed here or the pension offerings that are listed here that are administered by financial institutions. So what she is doing is she is going through those 75 plans and checking back with people who have terminated employment and seeing if they are actually getting the money, doing, I would imagine, a spot check to just make sure that the compliance is being carried out by the financial institutions. There were 75 for last year. Last year there were 75 audits done and this year there will be 75 audits done. She is just beginning that process.

Mrs. Smith: So to clarify, there is one person doing all these 75 reviews? Could the Minister clarify that?

Ms. Barrett: This is not an onsite audit. It is a desktop audit.

* (14:50)

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister please clarify, when these reviews are completed, who does this reviewer or this person report to? Does he or she report to the Minister in charge. What is the process that happens there?

Ms. Barrett: The policy analyst would report to the acting director of the Pension Commission, as they would report all of their activities to her. Then the process would be if there were any policy issues that needed to be discussed or anything then the acting director would call, contact the Minister's office, but it reports to that position.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, there are going to be between three and eight public education sessions that will be delivered to financial institutions, plan sponsors, plan members and groups interested in pension issues. Could the Minister please clarify which financial institutions, which plan sponsors and groups this education session would apply to?

Ms. Barrett: These between three and eight public education sessions are an estimate based on past experience and basically they are requests that come in for workshop or discussion or coming to meet with a group. Organizations that have had this kind of contact in the past include Investors Group, ScotiaMcLeod, the Canadian Pension and Benefit Conference. Actually anybody that would have a direct link to the pension issue can call and say we would like for one of your analysts or yourself—acting superintendent, I put on the record wrong information about the title. So that is the estimate and it certainly—if other groups more than eight wanted to go, I am sure the Pension Commission would be delighted because the more you provide information ahead of time the less likely you are going to have to do in-depth audits at the end, or any of that sort of thing, so it is something they are more than happy to do.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you, Madam Minister. That is very helpful. Just to clarify, in other words, Madam Chair, what is happening here is that these education sessions occur at the request of the financial institutions and the members who want. It is not actually initiated by the Minister or the Department of Labour or in some cases, is it initiated by the ministry?

Ms. Barrett: Well, directly it is an initiation by the stakeholder of a request for coming out and speaking or dialoguing or whatever the format would be. All pension plan administrators are made aware as they file their reports and discuss

issues with the analysts that, of course, the Pension Commission is prepared to come out. It is a bit of both, but the direct initiation is done by the stakeholder that wants the Pension Commission to come to them.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, the emphasis, of course, in the administrative reviews is on the use of risk management mediation and audit. Could the Minister please clarify exactly what is meant by risk management? What would that entail in the pension plan itself?

Ms. Barrett: Basically, the risk management, I think you could say that that is one of the major focuses of the work of the Pension Commission. That is going back to those flags, those minimum standards that we spoke of earlier. Those are the kinds of indicators of whether or not a pension plan is being managed in a way that reduces the risk of the plan not being able to provide the benefits that it has contracted with its beneficiaries.

* (15:00)

So there are a number of different elements that go into that risk management. What is their investment portfolio? Is it making a return that is going to allow them to provide the benefits for the number of employees they have, with the actuarial projections that they have, with the benefits that they have? I would imagine that the Pension Commission could even look at the kind of operation that is there. Is this a high-risk Venture Capital thing, or is this a staid, stolid, been-around-for-a-hundred-million-years kind of organization? Those are the kinds of things that they look at.

Then, if they identify some areas that are problematic for risk management, then the first line of making sure that the risk management is under control would be mediation, and that is a whole area of talk. It is, again, a range of actions from just telling the plan administrators, well, this is something that you did not do. Well, I am sorry I meant to. It is an error on my part, oversight, et cetera, to maybe more complicated, more difficult negotiations or discussions. Then, if that does not work, then there is the audit function, and then there is the whole issue of compliance.

So, basically, risk management is what the Pension Commission does.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, under Expected Results, we are talking about the emphasis being placed also on identifying required new skill sets. Now in the year 2000, what are the kind of new skill sets being looked at by the Minister at this point in time that you think will be needed to successfully implement the pension plans, because you know we have an increased population going to be retiring and going to be enjoying the pension benefits? So what are new skill sets that need to be available?

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chair, yes, the required new skill sets here relates to the Pension Commission staff. Basically, it is those kinds of skills that will enable them to more quickly identify situations that might be putting a pension plan or its beneficiaries at risk, ways of discussing issues with pension plan administrators so that you get the information out to them more quickly and more acceptably so that your mediation skills are increased.

They are also looking at bringing in a pension actuarial expert to do a workshop to talk with the pension analysts about new developments in how you risk manage and how you can identify where those risks are. So it is basically those skills that enable them to do the analysis, that enable them to discuss with pension plan administrators and this kind of thing.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister maybe be a little bit more specific on the kinds of skills that this pension actuary will be trying to develop? I know this is a new line of thinking and that it is a challenge I know that the Minister's department will have, but very specifically what are they looking at? What is the Minister's department looking at that might be new and different from what we have had to look at in the past?

Ms. Barrett: This actuarial expert will be talking basically about solvency issues, talking with the analysts about the actuarial principles that are used in looking at plan solvency, how does the actuary value the plan, what are the assumptions that the actuarial science uses to identify a plan's solvency. This is critical

information that the analysts need in order to be able to look at the plans and assess more accurately their solvency and, if there are any risks, being able to identify those risks, because you cannot talk to a plan administrator or a plan trustee about a problem if you do not know that a problem exists, and you will not know a problem exists with solvency unless you are up to date on how actuaries actually do assess the solvency.

So it is that kind of sharing of expertise so that the analysts can better analyze each plan's solvency, particularly what we discussed yesterday about the new regulation that we brought in requiring plans to fund themselves even if the business is not in existence anymore or is sold or something. This is critical information, as we know there are changes made every day to ownership and movement of businesses within the province, outside the province, outside the country. So it is critical that those plans be as actuarially sound as they possibly can be so that the employer or the buyer of a company that has a pension plan can rest assured that that plan is stable and is sound and that the employees know their pension money that they put in is going to be protected to the extent of the legislation.

This actuarial expert can help increase that level of comfort and security on the part of both plan administrators, employers and workers.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in the event that a company moves, let us say it is a Manitoba-based company, from this province to another province, is there is a base line or a basic expectation? Does a pension plan still remain intact for the most part or how is this pension plan governed? Are there a variety of ways or how is that monitored, because here in Manitoba it will be under this minister's jurisdiction. In the event of movement, what happens then?

* (15:10)

Ms. Barrett: There are several things that can happen here. If a plant closes, period, and its business is wound up, then the regulation that we put in place would require that if that plan were not solvent, fully solvent or fully funded, they would have to ensure that it was fully funded so

their employees at windup would have the full benefits of their pension plan.

If a company moves from, say, Manitoba to Alberta or some of its staff decide to go, some of its staff decide not to go or have it decided for them, then in consultation with the Pension Commission, with the Pension Commission having the ultimate say, the decision would be to partially wind up the pension plan. It would be wound up then for those workers who did not move, who were laid off or who chose not to go with the plant or the business when it moved.

For those individuals it would be like the company had disappeared in effect, they would be given their pensions. For the workers that went with the company to Alberta, the plan would then be registered with the Alberta Pension Commission so that it would move with the worker, under the other jurisdiction.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you for that information. That is, I think, crucial to a lot of people living in Manitoba, because it is a question I have heard on a regular basis.

I would like to ask the Minister: What is the training necessary to develop the staff? Could you outline those kinds of processes that have to take place? Is there a training plan in place? What is the specific training that has to be acquired on an ongoing basis?

Ms. Barrett: The Deputy gave me a very good answer. Apologies ahead of time to the pension analysts in the Pension Commission, but his suggestion was that a good characteristic would be someone who finds a great deal of interest in dissecting and looking at the entrails of small animals.

I have a more legitimate response. That is not completely out of the question. I mean, in order to do this job, you have to be the kind of person who knows and understands numbers, who knows and understands financial situations, and who is very familiar with and likes detail. If you are a big picture person who does not like numbers, that is not the kind of position for you.

Specifically, the background the pension analysts all have as a requirement before they are

hired is some background in pensions. They either come from people who consult on pensions or they would come from a pension plan administrator position. Then once they get into the position they are trained specifically in the areas that are unique to a regulatory commission. So they have to become familiar with the legislation. They have to become familiar with the regulating authorities and all of the activities and expected results that have a slightly different twist when you are working in a government in a regulatory agency than when you are working at the other end. But those are the kinds of basic skill sets and the kind of basic interests that a person would have to be a good analyst in this pension commission.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister outline some of the new pension issues she will be facing in this portfolio in the next couple of years, based on the demographics, based on the strain we are going to be seeing on the pension funds?

Mr. Gregory Dewar, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the challenges facing pension plans are the same kinds of challenges that are facing governments, that are facing employers, that are facing any element of society today, and they are two or three in number. Well, there are more challenges, but, generally speaking, the aging of the workforce means that there are going to be more pensions that are actually going to be paid out; the way the demographics work where we are still having a smaller population, a smaller workforce that is going to be paying into the pensions. So there is that challenge.

* (15:20)

There is the issue of expanded coverage. There is the issue of harmonization of standards. We talked earlier about the fact that workforces are mobile, that organizations and corporations are mobile, and we need to work towards and I believe the pension commissions across the country are working towards harmonization of those standards and of regulations, so that while a pension plan is registered in one jurisdiction, if they have multijurisdictional elements to it, they

have to administer all of those regulations from coast to coast to coast in some cases.

So the more harmonization you can get across the country for those pension plan regulations, the less expensive it is to administer and therefore the more the premiums can go towards actual solvency issues rather than administrative issues.

So those are the kinds of issues that are facing pension commissions and pension plans throughout the country.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please tell me if she has done any recent studies on the demographics here in Manitoba, and, if so, could they be presented here to committee, at least the latest ones that are available to us in terms of people who will become pensioners?

Ms. Barrett: The Pension Commission we would use throughout the Department and, I believe, throughout government, the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics data on demographics, but each pension plan is unique and each pension plan can have its own retirement ages. I know the Member is aware of negotiations that take place in various organizations as to whether you will retire with full benefits at 55 or 60 or 65. If you retire at less than full benefits, what percentage are there. The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics can provide the demographics, but that does not necessarily reflect each individual situation, but generally speaking, the population is aging. The baby boomers are now starting to get to be at least early retirement age. There is a cultural—

An Honourable Member: You tell them, Becky.

Ms. Barrett: Not even a baby boomer, prebaby boomer. There is also a culture that says for some people I would like to work less time, I would like to retire earlier and spend more time with my family and more time with my flowers or more time travelling. There are other people who say, no, my life is my work, I want to work past retirement age. There is no such thing as uniformity in this issue. While I spoke earlier of the need for our analysts who had an interest in detail, it is not just a dry science or a dry issue. It

is incredibly important to people's lives. It has very large ramifications on the decisions that people make on the choices that they have. It has implications in negotiation of contracts. There are a large number of implications in the range of pensions.

The people at the Pension Commission have a very important role to play in ensuring that those decisions that have been made, those plans that have been put in place provide the benefits they were designed to provide and that they by law are required to provide. It is a challenge for anyone who is involved in pensions. It is a particularly important responsibility that the people in the Pension Commission undertake very capably I might add.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you for the information, because it is, as you say, very beneficial to Manitobans and to all of us early people as well.

I would like to turn to the Pension Commission chart as outlined on page 31, and I do have a couple of questions there. Can the Minister please explain—going down to Employee Benefits, I can see a change from last year from 24 to 26.4. Could you please explain why this has increased for the Employee Benefits of the Pension Commission?

Ms. Barrett: The benefits are tied to salaries. If the Member will go up to—well, look at the salary line for the Professional/Technical and the Admin Support, she will note that there is a small increase in salaries that is reflective of the merit increases, and then there is a corresponding increase in benefits because many of the benefits are a percentage of the salary. So that is \$2,700, I believe, if I am adding correctly. So it is tied to the salary line.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Chair, could the Minister please go through the salary line then for me. I am unclear as to where this would be picked up because the Managerial is similar or the same, and there is very, very little difference, just a 2.2 difference in the Professional/Technical. So how does that reflect in the 2.4 Employee Benefits? I am not clear on that.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the Benefits line includes a number of things, including CPP payments, EI, group life and Blue Cross, and it is again reflecting that what we are going from is an estimate of expenditures for '99-2000 to an estimate of expenditures for 2000-2001. The \$24,000 Employee Benefits was an estimate so the actuals will be much closer to 26.4. Some of that difference can be based on the fact that, for example, you can estimate the take-up of the Blue Cross but you cannot always know ahead of time, so basically you are going from estimate to estimate. So the 26.4 is a reflection more of what actually happened and a sense of what might happen over the year.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I will leave this over now to the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Under the Pension Commission, is the Minister or her department planning any legislative changes in the upcoming years?

An Honourable Member: In this division?

Mr. Schuler: Right.

* (15:30)

Ms. Barrett: At this point we are not contemplating any specific legislation. But what we will be looking at, and this may in the future lead to legislative change, is the issue that I was speaking of earlier about harmonization between jurisdictions. What we would like to see is more and more pension plans registered in Manitoba. To do that, if we can harmonize our regulations with more jurisdictions and get more jurisdictions to harmonize their regulations with ours, we have a better chance of being able to have more pension plans registered in the Province of Manitoba. That is an idea. We have not gone anywhere close to even thinking about any legislative implications.

I guess the basic answer is, at this point, no, we are not contemplating any legislative changes at this time.

Mr. Schuler: Through you, to the Minister, are you planning any changes to the way the

Department works? Is The Pension Benefits Act part of the review that you had announced? Those two first.

Ms. Barrett: If I understood the Member correctly, the first part of the question were we planning to change the way the division operates. No. No, we feel that it is doing an excellent job. As I said, a very small number of people doing a great deal of good work. All of the pieces of legislation are being, as I said several times, reviewed. But some pieces of legislation, a review may be more thorough than others. You can take any one of a number of avenues. But at this point, I think that the people of the Pension Commission have done a very good job. As I have said earlier, every time I have asked a question of the Pension Commission, it is a complicated area and one that I am not familiar with, as familiar as I am with other areas. I have always gotten exceptionally clear guidance and information from the Pension Commission staff. I am very pleased with the work that they have done and have no intentions of making any changes in that regard.

Mr. Schuler: I do not know, in that answer, any changes, any review of The Pension Benefits Act?

Ms. Barrett: As I said in the fact that I am reviewing all of the legislation. We made the regulatory change that we spoke of earlier. If other specific situations arise where it looks like we need to plug a loophole or a new kind of problem comes into view, then of course we will look at that critically at the time. But at this point, it does not appear that there are, other than discussing issues like harmonization and that sort of thing, we are not contemplating any immediate changes.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister and I had a discussion yesterday, quite lengthy, about pension plans and the federal government and the such. I know the Minister stated quite a few answers for the record. This is more about are there regular meetings between her department and other provincial departments that deal with pensions and the federal government in regard to pensions and pension plans. Is there somewhere a long-term strategy being developed regarding

pension plans, whether that be provincially co-ordinating between the provinces and/or with the federal government? Is there anybody on any level that co-ordinates between the different levels of government in regard to pensions? How are you working together on it?

I know, Madam Minister, and to your department, there are a lot of people who feel that the pension crisis that is looming, which some are calling, others feel is not, that there really is no problem. Has there been some work done within the various levels of government to ensure that at some point in time we do not have a problem with, for instance, CPP and with other pension plans with a heavy, heavy demand being placed on them? Just more of a co-ordination kind of a question.

Ms. Barrett: Again, as we spoke of yesterday, there are two different kinds of pension issues here or two different levels, if you will. One is the public pension issue. Currently any policy discussions in that regard would be at the premiers' level, First Minister. The other area, which is the employment pensions, the role of the provincial government and the Pension Commission. There is an organization, a co-ordinating organization that is represented by all the provincial and territorial jurisdictions called CAPSA, Canadian Association of Pension Supervisory Authorities. They deal with many of the issues that we have been talking about here, such as governance, investment, harmonization, those kinds of things. They meet regularly.

There is some preliminary, very beginning dialogue taking place between CAPSA and the HRDC about potential areas of dialogue between those two organizations.

* (15:40)

Mr. Schuler: Does the teachers' pension fund file an annual report to the Minister?

Ms. Barrett: No, it does not. I assume that it would file with the Minister of Education. The other pension plan that is similar to that is the Civil Service Superannuation Fund, and that pension plan files an annual report with the Minister responsible for the Civil Service.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, we are done with the pension section and would like to go back to Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services.

Ms. Barrett: I would just like to reintroduce Al Fleury who is the Director of Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services and introduce Beth Stitchell, who is a conciliation officer in that division.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Chairperson, the agricultural community is, of course, a very important part of the economy in this province. I think it is recognized by all as an industry that makes a very substantive contribution to the balance of payments through its exports of its commodity. I think everybody recognizes the very significant advancements that have been made in value-added processing and the exports of finished goods and what that means to the economy of Manitoba in the employment sector in Manitoba.

We have seen various significant changes happening because of actions taken by the federal government—and I am not going to go into great detail about that. I mean the dissolution of the Crow rate and how that has really changed rural Manitoba and how we must do business in rural Manitoba. I think the farm community has met or is meeting those challenges. We are seeing a vast diversification going on now, which is causing the primary producer to change the way they do business and change, in fact, what they produce on many of the farms, whether it is livestock or whether it is other edible commodities—most of them that are produced on farms are edible—and whether they are foodstuffs and/or other raw exportable products that are being produced. They are becoming more and more, in many cases, labour intensive, so the labour requirements on many of these farms are changing because many of the farms are becoming significantly larger.

I just looked at the significance of the livestock industry, the beef cattle industry and the vast growth that has happened in the southeast region, many of the smaller species increased production and specifically, also, the hog industry and the increase in hog production in the province. I listened very intently and read

with a great deal of interest some of the results of the NDP annual convention and some of the resolutions that had been dealt with in the past at the annual meeting. One of the resolutions indicates: Whereas pig farms and other agricultural industries are not now covered by employment standards legislation and the Labour Relations Act; therefore be it resolved that these Acts be amended to cover all such industries in Manitoba.

I am wondering whether the Minister has any intention of making some significant changes to The Labour Relations Act and The Employment Standards Act in the areas that would affect agriculture.

Ms. Barrett: As I stated, and the Member has not been in the Labour Estimates before, so I will restate some of the things that I stated earlier. We, in my department, as in all of the departments, are looking at every single piece of legislation that is under my jurisdiction. I am reviewing it. I am making recommendations, talking with a number of people.

Two of the pieces of legislation that we have in our department, two of the most important pieces of legislation, two pieces of legislation that have an enormous impact on people's working lives and their daily lives are The Labour Relations Act and The Employment Standards Act. There will be labour legislation coming forward in this session of the Legislature. I will, as I have stated in response to certain questions posed by the critic, be making an announcement about those pieces of legislation when they are ready for tabling in the House.

I am sorry, one other part, I would acknowledge the Member's accuracy and agree with him completely on the vast changes that are taking place in rural Manitoba, as they specifically reflect on issues of workers and employment standards, Workplace Safety and Health, building code standards. A hog barn that is going to house 3000 hogs is a very different barn, although the word is the same, than the old red barn that we are both used to that had 10 pigs in it, not 3000. These are quite fast-growing changes that are taking place, so we have enormous challenges, and I know the Member is

aware of that. I am hopeful that the Member is aware that we know that and are working on it.

We have a livestock stewardship process underway. The Department of Labour is involved in that stewardship process because we do recognize that there are health and safety implications. There are real challenges out there, some of which will be easy to address, others of which will not be. I do not know if the Member is aware that, for example, one of the highest groups of fatalities in Manitoba, workplace related, occur on farms. The two categories of individuals who are most affected by those workplace fatalities and injuries, but particularly fatalities, are young people under 12 and older men over 60. Those are disturbing statistics.

So we are very aware of that, and I think that as the nature of the rural economy, as the nature of agriculture changes, the definition of what is agriculture, the components of agriculture in rural life change. It is incumbent upon us to work together to address these issues co-operatively. That is why the Department of Labour is very interested in the livestock initiative that is being undertaken. Now we are looking at all of those concerns that I have raised and also that the Member has raised.

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. I wonder if the Minister could give me an indication as to what kind of representation has been made to her or to her government by the farm community or the farm organizations, and whether she can give me an indication as to what sort of changes, if any, that they have recommended to the two Acts that have been mentioned here.

Ms. Barrett: I have met with far fewer rural and farm organizations than, for example, the Minister of Agriculture and Food has. But we have met with groups, not only just now, but in Opposition as well, who had serious concerns about issues of farm safety, rural safety.

For example, the Women's Institute has raised concerns with us about these issues over a number of years when we have met with them. Another issue, which is not directly related to Labour but does have a rural component and is of concern to our government, is the issue of

child care. One of the potential links between those statistics that I shared with the Member about deaths and injury of young people relates to the fact that there are not resources in many rural communities, especially at seeding and harvest, for what to do with a child at a time when seeding and harvesting are taking place. Over the years we have been looking at alternate care facilities. Again, I am going back years when I was critic for Family Services, so it is a long time and I cannot remember the specifics, but there was some very interesting ideas that came from the rural community about flexible ways of dealing, maybe a roster. Some of it was a roster of people who would be available to do child care during those particularly critical points in time when both partners of a farm family would be needed on the fields. That is part of the problem as kids have to go with their parents because the alternative is staying at home which is not safe either.

* (15:50)

Those are the kinds of issues that we have been talking about. There have been some concerns recently, specifically about the hog barns, the large factories. Some people are calling them factories rather than farm kinds of operations. They do have some similarities to a factory in the sense that there is a large space, and it is not the old family barn that we were talking about. So those kinds of concerns, where if anywhere, does Employment Standards or the Labour Relations Act or Workplace Safety and Health come into this new economy that we are looking at. Those are issues and concerns that we are beginning to address.

Mr. Jack Penner: I listened very carefully to the response, and I could not agree more with the Minister that there is a need, I believe, for many families in the farm community to have some kind of provision for child care, especially during times of harvest and seeding, in those areas because it becomes very difficult for some mothers to, in fact, become the hired person when there are no people that can do the job, and very often the women and the men take turns in doing virtually everything on the farm.

It is interesting, we have two daughters-in-law that were born and raised in the city, had

never seen the farm, and they have become fairly adept at becoming very involved in the farm organization. It is interesting to see how quickly they learned to drive the big four-wheel-drive tractors and drive the tandem truck and the semi-tractors. *[interjection]* The Minister is making fun of this, but I think, in all seriousness, when a person is put in a situation where the livelihood depends on becoming involved, be it men or women, that they become very quickly educated to do things that they had never dreamed of doing in their lives. These young women come to the farms, become part of the farm, and become very involved and do things that they had never dreamed of doing, and never dreamed of operating a big semi-truck or whatever, and become very good at it. So I hear what the Minister is saying, that they are looking at some ways of looking at providing some child care in these communities, and I commend her for that.

My question though is recognizing the changes. She talks about the hog factories. I think many farmers out there would view that comment as a bit offensive, because if you ever walk into one of these barns, these new modern operations, you would very quickly see that they are not factories. They have people employed in these barns that are good at the medical side. Many of them have medical training to ensure the health of the barn and detect any kind of disease or sickness.

Many of these barns today are in fact so disease-free that they will not allow you or I to walk into them without either being disinfected entirely and putting on disinfected clothing before you enter and also showering when you come out. They want to be sure that you and I would not transmit or bring diseases into those barns, so they become very disease-free operations, and so a great deal of care must be taken, the same as we did when we had the little farms. The farmer would sit there when a sow would farrow and make sure that the little pig would not be squashed by the mother. So care is taken today to separate, to put the mother pig in an environment that it will not lie down on the little piglets or be able to lie down. I hear sometimes of the confinements that people that have very little knowledge about the industry talk about or want to portray it as such.

I think we need to be careful that we do not identify it as a simple crass kind of factory that manufactures gidgets and just pushes them out the end of the factory for the marketplace. That is not the kind of operations that these livestock operations are. And similarly the people that work there. If they are employed on an eight-hour basis, they would very often when they are in the middle of a sow farrowing stay there until the sow is finished farrowing even though it might take two or three or four hours, sometimes five hours beyond their regular work hours. They would stay there and make sure that the livestock was cared for. That is the importance of the recognition of the differentiation between a factory worker and a worker that takes care of live animals because live animals are in need of taking care of.

So, when we draft legislation, I look at this resolution, and I clearly detect that the person or people putting forward this kind of resolution have very little knowledge of what really goes on in these livestock operations and the differentiation between a factory and a livestock operation.

So I ask the Minister whether she is contemplating making changes to The Labour Relations Act or The Employment Standards Act that would significantly change the way farm labour is dealt with today compared to what it has been in the past?

Ms. Barrett: I thank the Member for the question. I do want to acknowledge that the word "factory" was probably not the right word to use, and I did not mean it in any disparaging way. I was trying to think of a distinction between the scale of what is happening today in agriculture, not just in the livestock area but everything. So there are, as the Member said very accurately, the barns themselves it is such a spot. I know this from my department because Mechanical and Engineering people come in to check the boilers, and actually it is quite in one way inefficient because they go out to a rural area where there are a number of barns to look at, and because the veterinarian in the area is the one who has control over when they can go in, they go into one barn, they make the inspection, and then they cannot go back into another barn in that area for another week or 10 days or two weeks.

I am aware of that situation and do not disagree with the need for that to happen, but there is a little wrinkle there. I do want to put on the record that I did not mean any disparaging comments by the use of the word "factories." As a matter of fact, most factories these days are very clean. They should be, at any rate, and they are very different than the smokestack industry that some of us know from our youth. So I put that on the record.

* (16:00)

The specific answer to the Member's question is the answer that I just gave, that we are exploring all of our legislation. We are looking at all of it. I am very aware of the Livestock Stewardship Initiative that is being undertaken. I expect to hear that over the course of the public dialogue issues around, either there are no issues or there are issues around the fact that the people who work in the barns, the people who work in the livestock industry, the people who work in agriculture may have concerns about the change in what they do and the way they do it.

At this point I am not contemplating any changes of the sort that the Member is talking about to either of those pieces of legislation at this point.

I am just wondering, for information's sake, yesterday the critic asked for Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity to come back because there were some questions that were going to be asked under this area. I am wondering if the Member who is currently asking questions is going to be asking questions about this area, because I did agree specifically to bring staff back from this area which the critic had concluded his questioning in. The questions that the Member has asked so far do not deal with Conciliation, Mediation or Pay Equity. I am wondering if he is planning to ask questions in that area.

Mr. Jack Penner: Yes. I intend to ask some questions in that regard, and I will lead up to them. I wonder whether I could ask the Minister whether she has had a significant or whether she has had any complaints from the farm community or the farm sector in regard to labour

conditions and/or the ability to settle agreements or those kinds of things. I wonder whether the Minister could give me an indication as to whether she has had representation either by individuals or by groups of people regarding the labour agreements and/or labour conditions in the agriculture community.

Ms. Barrett: The one labour dispute that I am aware of that has happened in the last eight or nine months in the rural areas was the Agricore labour dispute. I am open to correction, but I believe that there have not been. Yes, other than the odd question that comes through, and, again, this would be more specifically directed to the Employment Standards area. I have had some employment standards about agreed rate-of-pay issues, but, generally speaking, other than the Agricore labour dispute, there have been, to my knowledge, no labour disputes in the rural areas.

As far as other issues, again, as I said, we are just beginning the livestock stewardship issue, and there might be situations in a facility, in an operation, not just a farm but in a small town. For example—and I have not heard of this, but potentially—in the Winkler-Morden-Steinbach area there are a number of large manufacturing enterprises there. So there is potential there for labour issues to arise, employment standards, workplace safety and health, those kinds of things. But, no, we have not had much action from that quarter to date.

Mr. Jack Penner: I want to commend your staff for some relatively quick action, specifically by your deputy on an issue that came to my attention a year or two ago at a manufacturing plant, and he helped us resolve the issue. Your department was very, very helpful in clearing up an incident that happened there. I think that is exemplary, the kind of action that I have seen from your department, and I want to commend your deputy and his staff for the way they have dealt with at least the issues that I have brought to their attention. I think that is the way, in my view, that government should function, and I think it is commendable that they expeditiously dealt with issues and helped us get on with maintaining and helping to maintain an industry over a while.

I wonder, Madam Chairperson, whether the Minister could give me an indication as to the

number or the significance of inquiries that her department receives from either individual operators or individual employees in agriculture over a period of time in regard to whether there are complaints come her way or whether there are many inquiries on the various acts or their rights as individuals come her way via the Department.

Ms. Barrett: Again, Madam Chair, we were asked to bring back the Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services staff at this point. We have not gotten to Employment Standards or Workplace Safety and Health where those issues would be more appropriately asked.

So I do not have that information. I am sure the staff of Workplace Safety and Health and Employment Standards would be able to provide me with that information, but at this point, because we are supposedly on Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity, I do not have that information.

Mr. Jack Penner: We will get into this then, and I am sorry that I am delaying the staff because I think this is all sort of interrelated, and I think the staff recognizes that as well. I wonder whether the Minister is contemplating bringing in new legislation or laws that would bring the same kind of requirements into agriculture from a dispute-settling process or salary basis requirements, whether it is overtime and all those kind of things. I think that has to do with pay equity, where the Minister is contemplating imposing those same kinds of arrangements on farm labour. I understand that agriculture has been exempted in some of these areas, but is the Minister contemplating making some significant changes there?

Ms. Barrett: Again, this is information where the questions are more appropriately directed to Employment Standards. The conciliation and mediation portion of this division deals with working through labour disputes and attempting to conciliate or mediate them before they are required to go to the Labour Board or before they hit a strike or a lockout situation. The pay equity area deals with the implementation of the pay equity legislation which was passed unanimously by the House in 1985, I believe. All of these issues that the Member is raising

that deal with salaries, that deal with benefits, that deal with labour relations, that deal with pay structures of that nature, the questions he is asking are not appropriate under this category or under this division.

Mr. Jack Penner: Madam Acting Chairman, I have no further questions in this area. I am not sure whether the critic does, but I suspect not, so I wonder whether we could then set this aside and you can dismiss the staff because I have no further questions there.

I really just wanted to find out from the Minister whether she in fact intends to implement or bring forward legislation that would bring farm labour into the same requirements as industry now in the area of dispute-settling mechanisms. I am not even sure whether they are exempted under those provisions previous. Maybe staff can answer that.

Ms. Barrett: Again, those issues are issues that will be dealt with under the specifics under other areas. We are at this point investigating all matters relating to legislation, and legislation will be coming forth in due course.

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, I am prepared to move on then. I wonder if the Minister could, whether we could, deal then with the issues that I brought forward.

Ms. Barrett: We have agreed in this session of the Estimates that we will go in order of the Estimates book, and neither of those issues are before us. If we have finished with Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity and we have finished with the Pension Commission, we will go to the Labour Board and the Member can look at the list. After the Labour Board is Workplace Safety and Health.

* (16:10)

Mr. Jack Penner: When would you expect then that this issue would be reported to the Committee?

Ms. Barrett: Well, whenever the critic or the members of the Opposition move forward in the Estimates book, but we have agreed to go by order so that staff is not required. Unfortunately

that did not happen today, but staff is not required to be here or have to come on a whim, so we are going by order. I have no way of knowing. It could be tomorrow. It could be two weeks from today. We have about 130 hours left in Estimates.

Mr. Jack Penner: I guess you are dealing with the Estimates a bit differently than what we have in some of the other committees, and I find it very interesting that one would not be able to ask those kinds of questions or get answers to those kind of questions at this time.

The whole area of agriculture, as I said before, has seen some very significant changes, and yet many of the principles or the issues on the farms remain and have not changed from where we were 50 years ago and probably never will change. To take care of an animal requires—

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Cerilli): A point of order has been raised by the Minister.

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: I would like to remind the Member that the Member said he had no questions in Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity. We are discussing the Estimates of the Department of Labour, and I would ask the Member, if he does not have any questions, then we will go on to the Labour Board and perhaps he can ask questions in that area. But this department is dealing with issues of Labour, and I would ask the Chair to bring the Member to order.

Mr. Jack Penner: On the same point of order, Madam Chairperson, I was getting to the point where I was going to raise a question on pay equity and pay equity services. If we cannot agree to move into an area or just simply ask questions that would be related to, then I will ask some direct questions, and I will continue the discussion on Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Cerilli): On the point of order raised, I would like to advise the Committee, that is not a point of order.

However, I want to draw the Committee's attention that there was some discussion on the

format for this committee at the outset of the Estimates of the Department of Labour. That was that there were some provisos on dealing with global or line by line and which way the Committee was going to conduct its business. At that time there was an agreement by the critic for the Opposition and the Minister that the staff, if they were not available at the time when the questions were being asked, there would not be a requirement to—I just want to read from here where the Minister said: "I am prepared to discuss any question the Member has, with the proviso that there may not be staff at the table at the time the question comes up to give me the kind of information I may need to give back to the Member."

This is an excerpt from *Hansard* from May 30, which is yesterday—no. So that is what I was referring back to.

I wanted to go back to understand, realizing that each committee comes to an agreement on how that Committee, usually it is the critic starting out for the Opposition and the Minister, how they are going to conduct the business of that committee. It can differ from one committee to the next.

I will recognize the Minister on a new point of order.

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: Yes, thank you, on a new point of order, yesterday, in Estimates, we had a further discussion of the process and the procedures. When the critic asked to have the Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity branch brought back again, what we agreed yesterday was, yes, those staff would come back this afternoon and then we would proceed in order, line by line, division by division, not necessarily passing but going through so that staff would not have to sit here. So the latest agreement that happened yesterday was that we would go line by line, which is why I suggested to the Member that we would be going to the Labour Board after Pay Equity.

Madam Chairperson: The Minister's comments were not a point of order. She was providing information from yesterday. I want to encourage members of the Committee to come to an

agreement on how we are going to proceed now. There has been a practice in the past of coming to an agreement at these committees of how we are going to proceed.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: Madam Chairperson, I would suggest then that we revert back to Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity part of the Estimates debate. I would ask the Minister whether she could tell me how or what laws are in place that indicate how mediation processes must take place.

Ms. Barrett: The Labour Relations Act.

* (16:20)

Mr. Jack Penner: Could the Minister indicate to me then whether The Labour Relations Act applies to agricultural employees and employers as well, the same as it does to other aspects of industry?

Mr. Jim Rondeau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Barrett: No, with the exception of agreed rates of pay, it does not apply.

Mr. Jack Penner: Can the Minister indicate to me what sections of what act provide for exemptions of agricultural labour at this time or agriculture in general?

Ms. Barrett: That is The Employment Standards Act, and I am prepared to address questions directed to me or my staff when we get to the Employment Standards line in the Estimates.

Mr. Jack Penner: Could the Minister indicate to me how the exemptions affect the agreements between individual operators, in other words, individual agricultural people and the employees employed there?

Ms. Barrett: That again is an issue that is addressed by The Employment Standards Act, and I must let the Member know that The Labour Relations Act applies only to collective bargaining issues. So with the exception of

groups and organizations that are under a collective agreement, The Labour Relations Act would not apply.

Mr. Jack Penner: Could the Minister then indicate to me whether she is contemplating making changes in this area of pay equity, whether the Minister is going to attempt to bring legislation forward that would require the same standards to be applied, the same provisos within the pay equity area to be applied to farm labour as it is in other areas?

Ms. Barrett: The pay equity legislation that was passed unanimously by the Legislature in I believe 1985 applies only to the public service, and there are no plans to extend it.

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, Mr. Chairman, that means then that this government has no plans to extend it into the realm of agriculture. The agricultural exclusion proviso will be maintained.

Ms. Barrett: That is not what I stated. In my earlier answer, I explained that The Labour Relations Act applies only to negotiated agreements and therefore would have limited application, if any application, in the farming community. The employment standards legislation has the agreed rates-of-pay elements, and The Pay Equity Act, what the Member is mixing up, is designed only to deal with pay equity issues in the public sector. We have no intention, at this point, of opening up the pay equity legislation. The Labour Relations Act and The Employment Standards Act, have, with that one exception, no relation to the farming community.

Mr. Jack Penner: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, whether the Minister could give me a brief description of The Pay Equity Act and what it applies to and how it applies to the various areas and what it specifically does and pertains to.

Ms. Barrett: The pay equity legislation covers the provincial civil service, including teaching and non-teaching staff in the three community colleges, 20 Crown corporations, the province's 4 universities and the 23 largest health care facilities.

Mr. Jack Penner: What does The Pay Equity Act really do? How does it affect an individual,

whether it is a teacher, whether it is a nurse? Give me an overview of the legislation and how it applies to an individual.

Ms. Barrett: Pay equity legislation provides a systematic and mandatory approach to eliminate systemic sex discrimination in pay in female-dominated occupational classes, compared to male-dominated occupational classes.

Mr. Jack Penner: Does that apply to all aspects of labour in the province?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated earlier, pay equity legislation applies to the provincial civil service, the areas that I mentioned earlier and does not apply in any other area or to any other group of people.

Mr. Jack Penner: And as the Minister indicated before, she has no intention of opening the Act and making changes to the Act at this time?

Ms. Barrett: That is correct.

Mr. Jack Penner: I would like to ask the indulgence of the Minister whether we could in fact move to Employment Standards.

Ms. Barrett: I am not prepared to go to the Employment Standards division unless the members are prepared to pass all of the items in between the Manitoba Labour Board and the Employment Standards division, as agreed yesterday by the critic and myself.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rondeau): Is it agreed?

Mr. Schuler: I would suggest to the Minister then that we are finished asking questions with Conciliation, Mediation and Pay Equity Services and will go to the Manitoba Labour Board.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rondeau): Are you addressing the Chair?

Mr. Schuler: I was clearly addressing the Chair.

Ms. Barrett: I am wondering if it is the will of the Committee to take a five-minute break.
[Agreed]

The Committee recessed at 4:30 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:36 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rondeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Chairman, I would like to draw the Minister's attention to page 3 of the report from the Manitoba Labour Board on The Essential Services Act. It says the board has some responsibility for The Essential Services Act, yet this is not one of the acts you are responsible for as minister. Who is? And how does the board work? And who administers the Act? I will read it: The Essential Services Act. The Board receives and processes applications from the union for variation in the number of employees in each classification who the employer has determined must work during a work stoppage to maintain essential services.

Ms. Barrett: The answer to the first question is I am and I am not. I am responsible for The Essential Services Act but not as Minister of Labour, but as Minister responsible for the Civil Service. I am sorry I did not catch the other parts of the Member's question.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister did answer who is responsible. How does the Board work, seeing as the Minister does and does not oversee this particular act, and it does show up under the Manitoba Labour Board? How does The Essential Services Act work?

* (16:40)

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the essential services legislation provides for the maintenance of essential services during a strike or a lockout basically, and the Labour Board can act in the capacity. If there is an appeal to the number of individuals in a classification that has been determined to be essential, the Labour Board can make a determination about numbers but cannot determine which classifications are deemed essential.

Now I must add, in any discussion of the essential services legislation that that is the legislation that is currently on the books, and we have made an election commitment to make changes to The Essential Services Act. So we are talking only about the current legislation, and it should not be taken to reflect in any way, shape or form the form that whatever legislation is brought in will take, so with that proviso.

Mr. Schuler: Has the process begun in the reviewing of The Essential Services Act to fulfill the NDP election commitment? Has that been started? Is it almost to the point of being introduced? Sort of where is the Department with that?

Ms. Barrett: The legislation is under review.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister plan on coming forward with some kind of recommendation on changes during this particular sitting of the Legislature?

Ms. Barrett: As I have stated before in discussing other potential legislative changes, we will be making announcements on legislation when it is ready to be tabled in the House.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Schuler: So is that a yes or a no?

Ms. Barrett: It is the answer that I have given the Member, that the Member should stay tuned and when the bill is introduced in the House, that is when he will be aware of our timing.

Mr. Schuler: Who within the Department is currently reviewing that particular act?

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chair, the legislation and legislative and policy area and that was—sorry. To be a little more complete, the Management Services area would review it, but again this is under the Civil Service Commission, so we would take review from a number of sources, and on technical details would, of course, ask the Labour Board about because they are the body that adjudicates the essential services legislation.

Mr. Schuler: So just taking what the Minister has responded that the Manitoba Labour Board

will be asked to review it, does the Minister then give the Manitoba Labour Board direction on some of the changes she would like to see? Because how does the Manitoba Labour Board fulfil the promises of the NDP party when is the Manitoba Labour Board not actually a governance body, not a political body? So does the Minister then have to give certain direction to the board?

Ms. Barrett: No. The process with any legislative review is that there are several parts to a legislative review. We made a commitment in the essential services legislation to change The Essential Services Act as in the election. That is a policy decision. It is a political decision. We can also make decisions in my review of all the legislation, some of which may not have been part of an election commitment. We may decide in reviewing those pieces of legislation we need to make some changes here.

Let me back up to the Essential Services. Let us not confuse it, myself in particular. The policy decision was made that we are going to make changes to this piece of legislation. As we do with every piece of legislation, there has to be some advice as to how you implement those changes. That advice comes from a variety of sources. If we were going to make changes to the Employment Standards legislation, if we were going to make changes to The Workplace Safety and Health Act, we have to ask the people who are involved with administering those pieces of legislation. This is what we want to do. Tell us, give us advice as to how we do it. So they are not involved in the implementation, they are involved in giving advice on changes that government wants to make but they are separate from the decisions to do that. They are not involved in the political part of it. They are involved in providing technical experience.

Mr. Schuler: From what I understand, the Minister would then draft a change to the act and then would send it to the Manitoba Labour Board, for instance, to get their feedback on it. What if they come back and say the commitments made in this proposed act will not work or should not work? Then does the Minister just go alone anyway? The Manitoba Labour Board only gives a recommendation. It does not have any authority or power to change

anything so then in the end they can just tell you what kind of dangers or what kind of ramifications certain things might have. Then it would be up to the Minister to decide to proceed or to change it. Would that be fair?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the Labour Board itself would not see any of this legislation. People who are making suggested changes to a piece of legislation could call the chair of the Labour Board and say this is what we want to do and this is how we propose to do it. From your resourcing of The Essential Services Act, from your role as the adjudicator in this, not asking you as the chair of the Labour Board or as a person involved with Employment Standards what you think whether this is good or not, but this is what we want to do, can we do it through this method?

I am not the expert in Essential Services, nor am I an expert in Employment Standards or Workplace Safety and Health or any of the other specific pieces of legislation that come under my department. The ministers say this is the policy direction we want to go in. This is what we want to have as an end result. We are concerned about these elements of the essential services legislation because it does this and we want it to do that. What can you tell us about how we can get to do that rather than this? Do you see the distinction? So we just ask for technical assistance in implementing legislatively what we want to do. Then another resource for legislative change is the Legislative Counsel, which is under the Department of Justice. They have staff lawyers who draft all of the legislation not only for government but for opposition too. Then we will take a proposal to Legislative Counsel and say, help here, this is what we want to do. Tell us how we can do it in the legislation, and they will come back with suggestions as to how to do it. They will not tell us, gosh, that is a bad idea unless it is technically or legally wrong. They will give us assistance in that regard.

Mr. Schuler: Under Part VIII of The Labour Relations Act, it outlines the board. Section 138(2) outlines the make-up of the board. There are 24 members besides the chair, but the Act allows for more or less. It does not really say how many members there have to be. Why is the number of the board 24? Why 24?

Ms. Barrett: There is a two-part answer to that. One is that many of the boards, as we talked about at the beginning of the Estimates process, in the Labour Department are parallel; they are bilateral. They have representation from labour and they have representation from management.

The Labour Board is structured in the same way, so there are an equal number of representatives from labour and an equal number of representatives from management. The numbers 12 and 12 are designed to meet the current needs of not only the Labour Board but of the labour partners and the management partners.

Mr. Schuler: When The Retail Business Holiday Closing Act was brought in, did the Minister's department undertake a review of the Act prior to introducing the amendment in the fall?

Ms. Barrett: That legislation, as I spoke with the Member earlier when I made—*[interjection]* I can wait if it would be helpful.

That piece of legislation, as I have given the Member, comes under the Employment Standards division, so I would prefer to answer any questions the Member has in regard to that piece of legislation under that section of the Estimates.

Mr. Schuler: Seeing as we are dealing with the Manitoba Labour Board, my question then to the Minister is: As regards The Retail Business Holiday Closing Act, did it go to the Manitoba Labour Board for review?

Ms. Barrett: No, it would not be appropriate to have had it go to the Labour Board for review. Legislation does not go the Labour Board for review. I am wondering if the Member is confusing the Labour Board with the Labour Management Review Committee, which is that committee that is advisory—I will go back to the front, to the flowchart that we spent some time with.

The Labour Management Review Committee is an advisory committee to the Minister on labour legislation. Any labour legislation that comes under the Department of Labour will go

to the Labour Management Review Committee, but the Labour Board, which has the solid line there, is not an advisory board. It is a quasi-judicial board, and, as it says in the Estimates book, it is currently responsible for the administration and/or adjudication of certain sections of the following acts, and then there is a list there. I am wondering if the Member is confusing those two committees, those two entities rather.

Mr. Schuler: What we will do—and I wish the Minister would not be a stickler. To answer that simple of a question would not be that much of a stretch. Not everything falls neatly within certain categories, but we will leave this section of the holiday closing act. We will ask the rest of the questions under the Employment Standards.

Ms. Barrett: As we agreed.

Mr. Schuler: Has the review of The Labour Relations Act been completed?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: How broad was the consultation during this review?

* (16:50)

Ms. Barrett: As I stated in my earlier answer, the review is not completed. In the meetings I have held with a number of groups, as I listed earlier, both management-related groups and labour-related groups, there have been issues raised that are reflected in The Labour Relations Act by both of those communities. I think that there has been fairly extensive information given to the Minister on The Labour Relations Act from a broad range of groups and individuals.

Mr. Schuler: Is the Minister willing to table for this committee the groups that she has consulted in regard to reviewing of The Labour Relations Act?

Ms. Barrett: The consultation in that regard has been perhaps of a different nature than the Member is thinking of. When I meet with various groups they come with a number of issues to talk about, so when I talk with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba

Chamber of Commerce, various employer groups, various employee groups, labour groups, social justice groups, a range of groups that I met with in the last eight months, parts of some of their meetings with me have spoken directly or indirectly to elements that would be found in The Labour Relations Act. It would be very difficult for me to table a list of the people, because it was not an official consultation in the sense that I called the group in to speak specifically about that, or they came in to speak specifically about The Labour Relations Act.

I have met with various groups throughout the province and I would suggest that almost—well any group that has an interest or is a stakeholder in the implementation of The Labour Relations Act would have given me, I think virtually every one of those groups has given me advice or concerns or raised issues with me over the last eight months, so it is a huge range of groups, but they would have also have given me advice on a number of other issues.

Mr. Schuler: At the NDP convention, three resolutions were brought forward calling on the Government to introduce antiscab legislation. On April 3, 2000, I wrote the Minister asking her about it.

The first one 00-JE-18 reads: Antiscab Legislation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NDP Government enact antiscab legislation in that southwest region NDP.

The second one is 00-JE-29 antiscab legislation,

WHEREAS companies in Manitoba employ replacement workers and security forces during labour disputes; and

WHEREAS the use of scab workers and security forces seize confrontation and impedes the rights of workers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NDP of Manitoba introduces antiscab legislation.

That is the Swan River NDP.

* (17:00)

The third one is 00-JE-59, Antiscab Legislation.

WHEREAS antiscab legislation is working very good for business, labour and government in the province of Québec; and,

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba should have a fair negotiating environment for all sides involved in contract negotiations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this convention hereby encourage the Government of Manitoba to introduce antiscab legislation for this province.

The Maples NDP.

As I have mentioned several times before, I wrote to the Minister and received a response without an answer. A similar resolution was brought forward by the federal NDP at their convention, and it reads:

BE IT RESOLVED that this convention demand that the federal government amend the Canada Labour Code to prohibit the use of scabs.

Does the Government plan on introducing antiscab legislation?

Ms. Barrett: As I have stated in response to a number of other questions dealing with legislation, the Member will just have to be patient and wait until we bring forward legislation this session, next session, this term, next term, the following term, the fourth term. There is a lot of potential time here that we are talking about, and so I am going to repeat that answer: that I am not prepared to discuss specifics—*[interjection]*

Mr. Schuler: Resolution 00-JE-18, Resolution 00-JE-29 and Resolution 00-JE-59 were all introduced at the annual general meeting of the New Democratic Party, March 3 to 5, 2000.

My question to the Minister is: Were any of these passed by the convention?

Madam Chairperson: I would like to take a moment to remind all honourable members to please provide the courtesy of your attention to the Member who has the floor. It is acceptable to carry on conversations at the Committee as long as it is not disruptive to the proceedings.

Point of Order

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): The Member opposite seems to be confusing these proceedings with something that has absolutely nothing to do with the Minister of the Crown. He is speaking about meetings that are outside of the relevance of this committee and, again, bringing up issues that are irrelevant, asking the Minister questions about things that are outside of her portfolio as the Minister of Labour. I just wonder if the Chair would bring the Member under control and advise us of the relevance of his question.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Fort Garry, is this on the same point of order?

Mrs. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would appreciate very much if my colleague, the Member for Springfield, has the latitude to ask the kind of questions that need to be answered so Manitobans are clarified about different points that have been brought up. We feel we want this day to be very productive. It is not a tussle between different sides asking whether or not certain questions should be asked.

What we want to do is get the facts on the record and find out information. I would appreciate if the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) would stop asking if I was pro-life or pro-choice or Stockwell Day, or all these disruptive kinds of things. It is disrespectful to this committee, and I think that members in government should have a better deportment around the Committee. *[interjection]* Yes, they are challenging your authority in this area. Madam Chair, I am just asking that we focus on the Minister and get some facts on the table.

Madam Chairperson: On the point of order, the Honourable Member for Brandon West does not have a point of order.

I will repeat: a point of order should be used to draw the Chair's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to ask a question, dispute the accuracy of facts, clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood, or raise a further point of order.

Since this has been raised on several occasions, for the Committee's information, I will speak to relevance. I would like to remind all honourable members that their remarks should be kept relevant to the matter before the Committee. I will read, for the benefit of the Committee, our rule 73(2): "Speeches in a Committee of the Whole House must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion."

I would like to ask members to endeavour to keep their contributions relevant to the current department under consideration. I respectfully ask for your co-operation in this matter.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: I think it is time that you did call this committee to order, and I commend you for that, especially the members opposite, who have been frankly very disrespectful to you and your wishes in trying to control this meeting. I commend you for that. Basically this is tantamount to being a challenge to the Chair, and I think you have answered them very clearly.

I also would like to thank you for your last statement that you made clarifying that-

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Brandon West, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Smith: The Member again seems confused, as he has been over the last period of time. It certainly was not any challenge to the Chair. It was just asking for your opinion on it. If in fact it appeared we were being disrespectful to the Chair, that was certainly not the intent, and the Member opposite should be brought to order in relaying that we were in fact doing it on purpose.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Fort Garry, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Smith: I appreciate you going over the reasons and the guidelines in terms of a point of order. Madam Chair, it would be appreciated if members opposite could just relax and settle down and listen. I do not know whether it is possible or not, but it was the wish of this committee on this side to ask questions and receive answers from the Minister, who has very credibly put forth her answers.

So there is no point of order from members opposite because there are no rules that have been broken.

Madam Chairperson: On the point of order, the Honourable Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) does not have a point of order.

I would once again take a moment to remind all honourable members to please provide the courtesy of your attention to the Member who has the floor, who at the moment happens to be me. I believe all honourable members wish to keep the discussion and questioning flowing along constructively, and I respectfully ask for your co-operation in this matter.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: And maybe the flies buzzing on the other side of the table will actually allow us the opportunity to ask some questions, maybe even finish asking them before they raise their little hand and get swatted down again by the Chair. Madam Chair, I was just complimenting you on the statement you made on the previous point of order, you know, basically telling the members opposite that what is going on here is the Department of Labour, that this is the Manitoba Labour Board, and we are asking questions on some very serious issues which, frankly, I do not think the members opposite want on the record. I think they are ashamed of some of the things that came forward and, well, maybe this is not the time to sit and heckle and that kind of thing, and I am glad that you have called them to order. I think you have laid it out very nicely and very clearly for us, and I certainly appreciate that.

* (17:10)

I would like to proceed on with the question that I was asking, and I, unfortunately, do not have *Hansard* here. We seem to have been heckled so much that I will ask the question again.

Madam Chairperson: I would like to just add, I would like to remind the Member that I was calling the entire committee, all the members, to order. I would ask, again, not just to respect the speaker, I would very much appreciate a little more respect for each other, if we can work on that.

Mr. Schuler: The committee is thankful for the way that you have been holding order at this committee, and I am sure members opposite will be listening, as we have, all the way along, and you are doing a good job here.

Motion 00JE-18, antiscab legislation, which was presented by the southwest region NDP; 00JE-29, antiscab legislation, which was presented by Swan River NDP; and 00JE-59, antiscab legislation, presented by The Maples NDP; these were all presented at the New Democratic Party's annual general meeting in March 2000. I was wondering: Could the Minister tell us if any of these motions were passed?

Ms. Barrett: Thank you. I will take that question as notice and get back to the Member.

Mr. Schuler: Clearly there are many out in Manitoba who are interested. I mean Southwest Region NDP clearly are interested in seeing this kind of legislation go forward. The Swan River NDP clearly are interested in this kind of legislation going forward. The Maples NDP are also an organization that would like to see this kind of legislation go forward—

An Honourable Member: You forgot about Transcona, proud community.

Mr. Schuler: And the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) would like to see this kind of legislation go forward. What we do know is that there are others in the community who do not wish to see this kind of legislation go forward.

What we do know is that there are others in the community who do not wish to see this kind of legislation go forward.

Just to read to the Minister, on page 32, there are Objectives of the Manitoba Labour Board, and one is to resolve issues in a fair and reasonable manner. I was wondering: Is this something that the Minister currently has under review within her department?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated on several previous occasions, all of the labour legislation under the Department of Labour is under review, either active or will be under active review.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister had stated that the review of The Essential Services Act and changes to it, it was a promise that her party had made. Is it also one of their promises that they made during the last election that they would introduce antiscab legislation?

Ms. Barrett: No.

Mr. Schuler: Has the Minister instructed her department to look at that kind of legislation?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated earlier, all of the pieces of legislation for which I am responsible are under review.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister think that antiscab legislation is warranted?

Ms. Barrett: It is a very complicated issue and one that will need a great deal of discussion. As I stated earlier, all elements of the labour legislation are under review.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister tell us what type of economic impact do replacement workers, or as the organization southwest region NDP, Swan River NDP, Maples NDP calls scabs, have on the economy?

Ms. Barrett: No, we have done no analysis on that topic.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister intend on looking at that kind of an analysis as part of her review?

Ms. Barrett: I am not quite sure how one would go about an analysis of that nature, but as I stated earlier we will do a thorough review of all of the pieces of legislation and all of the issues relating to the pieces of legislation that are under the aegis of the Department of Labour.

Mr. Schuler: Perhaps, the Minister could consult with her department, which is sitting right next to her, very highly respected, a very well-spoken of department, and perhaps they could tell the Minister how something like that would be implemented.

Ms. Barrett: Perhaps.

Mr. Schuler: Could the Minister consult with her department on what type of economic impact do replacement workers, or as the organizations that I have previously read—they call them scabs—have on the economy? Could she consult with her department and let this committee know if this type of a study could be done, and is it being planned with the review of the Act?

Ms. Barrett: As I have stated before, all the elements that would be pertinent to the analysis, or deemed to be pertinent to the analysis of all the pieces of labour legislation under my department, will be undertaken.

Mr. Schuler: Under section 11 of the LRA, permanent replacement workers are mentioned and called an unfair labour practice. I will just read for the Minister section 11: Hiring permanent replacement workers. Every employer and every person acting on behalf of an employer, who, prior to or during a lockout or legal strike of a unit of employees of the employer.

Can the Minister tell this committee if the hiring of permanent replacement workers is common practice in Manitoba?

Ms. Barrett: No, it is not.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Board have any involvement with an issue of this nature?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, if an issue of this nature arose, the Labour Board would be directly involved as the adjudicator in that issue.

Mr. Schuler: As part of the review—I am sure the Minister has looked at this—it seems to be that if the Minister was looking at reviewing the whole replacement workers issue, and if she was looking at not having that kind of a situation in Manitoba, obviously if something were to be done, it would be done in this section. Is there anywhere else in the legislation that the Minister is responsible for—anywhere else does it mention the use of replacement workers or scabs?

Ms. Barrett: The word "scab" is not found anywhere in the legislation, and section 11 is the only section in any piece of legislation for which I am responsible that relates to permanent replacement workers.

Mr. Schuler: Section 14 of the Act discusses professional strikebreakers, and I would read for the Minister: "Using professional strike breakers. 14(1) Every employer or employers' organization, and every person acting on behalf of an employer or an employers' organization, who or which uses, or offers to use, or purports to use, or authorizes or permits the use of, a professional strikebreaker commits an unfair labour practice."

Are there professional strikebreakers currently in the province that the Minister knows of?

Ms. Barrett: According to my information we have never had a case of professional strike-breakers. I would just like to ask the Member if he is planning to bring some in.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister—through her to the Department—do they feel that professional strikebreakers are a problem in Manitoba?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated before, we have never had a case of this section being activated in Manitoba. But again I would like to ask the Member if he is interested in expanding his resource base and hiring on some professional strikebreakers?

Mr. Schuler: Perhaps the Chair of the Committee could read from *Beauschene's* and point out to the Minister that the way this works is actually the critic asks questions and the Minister answers them. Answering the critic

with a question is actually not part of the process. Maybe the Minister could just be reminded on that one, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairperson: Do you have a point of order, Member of Springfield?

Point of Order

Mr. Schuler: I will make that in a point of order. Could you please, on a point of order.

Madam Chairperson: On the point of order, I would like to remind the Honourable Member that ministers do not have to answer a question. I reference the ruling from a section of the Committee of Supply from June 13, 1991, where in a similar situation the Chair reminded members that the Committee of Supply is not Question Period and that ministers are entitled to some latitude in answering questions.

The Honourable Member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you for that, Madam Chair. I think it is very clear in that neither are ministers supposed to be asking questions. So we take that as notice, so we appreciate that very much.

Madam Chairperson: Just clarification for the Member so that we do not have to do this again. I would point out the last part of that paragraph: "that ministers are entitled to some latitude in answering questions."

Mr. Schuler: Thank you, Madam Chair. In fact, after about two and a half weeks here, we are still waiting for the Minister to answer some questions. We will be overjoyed when she actually does that.

I wrote a letter to the Minister dealing with Resolution 00-JE-37, and that is Labour Relations Act certification.

WHEREAS the previous government changed to The Labour Relations Act to replace card based certification with a vote-based certification; and

WHEREAS this change was initiated to make it more difficult for workers to form unions; and

WHEREAS it is in the interests of Manitobans and Manitoba to restore the expansion of trade unions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The Labour Relations Act be amended to provide automatic certification in situations where 55 percent of potential bargaining unit members have signed union cards. Brandon East NDP and Brandon West NDP.

* (17:20)

According to section 40(1) of the Act, Minister, 40 percent of employees must sign a union card or undertake a similar process, and then a certification vote will be called and conducted by the Board, and I read: "Representation vote or dismissal. 40(1). Subject to this Part where the board has received an application for certification and is satisfied (a) that, as at the date of the filing of the application, 40% or more of the employees in the proposed unit wish to have the union represent them as their bargaining agent, the board shall conduct a vote among the employees in the proposed unit in accordance with subsection 48(2)."

However, this resolution calls on the Government to change this section and automatically allow certification after 55 percent of employees have signed union cards. Does the Minister have plans to gut section 40(1) of the Act?

Ms. Barrett: As I have stated on many occasions in the past deliberations of these Estimates proceedings, we are going to be making changes to The Labour Relations Act. It would be inappropriate, and I believe actually it was ruled that it would be contrary to the rules for me to discuss the details of legislation in the Estimates process. As a matter of fact, for the Member's edification, when we finally do get members of the opposition debating legislation that we have raised in the House this session, they will be under instruction, the rules of the House, that in debate on second reading they cannot reference specific sections of the

legislation. It is debate on the principles of the legislation. The same applies here. This is a discussion over the Estimates of the Department of Labour, and I am constrained by the rules to not answer questions of any specificity on any possible legislation that may come before this House.

Mr. Schuler: And again, through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister, we know the kind of game that is being played, that the Minister first declared that she is doing a review and then walked into Estimates, and that has been very unfortunate and the Minister is basically hiding, she is fearfully hiding behind her rules. She just makes this blanket statement that she has this big review underway and thus will not answer any of the questions on where the Department is heading, what the intent is with some of the broad announcements that have been made to the public. I think that is very shameful. I think that is very shameful for the Minister because she will not come clean on the direction.

We have gone into past Estimates where Ministers have been forthright and answered questions, certainly when we were on the other side and ministers went into what direction they were planning on going with their particular department, and again you know, I do believe this committee and the House and particularly the public has the right to know. Perhaps one could go so far as to say the Brandon East NDP and the Brandon West NDP would like to know what is the intent of the Minister with her department? In what direction is she going? For instance, here: Therefore be it resolved that The Labour Relations Act be amended to provide automatic certification in situations where 55 percent of potential bargaining unit members have signed union cards, and that is being supported by the Member from Brandon West and the Brandon East NDP. Is this something that the Minister sees as being part of her review? *[interjection]*

I am not done with my question. Are you going to recognize some of the speakers on the other side who seem to be getting into the debate here?

Madam Chairperson: No, but I have something I want to speak to, but on that I would like to

inform the members that I guess I determine what is disruptive from my own frame of reference which is all I can do, and unless I am feeling that disruption myself, I guess it is—I am sorry. So I cannot speak to something that I was not aware of. As long as I can hear what you are saying and am understanding it, I did not find disruption there.

Would the Member for Springfield like to finish his question?

Mr. Schuler: I think we have a point of clarification—

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Fort Garry, on a point of order, with new information.

* (17:30)

Point of Order

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, just for clarification, on a new point of order, new information in terms of, in your judgment, if you can hear cat calls across the way and disruption across the way, could you clarify to me that we should put our hands up for a point of order?

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. On the point of order, the Honourable Member does not have a point of order, and I am going to once again, since you appreciate it—and thank you for that—a point of order should be used to draw the Chair's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to ask a question, dispute the accuracy of facts, clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood or raise a further point of order.

Just one note I would like to make is I very deliberately did not use the word "judgment." I do not see myself as judging. "Determine" is the word I chose. Okay. Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Schuler: That would conclude my question. Perhaps the Minister would like to speak to it, seeing as she certainly will not be answering. I mean she has not answered anything so far. It

would be more if the Minister would respond to the question.

Ms. Barrett: I would be glad to respond to the question. I will state again that I am bound by the rules of the House not to discuss in Estimates any elements of legislation or potential legislation. I cannot answer the question that the Member raised with the specifics of section 41(2) or whichever section that was on the certification, with the exception of saying that because the certification section is part of The Labour Relations Act, it is under review, as are all sections of all pieces of legislation under the aegis of the Department of Labour.

Further than that, more specific than that, I cannot become without going against the rules of the House. If the Member wishes to characterize that as hiding behind the rules, he is well within his rights to make that characterization. I am perfectly comfortable in working with the rules, in abiding by the rules of the Legislature. I do not know where the Member is coming from, what kind of rules he thinks he is—can he choose to abide by some rules and not others? I choose to abide by the rules of the Legislature that are put there for good and sufficient reasons. If he would like to have a dialogue about the rationale for that rule, I would be glad to engage in it with him. I am under strict instructions—not from my party or my caucus or my Cabinet or my leader—by the rules of the Legislature to abide by them, and I am doing so to the best of my ability.

Mr. Schuler: To the Minister, on March 3 to 5, 2000, the New Democratic Party had an annual meeting. There was Resolution 00-JE-18 put forward by the Southwest Region of the NDP. Did the Minister speak to this particular resolution?

Ms. Barrett: I do not recall.

Mr. Schuler: At the same convention, there was Resolution 00-JE-29, and it was put forward by the Swan River NDP. Did the Minister speak to that particular resolution?

Ms. Barrett: I do not recall whether that resolution or the one before or the one following, which I am sure the Member will be asking me, even came to the floor for debate, so I cannot

recall. I do recall speaking on several resolutions that had—but none of them do I recall speaking to that are in this category. I do not believe we took—I know we do not take minutes to the extent of who speaks on what resolution, so I do not know how I can answer that question, other than I do not recall.

Mr. Schuler: At the same convention, March 3 to 5, Resolution 00JE-59 put forward by the Maples NDP, did the Minister speak to that particular resolution?

Ms. Barrett: I give the same response as I gave to the former two questions. I do not recall.

* (17:40)

Mr. Schuler: At the same convention, Resolution 00JE-37 put forward by the Brandon East NDP and the Brandon West NDP, did the Minister speak to that particular resolution?

Ms. Barrett: I do not recall.

Mr. Schuler: Resolution 00JE-18 put forward by the Southwest Region NDP at the NDP's annual general meeting in Brandon, which was held March 3 to 5, did the Minister vote for this particular resolution?

Ms. Barrett: Again, as I stated earlier, I am not even sure if that resolution came before the convention floor, so I do not know if it was even voted on. I cannot remember that. Secondly, there were resolutions that were being debated all throughout the convention. I cannot guarantee, I cannot recall whether I was present for all of the debate. I know I was not present for all of the debate on all the resolutions, so I could not tell you, and we do not record who votes on which resolutions, so I would be unable to give an answer. I honestly do not recall whether that resolution came to the floor for a vote, nor do I recall whether I was in the room for the vote if it did take place.

Mr. Schuler: On March 3 to 5, the New Democratic Party had an annual meeting in Brandon, that would be March of 2000, Resolution 00JE-29 put forward by the Swan River NDP; Resolution 00-JE-59 was put forward by The Maples NDP; 00JE-37, a

resolution put forward by the Brandon East, Brandon West NDP. Did the Minister vote on any of these resolutions?

Ms. Barrett: I will give the same answer that I have given very, very many times before. I do not recall if those resolutions came to the floor for debate, I do not recall if they were actually voted on, and do not recall if I was in the room for the vote, if it took place.

Mrs. Smith: If you can bear with me, I would like to go back to the questions about the professional strikebreakers here in the province, Madam Minister.

Madam Chair, I should maybe back up to give some background to my question that I am asking. I know that professional strikebreakers can be part of mediators, can be part of negotiation, that kind of thing as well. I am wondering when we were talking a little earlier, when Section 14 of the Act discussed professional strikebreakers, I am unclear on exactly what that is.

Could the Minister please inform this committee what exactly that means?

An Honourable Member: What means?

Mrs. Smith: Professional strikebreakers.

Ms. Barrett: A professional strikebreaker would be an individual who would be hired by management to come into a legally constituted strike situation and attempt, through verbal intimidation, physical intimidation, any one of a number of illegal actions, to break that strike. That is why the prohibition against professional strikebreakers is in The Labour Relations Act.

Under no circumstances would they be considered part of mediation or conciliation. Good heavens, I cannot imagine the Member even making that statement.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, what I asked the Minister was: I did not know what a professional strikebreaker was. I am trying to get information, and that is why, to clarify why I am asking. I do not need a derogatory remark back at me. I am trying to honestly ask her what a professional

strikebreaker is because I have never been in the position of having to deal with that or understand what they are about. That is leading up to another question that I have on the same topic. So if the Minister would put aside her caustic remarks, and please just answer the question.

Madam Chair, the question is: I need to know what a professional strikebreaker is and how they are involved in strikes. I do not know what a professional strikebreaker is. Please clarify.

Point of Order

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): On a point of order, I do not see the relevance towards the Estimates, and we are supposed to be doing the Estimates, and I do not see how the definition of strikebreaker has any relevance to the Estimates and this department.

Madam Chairperson: The Member for Springfield, on the same point of order?

Mr. Schuler: Yes, ma'am. Thank you for giving us this opportunity. Members opposite, one must commend them, have great enthusiasm, and I think we have stated that before; however, they allow that enthusiasm to cloud their ability to reason through these points of order. If the members opposite would have taken the time and sat down and perhaps read some of the Estimates of years gone by, which certainly we did on this side, perhaps, they would like to educate themselves on what actually takes place at Estimates.

Madam Chair, there is a tradition that has developed over the years of the kind of questions that are asked. Perhaps the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), instead of playing with his little gidgets, and the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), instead of signing all his little political letters, should pay attention to what is going on here. Perhaps what they should do is get Estimates of years gone by and read through them, and then they would know what is supposed to happen here. They could actually come here and be informed. It would be wonderful to see them come here and actually know what they are talking about.

I would suggest that maybe that would be the recommendation, instead of them always calling up for points of order, that they just do their homework and then come here and be informed MLAs.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I thank all honourable members for their advice respecting the point of order raised. I will take the matter under advisement so that I may peruse *Hansard*, and I will report back to the Committee.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: I answered the question. The Member asked me what a "professional strikebreaker" was and my response to the Member was: a professional strikebreaker is someone hired by management, by the employer to come into a legitimate strike situation, a duly authorized strike situation and disrupt—I will just wait until the Member has time, because I do not really want to repeat the answer a third time—through intimidation, whether of a physical or a psychological nature, a duly constituted strike, and that is why this section is in The Labour Relations Act, to prohibit that kind of activity.

Mrs. Smith: Does the Labour Board have a list of these strikebreakers, and are they monitored in any way in terms of their impact?

Ms. Barrett: As I stated in response to an earlier question on this issue, there has never been an instance in the province of Manitoba where this section, luckily, has had to have been implemented so—

* (17:50)

An Honourable Member: Unless they are hiding something.

Ms. Barrett: Well, then I ask the Member rhetorically, but I did ask the Member for Springfield if he was looking at a new career change or a line of occupation, planning to bring some strikebreakers in, but we have no record of the Labour Board having to respond to strikebreakers activities under this section of The Labour Relations Act.

Mr. Schuler: Resolution 00-JE-37, part of it says: to restore the expansion of trade unions. I

would like to ask the Minister: Does she agree with this part of the resolution?

Ms. Barrett: The position of the New Democratic Party, as is well known to all members or should be well known to all members, is that we believe in a balanced labour relations climate. We believe in the right of workers to freely engage in collective bargaining. We believe in the right of workers to freely engage in the process of determining whether they wish to join or do not wish to join a union.

We have worked over decades to ensure that the rights of workers are not abrogated, the rights of workers to legitimately talk about and decide whether they wish to join a union, not join a union, whether they wish to join a different union, whether they wish to decertify from the union to which they currently belong. We believe very strongly in these principles and believe that a solid labour relations climate in Manitoba is very much enhanced by the enactment of those principles.

Mr. Schuler: Does she see that as being one of the roles of her position as Minister of Labour?

Ms. Barrett: As Minister of Labour, I am ultimately responsible for ensuring that the workers of the province in Manitoba, through the various pieces of legislation for which I hold responsibility, are, in fact, able to work in a healthy and safe environment, that they are assured that they have minimum employment standards that are met and that they have the right to decide within good legislative frameworks whether or not to join a union, which union to join, how long to stay in that union.

Ultimately, the decision as to whether the percentage of workers in a province is unionized or not, the expansion or contraction of the trade union movement, would depend on the will of the workers, assuming that you have a legislative framework that allows for legitimate expression of workers' desires as to whether they want to join a union, not join a union, whether they want to join a different union than the one they are currently in.

As long as you provide that climate that allows for that legitimate expression of workers'

wishes, then the extent to which the workforce of the province of Manitoba is unionized or not will depend on the workers themselves.

Mr. Schuler: Does the Minister believe that that particular climate exists in Manitoba today?

Ms. Barrett: I believe that the labour relations climate in the province of Manitoba could be improved. We spoke out very strenuously in opposition against some of the legislation that was put forward by the former government because we felt that it was unfair to workers, it was unfair to the process and that, ultimately, if allowed to carry on in its current form, some of these pieces of legislation we believe will lead to a worsening of the labour relations climate in the province of Manitoba, which is not good, we believe, for labour, for management, for workers, for owners or for the rest of the citizens of the province.

Mr. Schuler: So the overriding premise of the Minister's review is, then, to change the climate in Manitoba from what it is today.

Ms. Barrett: The review of all of the labour legislation, some of which has a more direct impact on the labour relations climate than others—The Labour Relations Act, because of its scope which deals with the contracts that are negotiated or the ability or inability of workers to negotiate contracts with their employers and the potential strikes and lockouts that can be as a result of inability to successfully conclude negotiations, that piece of legislation has an enormous impact on the labour relations climate in the province.

But many other pieces of labour legislation also have an impact. Employment standards legislation needs to be fair; it needs to be clear. We are reviewing that legislation to see if there are any sections that need to be updated. I know that that piece of legislation just underwent a major review several years ago, so I would suppose that that review would focus more on specific areas. We have spoken with the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) about the potential for implications for employment standards of the changing agricultural workforce.

So all pieces of labour legislation will be reviewed with an eye—more or less, depending on the piece of legislation—to ensuring that there is a solid labour relations climate in Manitoba which is fair to both workers and employers, that provides a healthy workplace for workers, and that provides basic employment standards for all people who are working in the province of Manitoba.

We believe with good labour legislation we will improve the climate for workers, for management, for business in the province, and that we can point then with pride to a labour relations climate in the province of Manitoba that says to people who are looking to move their businesses here: This is a good place to do business because we have well-paid, well-trained workers, a stable workforce that have good health and safety records, that have good employment standards, and that have good labour relations.

Mr. Schuler: On page 7 of the Department of Labour Expenditure Estimates, under Guiding Principles, it says: Consult equally with labour and management.

In the Minister's consulting with management, did they convey to her the feeling that there is a poor labour climate in Manitoba as per the Minister's statement?

Ms. Barrett: The Minister never stated that there was a poor labour relations climate in the province. The Minister stated that, in the review of all the labour legislation, one of the goals was to ensure that there was a good, solid labour relations climate. I stated that there were pieces of legislation that we felt had been drafted in an unfair manner, and that we were looking, over the course of our mandate, to redress some of those inequities to bring balance back to the province of Manitoba and its labour relations climate.

I have had meetings with various groups, as I have stated—and as I stated when we discussed this portion of the Estimates several weeks ago—meetings with a wide range of individuals and groups. We have had a good open dialogue and discussion about a number of issues.

Mr. Schuler: The Minister has mentioned on several occasions that there are some bills that produce a poor climate in Manitoba. Which ones would those be?

Ms. Barrett: I have never said we had a poor labour relations climate in the province of Manitoba. I would like to remind the Member that it is incumbent upon him to listen to what the Minister says, so that accurate information is continuing to be put on the record.

There are pieces of legislation, The Labour Relations Act being one of them, primarily one of them, because as the nature of that act, which guides and forms and deals with a negotiation process, by definition, that means that The Labour Relations Act is one piece of legislation that has a large impact on the labour relations climate in the province of Manitoba. We are looking, as we review all legislation, to ensure that—

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Will the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Food. Will the Minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 27 of the Estimates book. Resolution 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,785,700. Shall this item pass?

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Yesterday we left off on the issue of flooding in the southwest, and we had hoped that the Minister would concede to agree with us that there needs to be some extra action taken to in fact cause the people in the southwest and other parts of the province that have been affected by the '99 flood to gain some confidence that this government was actually serious about helping them with some

financial assistance. That obviously is not going to be the case.

We have asked again in Question Period today whether the Minister or the Premier is going to intervene with Ottawa again before the federal session ends and everybody goes out on holidays and nobody is in Ottawa to make decisions. We know that this Legislature is going to be here for most of the summer, and maybe all of the summer and well into the fall. So we know that we are going to have a lot of time to deal with this issue.

Having said that, I want to ask the Minister, first of all, on this matter, whether she is prepared to go back to her Cabinet and her Premier and try and convince them that there is a real urgency out there and a real need and that there are sufficient funds in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to make the appropriate expenditures to cause the pain to be alleviated. I am wondering whether the Minister is going to be the advocate and go back to her Cabinet and ask for that kind of support.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Chairman, this is certainly an issue we have had a lot of discussion on. The Member indicated that they tried to take some additional action yesterday by bringing forward a motion during our budget which was going to ask us to move funds from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund into the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, I am really quite surprised by that member, who has all the experience as a member for many years now, to bring forward a motion that is so out of order. The Member well knows that is not a function of Estimates and that we cannot move money from one department to another in Estimates, so he knew he was out of order. But I am also surprised at the Member that he would bring forward a resolution like this and not have the support of his caucus.

When we went to have the vote on your ruling, Mr. Chairman, it was obvious, from a number of the members that were there in his caucus, he had not clearly discussed it with his caucus to bring this motion forward. If he had

had the support of his colleagues, he would have had full participation here in the Chamber. So I think it was one of his own ideas that he generated, but it was really not supported because even the Interim Leader of the Conservative caucus was not here to support them on that motion.

Setting that aside, he questions how seriously we take this issue. I have to wonder where the Member has been when he questions how seriously we have taken this issue, when my colleague the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) indicates that he has written seven letters to the Minister responsible, Mr. Eggleton, on this issue, and Mr. Eggleton has refused to have a meeting with us to discuss this very important matter. We continue to try to get a meeting on that matter, but we cannot get the federal government to recognize the seriousness of this issue.

It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister, who was here, did not know the seriousness of the issue when our Premier (Mr. Doer) raised it with him, because the Prime Minister said, well, you know, it has not been raised as a disaster. Well, if the Prime Minister had been fully briefed on this, he would have realized that it indeed had been declared a disaster and that some funds had flowed under the disaster assistance, DFAA, to support things like damages to homes and municipal losses. So the Prime Minister was not fully informed. We hope that the letter that our Premier is sending to the Prime Minister will help to address this particular issue and bring it again to the forefront, Mr. Chairman, because it is a very serious issue.

The rain that we have had this week adds to the problem for those farmers, because there are parts of the land in the southwest part of the province that were still so heavily saturated from last year's water that this year the farmers have not been able to seed. This rain certainly adds to their burden and brings their issue to the forefront again. I am hoping that we will see an end to this rain, and it will not cause additional problems for many producers across the province, that it will end very soon and we can get some good weather that will result in a good

growth in the crop and not further difficulties because of the excessive moisture.

The Member talks about his concern about the session in Ottawa ending and the possibility of the session here coming to an end. Well, I have to remind the Member that government goes on. Even if the session is not on, government does make decisions, and we are going to continue to pursue this issue to see whether we can get the federal government to recognize their responsibilities.

Certainly, Mr. Chairman, if we had the support of the members opposite, where they would pass the resolution that I introduced in the House and give us the strength of all parties standing together supporting the people of southwestern Manitoba, that would be very helpful. The Member, on one side, is out there championing the cause of the people in southwestern Manitoba, but when we ask for their support to pass a resolution, they refuse to do that.

So I really have to wonder how sincere he is about his support for southwestern Manitoba, when on the one hand, he says, oh, yes, you guys should go back to Ottawa, but when we ask them for support, Mr. Chairman, to pass an all-party resolution in this Chamber, he wants to play games and make amendments and try to criticize the provincial government.

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairman, he also asked whether I was prepared to be an advocate in my caucus. Well, I am always an advocate for rural Manitobans and for farmers. I have to tell the Member that I am very proud of our caucus and the understanding that the people in our caucus have of the agriculture industry.

I think he has put comments on the record about none of us having an agriculture background. Well, there are many of our members who have an agriculture background, were raised on farms, have worked on farms and are now owners. In fact, we have a member who has a degree in agriculture. So the Member seems to think that he is the only one that is the champion of agriculture, but I say I have to

question his seriousness on this issue when he will not put forward an all-party resolution.

We indicated that the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) said today that our money is on the table. We have said that to Ottawa, but the Member does not seem to want to take our word. Certainly people who put comments on the record within this Chamber put the truth forward, and we have told him that our money is on the table. We have said to Ottawa, put forward a 90-10 program, put forward a 50-50 program; we will be there to support those producers.

Mr. Chairman, the Member talked about a lot of issues yesterday. He talked about volunteerism and the need for people in communities to work together and help each other out during a disastrous situation, and he talked about the disaster in my part of the province in 1988, when there was a real serious flood, and how his government came to help us out in that flood, but I have to remind the Member that, once again, it was his government that could have prevented some of this flooding, too.

In particular, in my part of the province, there was a proposal to put in a headwater storage on the North Duck River when we were in government in 1986—I mean 1988, I am sorry—and when they came into power they cancelled that project to put in a headwater storage. Now had that headwater storage been in place, or had they had the foresight to follow through on that headwater storage, we could prevent further flooding in that particular area. But his government cancelled the project, and as a result we have had floods since 1988, and we will have floods again. So you have to look for long-term solutions. One of the long-term solutions in my part of the province was to put in a headwater storage on the North Duck River, but his government turned down federal money and cancelled the project for a headwater storage, which would have helped part of the province. That is the kind of planning we had from that government.

Certainly there have been floods after 1988. Not as serious as the one we had in 1988, but I have to say, not only have we had flooding, we

have had other disasters in our area. One of the disasters that we had in our area was fires in the summer of, I believe, somewhere about '91-92. We had quite serious fires in our area. We had an evacuation of my home community. At that time, I want to say that I commend the number of people that pulled together and the support, the tremendous amount of volunteers that we had in our area to help other people.

There are always very difficult challenges. The people of the southwest part of the province are one of the groups that is facing a very serious challenge, and it is unfortunate that the federal government does not recognize this. I hope that they will look at making changes to the DFAA, so that we can have this addressed. Even though we pointed out to them the clause that they could have used to pay the costs in the southwest part of the province, they refused to recognize that.

Mr. Chairman, they have made exceptions in the past. There were exceptions made when there was the ice storm. There were exceptions made during the Saguenay flood. Certainly, there were exceptions made during the flood of the century, the flood in the Red River Valley. All we look for is equal treatment for people of the southwest part of the province, and we will continue to pursue that.

The Member I believe asked for copies of correspondence from my colleague the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton). He has asked for correspondence from the Premier (Mr. Doer). They have said that they will provide those, but certainly he also knows that the federal government has made some comments that led us to believe there was going to be support for the people of the southwest. When Minister Axworthy was in Manitoba visiting with the Premier, he gave an indication that there was some support there, and that made us very hopeful. That made the people of the southwest part of the province very hopeful, but Mr. Axworthy's comments were contradicted by Mr. Eggleton a little bit later on. Mr. Eggleton is the Minister responsible for Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements.

As I told the Member, we have raised this issue through letter, through phone calls, through meetings. We have had many discussions of it in

our caucus and in our Cabinet. We have the support of our government. We do not have the support of the federal government, because we are told that it was taken to the federal Cabinet three times, and each time the federal Cabinet has said no.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I listened very closely to the Minister when she talked about 1988 and the Swan Valley and I listened very closely at where she laid the blame, and clearly her government, before 1988, was in power for many years and prior to that Mr. Schreyer's government was in power for many years, and if there was corrective action to be taken they had roughly about, I believe, 15 years

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to clarify for the Member what I said was that after the flood of '88, the Conservative government cancelled a project that could have prevented future floods.

Mr. Chairperson: Misunderstandings of the facts are not points of order.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: It is obvious the Minister is a bit sensitive when we talk about the immediate action that the provincial government took to alleviate the hurt in the Swan Valley in 1988. It is very clear in my mind that if her government, the NDP at that time would have wanted to take action to alleviate future problem flooding they had roughly about 15 years when they were in power to do that, with a slight interruption of the Lyon administration.

It was obviously clear that they had no intention of taking action out there. But I would remind the Minister that I was the Minister of Natural Resources at that time and my staff informed me that it was in large part, the damage caused in the valley was in large part due to beaver dams having been built upstream and large amounts of water stored and when the dams broke because of the levels of water being raised too high, they crashed down into the valley and caused huge erosion in the valley, and that is understandable. I saw the erosion myself. I saw the large crater that was created on the

Harapiak farm and indeed there was huge damage caused there. There was no way that our government was going to let those people pay for those kinds of damages themselves, so we made the decision, virtually on the spot, to help those people restore their lives and then later on asked Ottawa for their support.

* (15:00)

Basically that is all I am asking this minister to do, is go to western Manitoba, go to the southeast part of this province and say to farmers, we are here, we will pay for the costs and we will make sure that you will not suffer unduly because of Nature's way of dealing with issues, and we have money and we will pay and then we will go to Ottawa and negotiate, as we did in 1988, as we did in 1997 and that is the way it is normally done. The Province takes the lead in their own provinces, as Ontario did, as Québec did and as virtually all other provinces do. They do take the lead. They make decisions and the federal government is then asked to come in and participate.

There is a DFA program. We all know it. We know it well. We know how it functions and in most part it functions well. There might be some adjustments that need to be made to the DFA program, as has been the case in other areas, other times when adjustments were made to that program, but in essence it has worked relatively well. When extraordinary situations occur, then other programs must be brought into being.

That is all we have asked this minister to do, to announce that this province will implement the same programs that were implemented in the Red River Valley and she will initiate that funding and that her government will provide the funding to address those needs. And that is all we have done, and if the Minister wants to be sensitive about that, that is, of course, her business. If they want to make the decision, they are the government, they are in power. If they want to play the blame game, the longer they play the blame game, the longer the people suffer. That is all there is too it.

You cannot fix anything by blaming other people for your problems. You have to fix them

yourself, and so I ask the Minister, and that is the reason I ask the Minister, and this is not a matter for her department to resolve or her department to make decisions on it is her decision. It is Cabinet decisions to decide whether they will in fact expend the money to alleviate the costs that these people have incurred and are still incurring, and to apply the same programs in the southwest, southeast and even some parts of the central that were flooded in 1999. If they want to blame the federal government for it, if they do not want to take action and the federal government does not want to take action, it is clearly a demonstration of the harshness with which they want to deal with this problem. Maybe they even want to teach people lessons. I do not know that. But this is not a departmental problem. It is clearly a political problem and a political decision to be made. So all I did was ask the Minister whether she would be the advocate for agriculture, because that is what she was appointed to be by her own Premier (Mr. Doer) when she was elected to the Government side of this House.

I want to raise one further issue, and it may not take long. The issue is the livestock consultation meetings that the Minister has announced. I received a number of phone calls after the news release came out asking why this must be done in the middle of July, in the middle of summer when farmers are at their busiest, when by the end of July will be getting ready to harvest a crop. It could well be that by July 25, July 30, combines will be out in the field.

I see that the Steinbach meeting will be on July 31. I see that the Morden meeting is on June 29, and I see also that there are no further meetings between Morden and Steinbach. That whole southeast part of the province, there will be no consultations there. Quite frankly, that is where the expansion of the hog production has taken place in the last five years. We wonder why the Minister would choose to leave out that part of the province.

The second other area that I find interesting that a meeting is not being held is the southwest. Again, there is a significant development in hog production taking place over in the southwest part of the province. We find it interesting that the Minister has chosen Brandon, Morden and

Steinbach, and left the rest of the province and southern Manitoba to travel, I suppose, that far if they want to make presentations to the committee that is going to be studying this.

I ask the Minister why she is being so sparse with her meetings and her consultations in those areas.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, again the Member covered a wide range of topics that I would want to respond to, and certainly he asked a question which I am quite prepared to answer. But I would be remiss if I let the opportunity go by to address a very important issue like the situation in the southwest part of the province.

The Member talked about the situation in Swan River, which he quite often refers to, and certainly that was a difficult time for producers. The work that was done was very much appreciated, but I talked about the headwater storage. I would ask the Member to check carefully on the records on that headwater storage, and it is interesting to note that he says he was the Minister of Natural Resources at that time when there was a project. Several headwater storage projects were reviewed during the '80s. In 1987-88, the Cowan headwater storage was one of the ones that was reviewed with the highest score on it and one that was going to proceed. The reason it was going to proceed was there was federal money available for it, joint federal and provincial money.

When we changed governments, the new government decided to turn down this federal money or move it to another project and did not proceed with the headwater storage structure that could have been a model for many other rivers that run off the escarpment of the Duck Mountains. There are other mountains where you might have been able to do this model on. But again, they chose not to proceed with a pilot project of a headwater storage that would then be a model for other escarpment rivers to prevent flooding. So you see, Mr. Chairman, if you would take the initiative and have some vision, you would plan ahead and say, okay, we are going to do a trial project here to see whether we can prevent damage from flooding and then invest ahead of time and then save a lot of

damage, which causes a lot of hardship for farmers.

I have to tell the Member that since that flood in 1988, there have been floods since then. Had that headwaters storage been put in place on that particular river, we would have by now been able to collect some data to see whether this was a good model to put in place to protect other communities and farmers, and what the headwaters storage was supposed to do was regulate the flow. It would hold back the water for a short period of time and maintain the flow so that the river, although it might escape its banks, it would not escape at the rate that it does during a flood.

I am surprised that the Member was the Minister at that time and he would not have had the vision to consider that as a valuable research project for Manitoba, and that his government would turn down federal dollars for a project like this that we could certainly—it may not have been valuable research in the part of the province that he represents because they do not have the kind of runoff that we have in the Parklands and other parts of the province, but it would have been quite interesting to get the results of that research project, especially when you could use federal dollars for it.

Mr. Chairman, I am surprised the Member would also be critical of the steps we have taken to try to get support for the people of the southwest part of the province. He will remember that a representative from his party was with us when we went to Ottawa, when we, again, took a creative approach—something that his government would not do—to put together an all-party committee of politicians, as well as community leaders, farmers and farm organizations to go to Ottawa to lobby the federal government. It is surprising that they would participate in that process but then would refuse to pass an all-party resolution. It just sends a very mixed message, and I am disappointed in the Member, that he is not able to put forward an all-party resolution to give support for the people of the southwest part of the province.

Mr. Chairman, the Member wonders whether we are prepared. We certainly are prepared, and we have put that on the record many times that we are prepared to put our

money into a program if the federal government will agree.

He talks about the money flowing in the Red River. I want to talk about the Red River Valley. My understanding is that in the Red River Valley there was an agreement between the federal and the provincial governments, an agreement somewhere around May 1. The federal and provincial governments came together, signed an agreement and the money flowed to the people of the Red River Valley. Very close—the flooding was just getting in full swing. I wonder why his government, who were in power during the flood of southwestern Manitoba, did not get that kind of an agreement so quickly. How is it that they were able to negotiate an agreement and get something signed for the Red River Valley before they handed out the cheques, and in the southwest part of the province, they did not proceed or try to get an agreement with the federal government. In fact, his government, Mr. Chairman, was handing out cheques before they had any agreement from the federal government. So why is it that, in the Red River Valley, they had an agreement signed? In the southwest part of the province, they had no agreement signed.

* (15:10)

Quite frankly the blame sits with the previous government. Had the previous government gone to the federal government and negotiated to ensure that these costs would be covered, they would have got money from the federal government; but they instead chose to put the money out without an agreement. Now they are telling us put more money out and maybe the federal government will come forward. Well, I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, but that is not the way you manage with the public's funds. There is money on the table right now, and the federal government has a responsibility to address the disaster. Quite frankly, the people of southwestern Manitoba should be upset with the previous government for not negotiating an agreement. Instead of running out to hand their cheques out, they should have had this agreement signed and got the funding that they needed. Had they gotten that agreement, we would not be in this difficulty.

So, Mr. Chairman, you know, they have to think about this. There are some agreements that should be signed. We are prepared to continue to work on this matter. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has said he raised the issue with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister did not seem to understand the issue. A letter has gone. My colleague the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) who is responsible for disaster assistance continues to negotiate and tries to get a meeting with Mr. Eggleton. I have full support, as my colleague the Minister of Government Services does, to lobby the federal government. We would not have gone to Ottawa if we were not serious about this matter. We would not have gone. There is money on the table, but, quite frankly, I think the previous government and the Member opposite has to look at their record and question.

I think the people of southwestern Manitoba should be questioning why they did not do a better job of this. The flooding did not start, the problem in southwestern Manitoba did not start in October. The problem started in the spring of '99. There was a lot of discussion, and it was declared a disaster. Some of the costs were covered. Unfortunately, the Government did not—I am starting to believe the government of the day did not negotiate properly and let the federal government off the hook a little bit, and I think the producers of southwestern Manitoba should recognize who the government of the day was, who was the government when the flood was. The members opposite, they are the people who were there.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is interesting, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for recognizing the Member for Emerson. However, I find it very interesting that the Minister is so sensitive when it comes to speaking about how the government of the day in 1988 recognized the need in the Swan River Valley and immediately came to their aid and did what had to be done.

I also would suggest to the Minister, Mr. Chairman, through you, maybe you could speak to her and suggest to her that she might want to get her facts straight about agreements in the Red River Valley, when agreements were signed and when they were agreed to and when monies were made available.

Yes, monies were made available very quickly, Mr. Chairman. Absolutely they were. The Province did write cheques. She is absolutely correct. So did the federal government write cheques in some areas. The federal government provided, through Western Diversification, some immediate cash assistance to get people started. It was the Business Start Program, and it was the federal government that wrote those cheques. The Province contributed in other areas, but the agreements were signed at a much later date. I attended some of the signing ceremonies right here in the city of Winnipeg after the flood was over. It was after the flood was over. I think the Minister should seriously consider her information before she continues to put false information on the record.

We are quite prepared, Mr. Chairman, as an opposition party, we are quite prepared to support the Minister, to join the Minister in her efforts if she decides to go back to Ottawa and try and meet with the Cabinet and/or the Prime Minister again, to demonstrate by taking personally the documents that we now know exist and that we have copies of, whereby the disaster was declared and the recognition of the disaster was made in June. The proposal to the federal government, they accepted it later, at a significantly later date, and their Cabinet document demonstrates that.

So let the Minister not put on the record that we did not act immediately. We put \$70 million in the pockets of people before the fall of the year, right after we recognized how severe the disaster was, without getting any conviction or support from the federal government at that time. They came at a later date after we had made the decision. They came at a later date and said through AIDA we will support our 50 percent of the contribution, which in essence provides 40% provincial funding to AIDA and then AIDA is used to offset the 50 percent which is deemed to be federal.

The Minister was correct the other day in her statement saying that a major portion of the money came from the provincial government in that manner, and it did. There is no question about that. But that was the only response we could get from Ottawa at the day, and we thought it was time to say yes to those kinds of

things and get on with supporting the people in that part of the world that were suffering, suffering severely. I believe that truly this government has sadly neglected and not recognized the need to the business community, to the people who did not get any crop at all. Even though they were paid \$50 an acre, it went a very small way in realizing the true cost of doing business for a whole year and providing income for families.

So another decision should have been made in the latter part of the crop year in the fall of the year. Normally it is only during September, October, that harvests are done, that you know what the true impact is. We know that the crop that was harvested was a very, very poor one. We know that some of those people had crop insurance, but many did not. We know that, even though they seeded a crop and did not qualify for the non-seeded acreage of \$50 an acre, they, in fact, now are probably worse off than the ones that did not seed a crop, the ones that harvested a crop, and that is the area that needs to be addressed.

The Minister keeps blaming the federal government, keeps blaming the previous government. But we have wide shoulders. We accept blame. We know we did not do everything right, and we are the first ones to recognize that. But let this minister—surely, she has a conscience. She will sit there and try and blame everybody else but recognize her responsibility. She was elected. She was appointed minister. The Premier (Mr. Doer) was elected Premier, and Cabinet members have the right to make decisions, and they should make decisions.

Certainly, Mr. Chairman, you would recognize, above anybody else in this Chamber, the need to alleviate the human suffering. Even though this minister seems to have no heart at all when she speaks about this, because she recognizes full well what it meant in the Swan River Valley or in the Interlake when the huge fires roared through the Interlake, that a government immediately made a decision and said, yes, we will be there. By the way, Mr. Chairman, then we started negotiations with the federal government and said you must cost-share.

* (15:20)

It took seven years of negotiations to convince the federal government of their responsibility, seven years. Now this minister wants to walk away from the issue without having made the effort, without making sure that the demonstration of the recognition of the hurt is real by putting out the money and then going back to the feds and negotiating. This would not be a precedent-setting measure. This would be virtually the norm in Manitoba.

A similar type of thing has happened in the Red River Valley. The agreements were struck later. I say to the Minister that she should have heart, Mr. Chairman, and she should recognize the pain that goes on. Instead of blaming, blaming, blaming others, she has the right and her government has the right to step in and alleviate the pain, and yet she will refuse to do that.

I asked the Minister a question before, why it was that she had scattered the hearings on the livestock consultation meetings so sparsely across those areas, where especially the primary pork development was taking place in the province, and I wonder why there are so few consultation meetings being held in those parts of the province where there is significant livestock development in that area.

The beef industry is a very large part of southeast Manitoba. I would suspect that the Vita area would have been a perfect place to hold a consultation meeting. I think many of the beef producers would have come forward. Many of the sheep producers in this province are situated in that part of the province and would have come forward. They would have indicated to the Minister the diversity of our livestock sector in this province. They would have indicated the need to recognize the differences between the various aspects of livestock production. Yet she is going to force many of these producers, if they want to make representation, want to make their views known, to drive great distances, either from Middlebro all the way to Morden, which is roughly about 170 miles, or all the way from Middlebro to Steinbach, which is some 70 or 80 miles one way. To drive that distance, I think she would

have done well, if she would have at least held some of those meetings in that Vita area and another meeting maybe in the Waskada-Melita area which would not have required those people to drive all the way to either Morden, which is better than 100 miles and/or to Brandon, which is again some 50 or 60 miles. I guess the Minister is aware that there might be some good advice in some of those areas, and it appears to me, Mr. Chairman, that she in fact, maybe does not want to hear some of that kind of presentation. That is why she has scheduled the meetings where and when she has scheduled them.

So I ask the Minister whether she has an answer to that question that I asked previously.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member has raised an important question, but I want to reflect back a bit on what he said about the flooding in the southwest part of the province and that the people did not know the consequences of this situation until October. Well, I would remind the Member that there was a major meeting in mid-June in Melita when it was well recognized. We had been in that area before that. It was obvious that the crop was not going to get into the ground, and there were going to be very serious problems. Nobody had to wait until October to see the consequences. Certainly the crop that came off the ground, the details of that were not known. People knew. For him to say that people did not know this was a disaster or that farmers would need the support until September or October is not true. People were looking for the support much earlier. There was a huge rally in Melita earlier. We met with Chambers of Commerce. We met with town councils earlier than that. For him to say that nothing could have been done before that is not accurate, and I want to just tell the Member that I recognize how serious the situation is, and that is why we have put together an all-party committee. That is why we have asked for an all-party resolution to be passed, and that is why we have met with federal ministers and asked them to join with us in this effort. They have not done that.

The Member is referring to the Stewardship Initiative that we have put forward and asked why we are leaving out certain parts of the

province. I want to tell the Member that we have set this schedule of six meetings that have been scheduled, that are going to be held, and we have distributed them across the province and hoped that we will have a good representation at all the meetings to discuss this very important issue, but I also remind the Member that written submissions can be put in.

There is a Web site that people can put their responses on, but this is only one form of communication. There are other forms of communication. We meet with farmers all the time to discuss all aspects of agriculture. Certainly there is growth in our beef industry. We see the numbers of our sheep and goats increasing. There is an increase in hog production. All of these livestock industries are very important, and we know that it is an important part of the economy. The Member talks about the people travelling. Well, I remind the Member we have events like poultry days that are held in one centre. We have Ag days that are held in one centre, and farmers and producers travel from across the province to attend these kinds of events.

I know and I think that the Member should have more faith in the farming community. When the farming community sees an important issue and an issue that they want to comment on, they are going to find a way. If there is need for more consultation, those are options. The committee is going to deal with that, but let us not get the cart before the horse. Their meetings are advertised. Let us look at what kind of registration we have at these meetings, and then we will address it, but certainly I know that farmers when they are looking for information or want to provide information they are prepared to travel.

Mr. Chairman, these are important issues and farmers will have the opportunity to have input, to ensure that as we plan the growth of our industry, that this growth takes place in a responsible sustainable way, that we address the economics of it, the environmental issues and the social issues that all come with it. All of those issues are what we want to see addressed. I know that producers are going to be participating and let us not prejudge what is happening. Let us wait and see how many people are attending, and

there is the ability to hear all participants, and we certainly expect written presentations.

I know, Mr. Chairman, we announced this several months ago, that we were going to be going through this process. People are well aware of it. I know that those people who want to make comments have been preparing their comments for some time, and they will have the opportunity through many forums to bring their thoughts to the panel.

* (15:30)

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to be here this afternoon. I want to begin by thanking the Minister for earlier this afternoon recognizing the lifelong contribution of Dr. Clay Gilson to Manitoba, and most certainly the agricultural industry throughout those years have benefited immensely from his contributions. I would like to thank the Minister for her statement of earlier today.

Mr. Chairperson: Any questions? Shall this item pass?

Mr. Faurschou: No. Mr. Chairman, I was waiting for the attention of the Minister. I am afraid that sometimes we are in here a lengthy time and there are messages that have to come and go from this Chamber, so I was waiting for the Minister's attention.

As I was saying, I appreciated the Minister's statement earlier today in regard to Dr. Clay Gilson. The Minister, just moments ago, made a couple of statements that really truly are ones that provided inaccuracies to the official record of this very honoured Chamber. I, as the Member for Portage la Prairie, did participate in discussions regarding the excess moisture situation and the potential for not being able to crop upwards to a million acres in the province of Manitoba, and the Department officials in Agriculture made a great deal of preparation in the spring of 1999 to support the seeding efforts should they have presented themselves. There were programs in place recognizing the seriousness of the situation, and it is inaccurate to suggest that the previous government was not making any movements to recognize the

hardships that producers were experiencing in the southwest quarter.

I know it is very important to myself as an agricultural producer in this province to make certain that we recognize the agriculture community and the importance that it has to not only the economic viability of this province but that of the sustained economic viability of the communities and support services that are so vitally linked to the Ag industry in this province.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister as a member of this Legislative Assembly whether she is considerate at this time, then, to amend the resolution that is in the Chamber at this time discussing the disastrous situation that southwest Manitoba and, in fact, other areas of Manitoba experienced in regard to excess moisture, to bring that resolution up to the current-day situation, insofar as the acknowledgement that she has made that the dollars are there and the provincial government is most assuredly ready to participate.

So that is just a quick question to ask the Minister, whether she is prepared to do that at this time. Short answers, please.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would certainly be prepared to answer the question, but I want to correct his comments on the record. He talked about the work of the Department and that I did not recognize the work the people were doing during the flood situation. Certainly, I give a lot of credit to the people in the Department.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, there was a group of people who worked on the disaster who were nominated for an award at the service excellence awards today. They were not successful in getting the award, but just to have that group of people who dealt with the disaster and the flooding in the southwest be recognized by their peers as doing outstanding jobs indicates very clearly that the people in the Department were there and worked with the farmers and worked to implement the supports, whether it was the seeding program or any of the programs.

What I said, Mr. Chairman, was that it was unfortunate that the previous government did not negotiate with the federal government before

they paid out money. They negotiated during the time of the flood of the Red River Valley and got agreements. What I said was it is unfortunate that they did not take those steps then to ensure that the federal government was going to fulfil their responsibility. I think that that would have helped an awful lot in the situation.

The Member talks about amending the resolution. Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, we have missed the boat on the resolution. What we were looking for was to get all-party support, a resolution that we could take to Ottawa saying that just as we had all-party support when we took the delegation to Ottawa to talk about the income shortfalls and the disaster, we were looking to have support from this Chamber, from all parties, that we could go to Ottawa, to the Cabinet there, to the Ministers that we met with and say, yes, we have support of all parties. Unfortunately, the members of the Opposition did not feel that it was important enough to give this kind of signal, and we were not able to have that kind of strength with us when we went to Ottawa.

To amend the resolution, I think we have certainly missed an important opportunity.

Mr. Faurschou: Can we move now into the Department section to which we—

Mr. Chairperson: Well, the Chair would be glad, if we take up the item under consideration. We have been out of this topic for two or three days.

Mr. Faurschou: In regard to the Agricultural Development and Marketing, within the Province of Manitoba, the Department has shown a great deal of leadership over the years. I am wanting to ask questions that will be related to continued leadership and support of the diversification and value-added industry that is so necessary for the proliferation and prosperity of the agricultural community.

* (15:40)

In regard to marketing, I would like to ask the Minister: Is there continuation of the strong relationship between her department and the Department of Industry and Trade for the

promotion of agriculture-related products produced here in Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I want to tell the Member that there is a very strong relationship between Industry, Trade and Mines and my department. We work very closely on promotion of trade and development. We also work very closely with the federal government, and in fact have just signed a memorandum of understanding. It is a renewal of an agreement that has been there, a memorandum of understanding that has been there, and we have renewed that agreement. We do work very closely on various projects.

Just yesterday, we had breakfast with a delegation from Egypt. There were representatives there from Manitoba Trade, representatives from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, representatives from the business community. We work very, very closely with them on various projects. Manitoba Trade has representatives in various countries, and when our department is working on trade missions then we use those resources through Manitoba Trade. So there is a collaboration of working together between our department and the federal government to ensure that both ingoing and outgoing trade, that there is a co-ordination between all departments on those matters.

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate the Minister continuing the relationship between her department and Industry and Trade. I am wondering, though, is there going to remain a continued focus, if I might use that term, on proliferation of the trade with Mexico and the merging market that is present in that country just simply because of demographics? Half the population is in their early 20s or less, and this is a tremendous opportunity to develop a greater marketplace for Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, Mexico is one of eight markets that we are focussing on, and one that I believe offers tremendous opportunity for us. The Member talks about the location of Mexico to Manitoba, and certainly there is a trade corridor that is very important for trade both ways.

I want to tell the Member that I had the opportunity to lead a trade mission to Mexico

and visited in six or seven cities, meeting with officials there to talk about the importance of trade. Certainly there is a tremendous opportunity for us there. We have letters of understanding with Jalisco, and when we were in Mexico, the Durango government expressed an interest in signing a memorandum of understanding with us. We are hoping that they will be in Manitoba this year to sign that memorandum of understanding.

We also anticipate that we will have an incoming mission from Jalisco. That province is interested in breeding stock for the beef industry. I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, I made a mistake on that. What I meant to say was that we did have a mission from Jalisco, and at that time, to look at our breeding stock. They were very interested in our breeding stock. As a result of that, one of our dairy producers was down in Mexico with us, and that has resulted in some additional trade in dairy genetics.

Certainly there have been goats that have gone from Manitoba to Mexico, something that is a very, very interesting project that the Sisters of the Catholic Church are setting up to help orphaned children. I had the opportunity to visit that site, and I was quite impressed. I understand that the Sister that is in charge of that project is hoping to come to Manitoba this summer as well and recruit more goats to ship to Mexico. I think there are opportunities there as well.

So, Mr. Chairman, yes, there are opportunities in the livestock industry, certainly in the forage industry. We had people from the Manitoba Forage association with us who are looking at shipping hay to Mexico. The challenge is the bulkiness of the hay and the transportation costs. That is something that has to be worked around, but you look at that and you see that as a real partnership. There is a very large population there, but they have very dry weather. They need to produce food, and there is an opportunity for our farmers to grow hay and ship it down there if we can work through the whole transportation issue.

I also have to say, Mr. Chairman, that there is a project to ship bison. I had a chance to witness the signing of that agreement between the Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation and the

city of—just near Mexico City. The name of the city escapes me. There are many opportunities: bison, forage, genetics, and certainly they produce vegetables and fruit during our cold season, so there is the opportunity for two-way trade and, as a result of that trade mission, there has been a follow-up with respect to the bison. The other area where Mexico plays a very important market for us is in beans. Manitoba has become the king bean producer of Canada, and I had the opportunity to tour a bean processing facility and meet with many of the wholesalers who are interested in working out arrangements for additional beans to go from Manitoba to Mexico. It is an important trade area and one we are focusing on.

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate all of the information the Minister is providing, and it just goes further to say that this is a very important market. I appreciate the Minister mentioning that it is in fact a two-way trade that is important to the Mexican government and its people. We should most certainly be looking at opportunities so that the transportation corridor is not just road corridor but rail as well, that the opportunities are there to have loaded vehicles both ways. I appreciate the Minister's remarks in that regard and I thank her for them.

I would like to ask the Minister, in regard to marketing and continued relationships, it is very important that our producers are kept within the loop of information about expanding markets, new markets, market opportunities. The Department has in past sponsored and co-sponsored technology and training programs that have assisted producers in their production decisions, and I would like to ask the Minister today: Is she looking to not only continue with those types of opportunities for the farming community of our province but looking to enhance that for the producers so that they can be kept up to speed and have knowledge of these opportunities, so they can be the ones prepared to fill these market opportunities?

* (15:50)

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member raises a very important point because there is no point in doing these trade missions or having them come in if that information and those opportunities are

not shared with the producers. The information is shared on a regular basis with the regional staff and as a trade mission's commodity group staff that gets this information out to the regions.

We have taken some new steps on this as well. We have just appointed or put in place a marketing extension contact group of eight people that will be the go-between the producers and the regional offices and the trade office to ensure that the information is getting out. In fact, this group is going to have their first meeting tomorrow, and that is a very good step.

But also, Mr. Chairman, as a new step, in this budget we have put in place \$16,900 for Internet marketing. Through that database we will be developing a database of all the information from the various clients and the clients that are there. So that is a very important starting point to a new initiative to get the information of what the results of the trade missions are, what the opportunities are out there. So that project is getting put into place right now.

As well, we have the home page, which is the second most popular home page within government. Actually the Tourism one is the one that is the most popular one. There is a lot of information on that site, and that is another tool that we have there. I want to tell the Member also that we work very close with ITM on this and with Manitoba Trade to ensure there is not duplication, that the information is out there. But we recognize the importance of getting the information to the producers, to the consumers and to the business community because that is what trade is about.

I have to tell the Member that as we go on these trade missions and reach out into other countries, it is not only for food products, it is technology that we are interested in as well. Certainly when we had people here from Italy, they talked about the excellent technology that they have in meat processing that we do not have here. It is a two-way communication. Through the home page and through the new model that we are setting up for Internet marketing, those will be very beneficial, as well as the marketing extension contact group. All of this information

also goes to the regional offices, and it is available there.

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate the Minister's response in that regard because it is vitally important about the information transfer. May I be a little more specific insofar as there were winter courses available to producers throughout the province that supplied producers with training that showed them how to access department references through the Internet, how to make the connections, as well showing what technology one needed to achieve these. So it was really a hands-on program, and I am really concerned that this programming be maintained and available to producers.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, those types of projects are continuing.

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate the Minister's support in this regard, as it is extremely vital.

The open opportunities, and I want to go over to just not only education and information transfer, but I do want to ask the Minister as to the direction and support that she is showing to the Department of Education, where as we identify the marketplaces and start to enter into production, that we require trained individuals to carry forward.

I might just use the example of the swine technicians course that is just this year now being offered out of Brandon. I believe that this type of program is absolutely necessary, and I want to comment at this time that that technicians program in my own interpretation and analysis should have been in place four to five years ago, because the absolute critical shortage of trained and knowledgeable individuals throughout this province is right now being shown as a restriction on further expansion. Regardless of how great the opportunity there is, if we do not have the people to capture that opportunity, then it truly could be lost to us.

I know the department is well versed and understanding of where I am going with this line of questioning, and I would like to ask the Minister for her commitment to make absolutely certain that not only the department and agri-

cultural producers have knowledge of this but that the Department of Education is very well understanding of the needs of our sector of the economic industry here in Manitoba.

* (16:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I want to assure the Member that we indeed do work very closely with the Department of Education, and I have personally had discussions with the Minister of Education to talk about programs and in fact some of the programs that we could work into the high school curriculum as well as after high school. But I wanted to let the Member know that we have within the Department an agriculture curriculum specialist who works with the Department of Education to ensure that agriculture is included in the curriculum. We want agriculture not to be just an add-on to the curriculum, but agriculture is a very important part of Manitoba's economy and it should be used wherever possible incorporated into the curriculum, whether it be in math or health or in sciences, and as well we work very closely with Ag in the classroom.

There is no doubt that our agriculture industry is changing, and there is need for more skilled people to be trained, particularly in the hog industry. That is the one that the Member referred to, and there are several training programs that are going on right now. We have the Swine Care Workers Level 1 program which is a six-week course offered at Assiniboine Community College, and the course covers the basics of swine production and is focused at entrance into the industry. In 1999 the courses were being offered at Ste. Anne, Selkirk and Brandon. It is in the Ste. Anne one that they are looking for additional—that is one of the areas that is quite successful.

There is also the Swine Technician Certificate Level 2 offered at ACC. There is the Swine Technician Certificate Level 2B offered also at ACC on a distance education basis. Now that is a very important concept, I think, that we look at offering these courses via distance education because people cannot always get to the site for their training. Assiniboine Community College and the Manitoba Pork Council as well as Manitoba Education and

Training are developing a new Swine Technician Apprenticeship program to recruit people into the Manitoba pork industry, and this program is designed to replace ACC's current swine programs that I outlined above.

They are looking at the programs they have and looking at ways that the programs can be improved to meet the needs of the people. Assiniboine Community College also offers a 60-hour course on swine record-keeping, and that is very important. When you get into the kind of agriculture and livestock production that we have today, record-keeping is very important.

As well, through the University of Manitoba there are several courses in production facilities and in barn management through the two-year diploma, undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Manitoba Education and Training is working with the industry to introduce a program that focuses on the swine sector at the high school at Ste. Anne, and that is one that I mentioned earlier and one that I have had discussion with the Minister of Education to ensure that the people who take this course at Ste. Anne are able to get credit for the course when they go into another program instead of having to repeat some of the things because the course at Ste. Anne is very hands-on and they actually work in barns so you want them to be able to get their credit for that instead of having to go back to the classroom and repeat it, and that is something I have had discussion on. Souris Valley School Division is developing a pork production course to be included in their high school curriculum, and a pork production and management short course has been offered every year at the University of Manitoba. As well, Manitoba Pork Advantage promotes skilled workers and managers to consider Manitoba as a place for employment.

One of the challenges is that, although some of these courses are being offered, there is not always full enrolment. So I think the courses that are being offered at the high-school level in some of the areas is a good step, because then people are right at home and you are getting people right from the agriculture community beginning some courses right in high school.

One of the challenges is getting enough attendance, and certainly we have to talk about promoting this kind of work. Many times, people do not think about working with livestock as one of the choice careers to be going into, but I had the opportunity to talk to some of the people at one of the barns in Brandon. They were happy with their pay. They were happy with their working conditions. I think, as the industry grows, we will have more people entering into the field.

So, through Manitoba Agriculture, we work with the Department of Education, and through Workforce 2000 have worked co-operatively and in the development of Manitoba Pork management certificate program and other programs, and recognize the importance of getting the training, because high levels of skill and training are needed for many of these jobs.

Mr. Faurschou: I want to thank the Minister for her remarks. In one word she mentioned a most critical factor is promotion of educational opportunities. I find that that is a significant point that is right now underutilized or is receiving less than, what I feel, and by the numbers of enrollment, as well, less attention than is required to do that. Because, as the Minister has well recognized, those of us who are in the industry recognize that employment opportunities abound in agriculture. In fact, working opportunities with good pay and great working conditions do in fact exist in the agriculture industry.

So I would encourage the Minister, even though we have really excellent technical and knowledgeable staff within the Department, we do need a little bit of marketing and promotional prowess within the Department that will make the most of what we have already.

I know I have shared with our agriculture representative in Portage la Prairie some ideas, and he has been quite successful with them. But we all know that it is very disheartening to put a lot of effort into sponsorship of a course and then find that it is underutilized through low enrolment. That is very disappointing for all concerned. So if we can do as good a job on promotion as we do in crafting some of these

programs, I think that that is most certainly something that we should be doing.

Does the Minister have a comment, in that respect?

* (16:10)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we work with the Department of Education. We work with people in the industry to promote the importance of the agriculture industry and the opportunities in the industry, not only in the hog industry but in the livestock industry, in all aspects of it.

With the opportunities for employment, we target the high school symposiums. There is one here in Winnipeg and I believe there is one in Brandon. There are symposiums across the province. When those symposiums are on, we have displays there and talk about the opportunities for employment in the industry. As well, Manitoba Pork has a booth there. Our department works along with Manitoba Pork pointing out the opportunities that are there. Manitoba Pork's display is called *This is a Pig, this is your chance* just pointing out that there are opportunities.

There is no doubt that as the industry grows there are going to be more opportunities. We have to look at the curriculums. We have to ensure the staff that we have is involved with curriculum, makes urban people aware of the opportunities in agriculture as well. We should not just be targeting rural people because these are also opportunities for urban people. There are opportunities for more and more people to go into the veterinarian studies. That is certainly one area that is changing as we have an increase in livestock. Those are very important areas that the Department recognizes. It is a matter of working together, not only in the Department, but also working together with the industry. As a department, we have to understand we have to work along with the industry.

I also want to point out that there is a national 4-H careers conference. It is the only national 4-H conference that is held outside of Ontario, and it is held here. Again, through this 4-H conference we are able to promote agriculture. There is this career symposium there

as well, where we can talk about the different opportunities in agriculture. Again, we are talking about the livestock. Also, there are many careers as we move towards value-added and changing grain production.

You look at the different crops and jobs that there could be within the canola industry, in the various oil seeds, in the bean industry. We have to look at training for people to work in the livestock industry, but we also have to ensure that we take that broad picture and give young people, urban and rural, a full picture for them to look at all of the opportunities that are there.

Mr. Faurschou: Again, I appreciate the Minister's recognition that agriculture industry here in Manitoba is exciting and it is dynamic. It is expanding and the opportunities abound. You can just look to the graduates of the various agricultural Ag institutions, training institutions here in our province and the level of employment that is garnered in their field, well into the 90% employment in their field of training. So we are still in a great deal of need of further well-trained individuals within our sector. I want to also want to say not only the new markets and value-added industry but even within our own traditional production. I might just cite the technology that one has to be accustomed with, with just placing one's self in the combine seat of a new model and to activate the on-board computer and the GPS mapping system and the tracking controls and the automated setting of that combine for the most efficient thrashing. Simply, Mr. Chairman, even to place the combine in motion, one has to understand the electronics that are involved in activating the combine and to carry out its thrashing within the field. We need continuous upgrading and training, and one has to look to the recognition in this very low margin production time in agriculture, that we cannot always afford, as producers, to maintain the training necessary to keep that cutting edge efficiency on our farms.

Mr. Cris Aglugub, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I want to make the Minister cognizant of the fact that it is vital that we have the opportunities to upgrade our employees, including the

managers such as myself, in current day's understanding of most efficient practices, to keep us most viable. We must have the ear of the Finance Minister in being able to recognize the tuition, the travel, the expenses that are incurred by upgrading, as well as new employees on the farm that are able to be recognized for the various programs that other sectors of business avail themselves to training on the job of new employees or employees that are changing job responsibilities. Those are the points that I would like to just leave with the Minister.

The question I have is emanating out of the Minister's last response. That involves veterinary training. Last year I was really taken aback by the level of service that our blossoming livestock industry is having to endure, as far as support from veterinarian services. Many areas throughout the province were significantly understaffed by trained personnel.

There are a couple of questions I would like to ask the Minister in this regard. First off, in the training of new veterinarians I want to ask the Minister: Is in fact now a criteria within the candidates screening of individuals that we support in the veterinarian programming in Saskatchewan, training in Saskatchewan, a culling of those—sorry, the word "culling" is not the most chosen word—screening of individuals that would have the greatest aptitude towards returning to the rural practices? We have been, in fact, training a great number of veterinarians. However, those veterinarians, once they are completing their practice, or starting their practices, choose to go to the city where it is perhaps more lucrative in remuneration, as well as hours being more desirable in their lifestyle, if I might say. So I would like the Minister's response to that.

* (16:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: Before I answer the question, I wonder if the Member can clarify, we are moving into another area now, into Vet Services. I wonder if the Member can indicate whether he is prepared to pass (a) and (b), so that the staff that is with us can leave the Chamber and we can bring the staff from Veterinary Services in.

Mr. Faurschou: No, I was going off the lead of the Minister when she spoke of veterinarian

training. That spawned my question on training. However, I am still on business management, and I have questions for Grant Assistance and Other Grant Assistance yet, so I would not like to completely leave (a) at this point in time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Member raises a very valid point about our veterinarians and the ability to maintain them here, and the Member talked in his beginning comments about how agriculture is abounding, and there are certainly lots of opportunities in agriculture.

I have to say to the Member that I agree with him. That is a challenge for us as a department. Because of the opportunities that are out there, many times you have people leaving the Department to go work somewhere else because there are opportunities.

But, certainly, there are lots of opportunities in Manitoba, and Manitoba is growing in diversity in the agriculture industry. We are second in potato production, first in bean production, third in pork production, so we know that there are lots of opportunities. There are lots of opportunities for employment, but along with that, there come challenges.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

One of the challenges we have is with veterinarians. The Member raises a very important point about, you know, people are trained, but they are not coming back to work in Manitoba, and how do you correct that. I think one of the things we have to realize is that young veterinarians, when they go through college, they train with some of the best equipment that there is, Mr. Chairman, and then they go out to one of these rural practices and the equipment can be quite antiquated. So we have a program in place where there is \$300,000 that is being used to upgrade equipment, and, hopefully, that will help young people want to go to rural facilities.

Also, many of the veterinarians are looking for places where they have regular hours, places where they have weekends off, and, quite frankly, most times that means going in to the city. I cannot say that I blame many of these young people, because they can go to a clinic

where they have regular hours. They can make more money than they can in rural Manitoba and spend time with their families. There are programs that, hopefully, will help veterinarians come to Manitoba. There is a Vet Science Scholarship fund that is in place, and if the student comes back to work for five years, then they get their full scholarship and get their scholarship paid off. There is also the Veterinarian Student Employment Program that is a very important part of recruiting veterinarians to rural practices. The hope is that, if an individual comes out to a rural community and spends the summer there, they might see the benefits of living in rural Manitoba, because sometimes it is not only making a lot of money that is important. It is a quality of life that we have in rural Manitoba, that is different than in urban centres.

There is a challenge in keeping people in rural Manitoba, and keeping them working in Manitoba instead of going somewhere else. It is not a new challenge. It is one that has been there for a long time. I am hoping that we will see more veterinarians in Manitoba, and more stability to the vet services in rural Manitoba as the number of livestock increases, and certainly we are seeing an increase.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the Minister's knowledge on this subject, and, in fact, I agree with her whole-heartedly. The question, though, that I had today, as I had a year ago, is with the academic community—the selection process. I would like to ask the Minister if she is prepared to approach the institutions that make the selection for individuals that will continue their higher education within the veterinarian field, that the selection involve questioning that would determine, to a greater degree, the attitude and aptitude of those candidates to take up practice in the rural of Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, that is a question that I would like to respond to when we have the staff from the Vet Services with us, so I will take it as notice and then get the answer back to the Member.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that the staff is not present for this area, so I will

leave the further questions that I had for Veterinary Services to another day. I would like to just ask one further question—and I am going to turn then the floor over to my honoured colleague from Arthur-Virden to continue in this section—and that is in regard to the disappointment that many within the Ag industry who recognize past contributions or present contributions, as the Ag Society has a challenge to do, that not even a recognition of inflationary dollars comes into their budget. The Ag Society and their undertakings have had to make do with a static budget, and, again, I see a great deal of disappointment that in the overall Agriculture Department it does not even get inflation adjustment to carry on the programmings. This disappoints me when I have to see the First Minister (Mr. Doer) stand and say that agriculture is a very important and integral part of this province, and then to come down and say that, well, you do not even qualify to get what you got last year because inflation has taken the bite out.

* (16:30)

So it concerns me greatly that we are continuing to lose a lot of our heritage because of time marching on, and that the museums and Ag Societies and other areas that try to preserve our heritage in this part of our economy and our heritage. This is why I am so gravely concerned because once the opportunity is lost, it is lost in fact forever. We are getting a smaller and smaller contingent of people involved in rural Manitoba in agriculture. We do not have the resources we used to, just because of sheer numbers, to carry on the nature of this work. So this is why I am very disappointed in these next two lines. If the Minister wants to respond to my comments, I would appreciate it.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Member raises the Ag Societies—they certainly play an important role—and he has expressed his disappointment. I have to wonder whether the Member expressed the same disappointment for the past five years because the number has been maintained the same. The numbers I have here go back to 1996-97, and the number is stagnant. So I hope that he raised it.

He also talks about the Agriculture budget and his disappointment in inflation. I wonder if

the Member looked back at the record and looked at how high the Budget was in the early '90s under his government's administration, looked at the decline. In 1990, it was 1.12 and then it went up in '92 to 1.35. I will skip a few and I will go to '96-97, when I believe he was a member already, and it went down to \$96 million. In '97 it went to \$97 million, and he did not express his disappointment at those times. Now we have had a slight increase in the Budget, and I would think that he would look at this as recognition that there is indeed a commitment from our government to the agriculture industry.

The Member has to also remember that there was additional money put in in last year's budget to enhance AIDA. There are additional programs put in place. So I think that the Member, in expressing his disappointment, should look at the numbers that his government put forward. In fact, Manitoba Ag Societies do play a very important role. Their funding is important. But it is stagnant, back from '96, at least back to 1996. I would certainly hope that the Member expressed his disappointment to the previous administration as well.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Thank you for that answer, Madam Minister, but I am assuming that—I do not know what Mr. Faurschou did last year in regard to challenging the Department on the amount of budget that we had in that area, but I can assure you that I was not here. [*interjection*] Well, thank you. It is a pleasure to be here. Being a farmer in the rural area, I am very well aware of what it was in a number of situations. I guess we are looking at the situation of the support that was there last year, that is for sure, in regard to farmers when they really needed it. As you know, you agreed there was \$71 million that came out in that whole area. I think it is very well proven that the Conservative government, when they were in power, did put those funds forward.

Madam Minister, as much as you have alluded to a slight increase, I believe there is still an overall decrease in regard to marketing in the total—I was looking, pardon me, only at the Salaries and Employee Benefits, which are down slightly. I am assuming you can give us an indication of why. I believe it is only \$900. I am

just wondering what discrepancy there would be to have that small of a difference.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, if you look at line 3.4, which we have been discussing for some time now, the estimated expenditure in 1999-2000 was \$14.127 million. For this year it is \$14.949 million. There is an overall increase in the Budget for Agricultural Development and Marketing. If the Member is talking about the decrease in Salaries and Employee Benefits, those are just the kind of, you have different staff hired, somebody new comes in and you would then have some adjustment in salaries where somebody might come in at a different level on the pay scale. So there is some adjustment there. The other one, you have a slight decrease in transportation or communications. That is just a variation on the amount of travel that somebody might be doing. There is an increase in communications. Our department must be working very efficiently and has had a slight reduction in their travel.

Mr. Jack Penner: In the whole area of Marketing and Farm Business Management, is the Minister contemplating additional staffing there or some additional programming in that whole area or changes in the programming in the farm marketing area and the market development area?

Ms. Wowchuk: There has been an increase in the Internet marketing project, but there is no change in staff.

* (16:40)

Mr. Jack Penner: I am wondering whether the Minister and her department might want to consider making some changes there, and I reflect on the massive change that we are seeing in the primary sector and that it would lead one to believe that they might want to take a look at this and have some consultations with the agricultural community, especially in the livestock sector because we are seeing some very significant expansions there.

We are seeing some very significant expansions in some of the specialty crops area, and I am wondering whether the Minister might want to, in fact, have some discussions or

debates with the agricultural industry to see what the needs are or to determine what the needs of the future might be in that whole area, simply because of many of the very significant changes that are happening today.

I am wondering whether the Department is taking a look at these changes and is trying to determine how to meet those needs.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to tell the Member that there is a strategic planning process that is going on right now within the Department. In fact, the Department, through various groups, has met with over a hundred groups and producers and are looking at addressing all of these issues that the Member talks about, because, certainly, agriculture is changing, and the Department wants to be sure that they are meeting the needs of the producers and are addressing the challenges that are out there. So that process is in place. There have been several meetings, and I believe that information from each of those groups is being compiled, and we are developing a strategic plan.

In this particular section of Marketing, there is no increased staff, but in recognizing the changes in agriculture, there have been various positions that have been added. As we get to the various sections, I can indicate to the Member that we are looking at the changing demands of the farming community and the demands of the consumer and are addressing it with additional positions in the Department.

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much for that. I commend the Department for taking that initiative, especially for consulting with the stakeholders. I think it is extremely important that the stakeholders be brought into the discussion. I think, Mr. Chairman, that the Department needs to be congratulated and commended for bringing in the stakeholders to assess the needs of the agricultural community at this time. I think that is commendable.

I think it is also important to recognize that many of the changes that we are seeing will have a long-lasting impact, and I am wondering how the Minister intends to deal with or how the Department might intend to deal with those changes that are taking place. The grain sector is

becoming apparently less significant in the general scheme of things and the livestock sector more important, the specialty crops sector, more important; whether they are contemplating making internal changes and staffing changes to reflect the changing needs within the farm sector.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, that is exactly the kind of work, results that I expect that will come out of the strategic plan where people from the different regions have met with producers and groups of producers to look at the challenges and the services that are provided. Certainly, there is a change. The Member talks about the shift from grain production to livestock production, and we are still going to have grain production. But we are going to have more livestock production, and that is exactly why we have added people into the livestock sector. We will get to those when we get to those branches, but we have also added people into the specialty crops where we believe that there is need for specialty services. So we are working on that right now. We have recognized the importance of those sectors to our economy and are putting some additional resources in place in those areas and also looking for the results of the strategic plan.

The Member is talking about hiring new staff. Certainly, as I indicated, there are several new positions, but I think that we also have to recognize that we also have people in the Department who have a broad range of knowledge and can also adapt to providing services and in a variety of areas. These are agronomists, these are people who are trained.

Certainly, within the Marketing Branch that we have here, the people who are responsible for marketing and promoting of our products work with specific countries. There are eight countries that we target as our major countries of where we want to increase our trade. The people that we have within the Marketing Branch are very knowledgeable about the countries that are there and what we have to offer, and can also adapt to the needs of the consumer of the market because many times, Mr. Chairman, it is not the farmer that determines. It is the consumer and the market at the other end that determines how we are going to change our crop.

So our people within marketing play a very important role in understanding the needs of people in other countries in understanding what the expertise is there and then bringing the two together. So within the Marketing Branch, I am quite confident in the staff that we have, that they have the ability to adapt to the new crops and promote those new crops. Also, I am confident they have the ability to read the market out there and then bring the information back to our producers.

But the strategic plan, the strategic planning process that we are in, it is certainly timely. We are into a new millennium. We are into a lot of change in agriculture, and it is time to sit down with the producers and the various groups in the province to evaluate what it is, what kinds of services they are looking for from the Department. Of course, Mr. Chairman, we are also into an age of new technology and that is why we are investing in Internet services and into the home page and all of those kinds of things, to improve the kinds of services that we provide for the producers of Manitoba.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for that response. When I look at the objectives that she has laid out for her department, one of the objectives is to provide programs and support for farm families, industry and extension staff in areas of farm management and marketing, international trade, value-added and diversification in the area to provide a youth curriculum, agriculture curriculum and awareness, to provide home economics and agricultural societies aimed at strengthening the agricultural food sector. That is the reason I asked the question because of the massive change in diversity that we have seen over the last decade in agriculture.

It would appear to me from where we are heading that we are going to have to make some very, very fundamental changes to the Department in its operations, and I am wondering what sort of leadership the Minister intends to provide in that direction to give direction for the implementation.

The second question I have is whether the Minister might be able to indicate to me what farm groups she has met with, what individuals

she might have met with to give me an indication as to how broad a range of debates and discussions she has had in this regard. This is, in my view, one of the most key and important aspects of the future development of the Department.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, this strategic plan that is in an ongoing process right now is a very important part of reviewing the kinds of services that we provide and where we have to go with services. The Member asked for a little bit more detail.

* (16:50)

So I would tell the Member that there were seven consultation groups made up from various parts of the Department, and from various regions. There were people from different regions in each group so that you had a good cross section in each group so that we were not having all crops people or all trades people in one group. The goal was to bring in a variety of people into each group so that you were addressing a broad cross section of issues. On the average each of these seven teams met with 12 to 20 industry groups and had a discussion about the Department and the services and about the industry.

On the whole, the seven groups met with about a hundred different industry groups. After that, each team met with farmers from different regions. Those farmers were identified by the regional offices. The farmers were then invited to participate in the meeting. So it was the regional people who were doing the inviting and bringing farmers together.

So on average each group then met with eight to eleven or twelve families and again went through the same process. The staff were at all of these meetings so they get a good sense of what the industry and the producers are saying. Staff has input into the collection of the data and has input into the discussion as well.

So this process has now been completed. All the groups have met and they have all shared their reports on their discussions with the various groups. This is all going to be now compiled into the summary. The summary results are going to

be then sent back to the participants, and the participants will have input again into the final results of the strategic plan.

Mr. Jack Penner: This is the first time I have heard about this process, and I am wondering whether it was done through the Ag reps, whether the Ag reps were the proponents for the Department or who did this within the Department and who selected or who chose the participants from the agricultural community and how were they selected. What criteria was used to determine their qualifications to advise the Department on matters?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, we are in the new millennium. Agriculture is changing, and it is important that we put forward a plan. Where do we see the industry going? And that is what we are doing. It is something that I very much believe in and I want to see happen, so we have started this process, and in the whole process I want to tell the Member that we invited staff. Staff knew we were doing this and staff were volunteering. We had more volunteers from staff than actually participated, so I think that is a very good sign from the staff of the Department. They are very anxious to work and talk about the industry and look at how they can improve the services that are provided and talk about the direction of the industry, all aspects of agriculture.

With respect to the industry, a lot of people were invited, commodity groups, farm organizations, various industry people were invited and most of the ones that were invited by the Department—and the Member knows there are lists of commodity groups in the agriculture industry that we all know about and those people were invited to participate and were very interested. Most of the people who were invited came out. Now the Member asks about how the farmers were chosen to participate. Those were at the local level and just as any organization, our Agriculture staff, our Ag reps know the people in their areas. They know the people who might be interested in participating in these kinds of discussions and this kind of planning. So the Ag reps and the staff from within the Department of a particular region then chose to pick some people who they thought might be

willing to participate, and that is how they were invited.

The Member also has to know, when you are doing strategic marketing and planning, that is only a success, will only work if senior management are involved. I want to tell the Member that senior management of the Department was involved in this process too. I have had the opportunity to listen to the presentations of some of the groups as they prepared their presentations, and I look forward to the summary results to work on this to develop the direction of the Department into this decade and on.

Mr. Jack Penner: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, whether the Minister might want to give us an indication who these people were; whether she could give me some names of the people that were invited to this; whether she could give me a list of the organizations that received invitations to participate in the consultative process; and whether she could tell me whether all the Ag reps were asked to hold meetings or invite individuals in their areas to participate in this kind of planning process.

Ms. Wowchuk: There were seven consulting groups, and those seven groups had one meeting with farmers spread out through the various districts of the province. I also want to remind the Member that when the groups were meeting with industry, farmers were also involved there. So there are the various industry groups that the consultation team met with and various commodity groups. So there were seven meetings that were just farmers, but the other meetings also involved farmers because farmers are on the various groups that were invited to participate.

I can tell the Member we do not have a list of the people here who participated or the groups, but the Member is well aware of the various farm organizations. We had a wide range of people. You know, we have canola growers, we have Manitoba Cattle Producers, Keystone Agricultural Producers, the National Farmers Union, the University of Manitoba, Department of Health. So there is a wide range of people that would be affected that are impacted by the agriculture industry. So it is a broad section of

farmers that are involved in industry, the various commodity groups and then farmers who were invited to the seven consultation meetings with the groups.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, you know I listen to the Minister constantly name the National Farmers Union in her deliberations of various issues. Virtually, at every answer she gives me, she talks about the National Farmers Union.

The National Farmers Union is not a provincial farm organization, and I am wondering whether she is inviting at the same time the same kind of requests or comments from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, especially now seeing that the President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture is actually a Manitoban. I am wondering whether she would be soliciting that same kind of advice from the nationally recognized farm organization as being a very important organization, which is supported, in large part, by the supply management organizations, by organizations such as the Keystone Agricultural Producers and virtually all of the other provincial farm organizations that are present, and their funding mechanism is driven through and applied to the Federation of Agriculture through these organizations, so it becomes an individually supported organization on a national basis, which I think is well recognized throughout Canada. The advice given by the Federation of Agriculture, I think, is appreciated by all levels of government.

However, when I hear the Minister mention the various farm organizations, Keystone is always mentioned, as is the National Farmers Union, and I wonder whether she is going to start inviting comments and/or representation from the other national farm organization, as well, in this province, recognizing that it in large part represents the pork producers, the dairy producers, the poultry producers, all the various commodity groups belonging to the provincial farm organizations in all aspects of Canada.

Then I only say to the Minister this, that once you start dealing with national farm organizations, you are going to get a very broad base of advice, but it will not always be the advice that is pertinent to your province. National farm organizations deal nationally, and

they have a national view of things. That view often differs from a provincial farm organization, because a provincial organization looks at the specifics of the region and the requirements within its mandate. Those provincial organizations go to the national forums and present their case to the national forum, such as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and are not always successful in gaining the acceptance of those positions that they might bring forward at those national forums.

So I would say this to you, Mr. Chairman, that having been there, having seen the negotiations and having seen the debates and having participated in the debates, I think sometimes one must question whether the relevance of the advice from a national forum brought forward is as significant as the advice from the provincial forum. For that reason, I ask the Minister why she would be consulting with one national organization constantly and not with the other one and whether she places as much emphasis on the advice she gets from the National Farmers Union as she does from the Keystone Agricultural Producers.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I am not afraid to listen to any organization that will offer advice, and I do not think that the Member should be either. I mean, any information that you can gather and thoughts that you can have from other people is always useful.

Now, the Member asked if I consulted with the CFA. I know Mr. Jerry Friesen very well, and I want to assure the Member that I discuss issues with him whenever they arise. I certainly value his advice, even though he is a representative of a national organization, because I think it is very valuable advice. I just gave the wrong name, for the record. It is Mr. Bob Friesen who is the chair of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. But I again repeat, Mr. Chairman, I value the advice of people serving on national or provincial organizations. I know that the Member has a very narrow vision and seems to just despise the fact that the National Farmers Union should have any opportunity to offer advice to the government.

If his government was a government for all the people, not just for a select group of people,

they should have been prepared to listen to the advice of all organizations. I would imagine that they did. I am sure that they did not close their doors to organizations that were of a national level that had representation at a provincial level.

We have the National Women's Institute, who has membership in provincial organizations, but we take the advice of the National Women's Institute when they discuss issues that affect people across the country. Any extra knowledge is something not to be afraid of, but the Member just does not think that there should be national people there. The invitation was extended to the provincial representative of the National Farmers Union, but we also invited other national organizations.

* (17:10)

I wonder whether the Member thinks that we should have excluded these people. The Canola Council of Canada was invited. Is he saying, because they are a national organization, we should not have consulted them when we were doing our strategic planning. The Pulse Growers of Canada were also invited and I believe participated. The Canadian Wheat Board, is the Member saying that the Canadian Wheat Board, because it is a national organization, not a provincial organization, would not provide valuable information and have valuable input into a strategic plan for Manitoba's agricultural industry? Canada Special Crops Association, Buckwheat Growers—I share with the Member other national organizations that participated in this strategic planning.

Some participated and some were not able to attend, but I have to tell the Member that, yes, I do take advice and listen to people who work on a national scale, in national organizations, because I think that sometimes there are things that are happening across the country that we can glean information from and then improve our services.

What we are doing here, Mr. Chairman, is, as I indicated, we are looking at developing a strategic plan as to what kind of services, what kind of changes we have to make within the Department to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the producers, who are in a changing environment.

I welcome the advice, whether it is from the National Farmers Union, whether it is from Keystone Agriculture Producers, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canola Growers of Canada, Pulse Growers of Canada. Yesterday we were at a breakfast with the people from Egypt, who are interested in trade with Manitoba. Who was there? There was a representative from the Pulse Growers of Canada and from the Canola Council of Canada.

We are a provincial government but we do deal in international issues and we work with national organizations all the time. I sincerely hope that the Member, when he was a part of government, did not discourage participation of all organizations who bring many different views to this province.

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, Mr. Chairman, let the record show the first time in this debate on Agriculture Estimates that the name of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has crossed the Minister's mouth. I think the record will show that the National Farmers Union has crossed her mouth quite often in the debate and has been mentioned quite often. It is the first time she has ever mentioned the Canola Growers Council. I would suggest to her that we also do have a Manitoba Canola Growers Association, and so do we have a Manitoba Pulse Growers Association who are all members of the national organization. I think most provinces do have provincial pulse growers associations, which are members of the national organization.

I would ask the Minister whether the reference to the National Farmers Union is simply because there is no provincial farmers' union, that there is, however, a general farm organization which many organizations prescribe to. I am not quite sure exactly how many organizations, but I know the Cattle Producers Association, the Hog Producers Association, the poultry organizations and many others belong to the Keystone Agricultural Producers as member organizations.

Similarly, I think it is important to put on the record that there is no Manitoba farmers' union. There is the national one, and maybe that is why the Minister constantly refers to them. I do not fault her for that, but I wonder when she talks

about consulting with national organizations why some of the other organizations were not identified before. It is just something to note and put on the record that farm organizations and farm leaders will read to know where the Minister sets her priorities and where her priority advice comes from. It is well noted on this side of the House where her main emphasis of direction comes from.

I want to ask the Minister whether the strengthening of the competitive position of Manitoba's agricultural industry, by assisting in the identification investigation and development of new markets and the expansion of existing markets, is of key importance to her. I want to ask her what direction she has given to the Department in regard to this area, whether she is contemplating increasing the staffing of those marketers or whether she is attempting to increase the activities that will create opportunities and economic activity for Manitoba producers and the value-added industry.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, just before I answer the Member's question, I want to just set the record straight. The Member, in his comments, implied that we were not consulting with national groups, only with the National Farmers Union. I want to again put on the record that we consult with the Canola Council of Canada, Pulse Growers of Canada, Canadian Wheat Board, and many other national organizations. I certainly value their advice and input. I know that the staff values their input and advice.

I know the Member has no support for the National Farmers Union. He has made his views very clear on that. I want to tell him that he talks about the national organization. There are provincial organizations, there are regional organizations within the National Farmers Union as well. He might take a little bit of time to learn a little bit about the organization. Maybe he might come to appreciate them a little bit more than he does. Certainly I am not afraid to consult with anybody or accept advice from anyone, whether they be national or provincial, because I think that we gain from it all, and they have special input.

* (17:20)

But, just to put the Member's mind a little bit at ease, we did invite the National Farmers Union to participate in the strategic planning. Unfortunately, they were not able to attend, so he will not have to worry about the influence that they might have had on this strategic plan that we are putting forward.

The CFA is an important organization as well. I look forward to continued discussions with their representation.

Certainly, Mr. Chairman, getting back to the Member's question about what our intentions are with regard to marketing and marketing development. As I indicated to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) when he was asking questions, this is not just work that is done independently of other departments through our Marketing branch. Our Marketing branch works very closely with Industry and Trade and Manitoba Trade to ensure that we are not duplicating, that the work done by both departments complement each other.

It is not only the Marketing staff that is involved. There is also the regional staff that works with the Marketing branch to ensure that the information is getting to the producers and out to the people who work in the industry to make them aware of what marketing opportunities are developing out there. We work very closely with, as I said, with Industry, Trade and Mines. Culture, Heritage and citizenship is involved as well, as is Labour, in some cases. It depends on what the issues are that we are working on. Certainly trade and marketing are a very important part of the economy of this province. We grow high-quality product, but we grow far more than we consume.

Our exports markets are very important to us, as is developing trade with other countries so that we can ensure that we have stable markets.

In 1999-2000, Mr. Chairman, along with having export trade missions, we had incoming trade missions. Last year we had a total of six trade missions come in from Japan. Areas of interest for them were swine breeding stock, pork, turkeys, and food products. China sent three trade missions to Manitoba. The commodities that they were interested in were

horticulture and beef. We had five trade missions from Korea; six from Mexico; six from Chile; and interesting markets developing there in feed, peas, and seeds; Brazil, there were two trade missions coming to Manitoba; and six from the Middle East. That basic interest was in grain and in oilseeds. Australia had one trade mission come here; Africa had one; and Europe had two, for a total of thirty-eight incoming missions.

Outgoing missions, Mr. Chairman, we had in 1999-2000, there were two trade missions to Europe. Those basically were with pork and investments in agri-foods, and I have outlined to the Member the interest we have had from European countries in sharing their technology and coming to Manitoba to invest; five trade missions from the United States, and I think that that is one of the markets that we sometimes think that because it is right next door to us, we do not have to focus on it very much, but it is one that is very important to us. I believe that that is an area where we have to do more work to ensure that we do not take that market for granted.

We had a mission to Brazil, and that mission addressed beef, pulses and dairy products. There was one trade mission to Mexico, one to Japan and one to Korea, and we do work very closely with other departments to ensure that those departments are informed about what is going on and that we complement each other. Regional staff is also involved, and we take staff people with us. For example, when I went to Mexico we had with us our dairy specialist who then in Mexico put on seminars on how you should be managing your dairy herd, about our dairy genetics and things that they could be doing to improve their quality of herds. So there is a wide range of people involved in working with our Marketing branch.

Mr. Jack Penner: I wonder whether the Minister could identify for me who she had invited from the Canadian Canola Growers and who she had invited from the Canadian Pulse Growers Association to attend the discussions or whether it was, in fact, the Manitoba Pulse Growers Association and the Manitoba Canola Growers Association that she had invited.

That would make a lot of sense to me if the Department had brought them in, to bring the

federal and national organizations into the discussion of what needs to be done in Manitoba. It would surprise me a bit when we have provincial organizations that are actually the leaders in the promotion of the industry in general, such as the Pulse Growers and the Canola Growers and the pork industry. They all have national organizations which these provincial organizations belong to, and I would suspect that the Minister might, in fact, have meant that they brought the provincial organizations in instead of the national organizations.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, invitations went to the Manitoba Canola Growers Association and the National Growers, the Manitoba Pulse Growers Association and to the National Growers Association, Manitoba Seed Growers. The invitation went there, but it was the association that determined who would come to the strategic planning meetings. But the invitations went both to national and provincial associations.

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for clarifying that, that the invitations went to the provincial organizations, which I think is honourable and commendable.

I wonder whether I can actually get an indication from the Minister whether she is contemplating doing something similar to what the Canadian Wheat Board and the Canadian Grains Institute has done. I know that the Canadian Wheat Board and the Grains Institute have combined their effort to put on demonstration projects in this province to deal with the marketing and the demonstration of the quality of the grains that they sell.

I toured just recently the CIGI facility, the milling operation that they put in place. They gave us a demonstration of their pasta manufacturing plant that they have set up at the Institute and also the baking facility that was there. I understand that they are in the process of setting up a brewing operation, as well, to demonstrate the qualities of barleys in the various brewing operations. I am wondering whether the Department of Agriculture, instead of just doing the trade missions and that kind of market development, whether they are in fact considering doing these kinds of demonstration

projects in the province, bringing outside interests into the province to show and demonstrate what in fact can be done with our products and what the quality of our products is by demonstrating the end results of the utilization of those agriculture crops.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Wheat Board and the Grains Institute, CIGI, they all play a very important role in promoting our grain products and in demonstrating what can be done with our grains. Certainly, when we have trade missions coming in, if they are coming in and are interested in the grains and finished products, we would take them, there is no question. Why would we not take them to those institutes and have them tour and have discussions there? But we certainly would not want to be duplicating what is already being done so well by these institutes.

* (17:30)

When trade missions come in, we take them out to the rural areas to look at our grains. We would take them to a processing plant. We would take them to any aspect of the industry that would help them to understand it better. If there are demonstration plots, if they are interested in a particular crop, we would involve the association that is growing that particular crop and have them see those demonstration plots when they are here.

So, the services, the work that is done by the department in the trades sections, it complements the work that is done by the other institutes that the Member outlined. We take advantage of the work that they are doing and take out people who are here and arrange for them to have tours and have discussions on work that is done.

When we go on outgoing missions, we take samples of the products that are produced here in Manitoba, and use those in trade shows. I know that the Wheat Board and the Grains Institute also do that kind of work in other countries, where there is opportunity for markets. They test out the different products. They test the kinds of flowers and wheat that we have here in order to develop the right blend to meet the requirement of the market. We would not duplicate what

those people are doing, but certainly we would let them know about them and ensure that they have the opportunity to see them while they are here.

Mr. Jack Penner: Before we leave this part of the Estimates, I want to indicate to the Minister, for tomorrow, if it would be possible, I would like to move to Animal Industry and Veterinary Services, operating capital, if that is in agreement with her.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is the Member then saying he is prepared to pass the section and move on to the Animal Industry branch and be ready for that? Is the Member ready to do that, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Jack Penner: Yes, I think we will do that. We will get there tomorrow. I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. Just so the Minister is aware, that she gets ample notification, I want to indicate to her that I will be prepared tomorrow, or the next time this Committee meets, to move to the Animal Industry and Veterinary Services and operations.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want the Member to know that we have that staff here right now. They are prepared to go into Estimates. If the Member would be willing or be so kind or be interested in moving from this section then we could complete the questioning on this section. The staff that is tied to the Marketing branch would not have to come back for the next session. We could go directly into the Animal Industry and Vet Services.

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you. If the Minister is co-operative then I think we will be able to finish this section today. It will depend on how co-operative the Minister is. I have a few other questions in regard to this section. It deals with the activities in the co-ordination and leadership development on the farm management side of the ledger. What sort of activities is the Department involved in now in farm leadership and management development? Can you give me an indication of that?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the three main areas of leadership development are with 4-H, the Ag Societies, and the Women's Institute. The Department also works with Keystone Agri-

cultural Producers on leadership seminars. But the staff also does a variety of leadership and training activities in the communities. The staff can do leadership work and be involved with school boards, with municipal officials. The goal and the commitment of the staff are to have a strong, viable, healthy rural community. They work in a variety of areas. The main areas, as I have said, are with 4-H, Ag Societies and the Women's Institute. As you go on, the Ag staff throughout the region provides a lot of leadership. There are also training programs that they work on, various seminars that the Ag reps and the staff in the regions will put on. They help to facilitate particularly during the winter months when there is a lot more time spent on seminars. The Ag society plays an active role. It depends on what the particular interest is. There is work done at a variety of winter programs where the staff plays a leadership role. As I said, those are the major areas.

There are provincial seminars, examples of seminars that the staff puts on, Ag producers, the next generation. There was also a farm women's conference that is held on an annual basis which is a very important leadership opportunity for women to take some training. The other one, Mr. Chairman, is a quality equation conference that was just held in Brandon. It was a very good conference because it was an opportunity for 4-H leaders to learn some leadership skills and get some training that they were then able to take back to the community and pass on; 150 4-H leaders came to Brandon to learn some leadership skills that they took back to their community and shared with other 4-H leaders and of course with the 4-H Club. That was a very important conference that took place through the 4-H which is a very important section for us.

* (17:40)

Mr. Jack Penner: The Department, I think, for a number of years, and this is some time back, was involved in a farm leadership training process that spanned, I think, two or three years maybe, and these people used to do—and I forget the name of the program, but they used to do a week session or two-week session in the province. We would learn and meet with legislators and leaders in government.

Departmental people learn how this functioned. Then they would move to Ottawa for the next year session. I think they even went internationally to Washington at times. The name of that program slipped my mind. I wonder whether we are still involved in that or how the Department was involved and whether that program still exists.

Ms. Wowchuk: The program that the Member talks about was called Practical Politics and it has not been in place—I would be guessing. At least five to six years it has not been in place. I have to tell the Member that our staff with Ag Societies tried to offer the program recently and they were working with the Ag Society in Dugald because that particular Ag Society and other Ag Societies are interested in getting this kind of a program going again. Unfortunately, when they went to get the program going, there was not enough people who registered.

It was a good program, and I would certainly be interested in looking at how we could get it back again because I think it is very important that people understand the political process and understand the role of legislators not only here in Manitoba but on a national level and on an international level, because, certainly, our political process here in Manitoba, although very similar to the one in Ottawa, is also a little different. But when you go into the United States, to Washington, again that is a very different process than what we have here.

Part of understanding why government does certain things and why government does not do other things is understanding the legislative process. Unfortunately, when the Department tried to revive the program and get people interested again, there was not enough registration. Maybe at some point there will be.

Mr. Jack Penner: I appreciate what the Minister is saying, and I commend the Department for wanting to reinitiate that program because having participated in that program many years ago, I have a deep appreciation for the value of that kind of a program. I think it created an interest in virtually all of the people who participated amongst that group, and we had a very active group, but participated in that group and created an interest that I think still

exists today in many of those people. I still meet some of those people once in a while.

I think my advice would be, if the Minister wants some advice to the Department, to have some of her staff meet with the general farm organization and maybe some of the other organizations such as the Pulse Growers, the Canola Growers, the cattle producers and the hog industry and get them to jointly get together and say that we are thinking about offering this program and let them find a way of developing its sponsorship. I think you will be amazed at how welcome and how receptive those groups might be.

I used to be the president of our Ag Society. and when I was the president took on a significant initiative, built a community gathering place that cost us about half a million dollars. We went to government at the time and asked for government support. There was no government support at the time, so we put half a million dollars together. It took us a bit of time, but we did it and built a community gathering place, as an Ag Society.

What happened to our Ag Society in our area is happening to many of the other Ag Societies, and maybe we need a bit of a revitalization and rejuvenation of those societies. If that does not work, Mr. Chairman, then I would suggest use the other organizations that are there, because I think this kind of a program, the Practical Politics program or whether you want to call it something else, was a very valuable tool for the training of young people in the process of government, not so much from the political aspect but from a practical application. It gave those participants a pretty fair idea as to how the whole system worked from a provincial-municipal level, provincial level, national level and international level. I think it developed an appreciation for the intricacies of governing and providing programming to the various aspects. So I would encourage the Minister not to give up because the first attempt to rejuvenate it was not successful. I would encourage the Department to see if they could find ways to proceed in this area.

One other area that I would like to ask the Minister on is, and I guess we will probably get

into this tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, but what sort of an involvement does the Department have with industry in this province. I am not talking about the involvement with the Department of Industry and Trade, but what kind of involvement does the Department of Agriculture have directly with the industry in developing new product? Is the Department of Agriculture involved in new product development jointly with industry?

Ms. Wowchuk: There are several ways that the Department is involved with food development. Of course we have the Food Development Centre. That is under the Department now. That is a place where new product can be developed. We have the Marketing and Farm Business Management that works with producers. Many times they work very closely with developing a new product. You might have one or two people working on a particular product, helping an individual develop a market on a product. That would be on a very confidential basis, because individuals are developing their product and developing their own market. That is not something that is public knowledge.

We have a member of the Department on the Food Processors Association. We also have support through MAVI, Manitoba Agri-Venture Initiatives. Through this program we provide assistance in business planning, determining feasibility, marketing planning, and market development to support the value-added production and a more diversified industry. The fund can share on a 50-50 basis up to \$5,000 for individual enterprise or \$10,000 for industry-wide initiatives. There have been several projects that have been funded through this initiative to help with developing value-added and developing markets for this product.

* (17:50)

The Department works and has several initiatives and is able to work with people who are interested in developing products and building markets.

Mr. Jack Penner: I appreciate the Minister's answer on that. I wonder if the Minister could indicate to me what kind of a staff component is prevalent in Marketing and Farm Business

Management, that line. How many staff do we employ there? I thought I had seen that somewhere but I am missing it here.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, in 4.(a) there are 32 staff, if that is where the Member is looking. If we are looking under Marketing and Farm Business Management, there are 32 staff plus 2 in management.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, that means that there would be 34 staff equivalent, or does that mean that we have 34 warm bodies on staff there?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, that includes management and some summer students that we bring in.

Mr. Jack Penner: So we actually employ 34 people?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall this item pass, item 3.4.(a)(1)?

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Chairman, I did not mean to be facetious on that when I talked about 34 warm bodies. Some of them might not be that warm-hearted, but I think most of them are. I think you have some excellent staff, and I have met many of them at various seminars and developmental conferences. I think you have some excellent staff in this area. I commend the staff for the great job that they do, because I think we have seen the tremendous change and diversification over the last decade. That is clearly an indication that your staff in this area is knowledgeable and have a measure of expertise that I think is appreciated, not only in this province, but indeed worldwide. I think they have demonstrated that by opening the doors to new markets for Manitoba products. I think Manitoba pork is one of those products.

I think the Manitoba potato industry is an area that we have not talked about, but we will. When we get farther down to Food Development, I will talk about the potato industry, and similarly now with the new product that we are marketing, beans, and many other new pulse products that are in the marketplace. Our livestock industry, not only the pork industry, has tremendous potential for growth. I think it will be a challenge to us to break into some of these new areas of

marketplace. Secondly, I think we need to really focus, as we did in the pork industry, to try and attract a processor, especially in the beef area. We have a tremendous opportunity to redevelop our packing industry. I know Alberta, or other provinces, did us in for a while, but, from a competitive standpoint, there is nobody better positioned than Manitoba is, to redevelop that packing industry in the beef side and some of the other areas. I hope that we can concentrate on some of that, and I think you have the staff within your department that will allow us to do that.

Mr. Chairman, I am willing to pass line (a). If that is the Minister's wish, I would pass line (a) in this area.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,785,700—pass.

What is the pleasure of the Committee? There are three items here. Are we going to pass the rest of them or not?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Then the stop will have to be here.

An Honourable Member: We will pass all—

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Marketing and Farm Business Management (2) Other Expenditures \$1,291,300—pass; (3) Agricultural Societies Grant Assistance \$368,400—pass; (4) Other Grant Assistance \$42,600—pass.

What is the pleasure of the Committee? It is almost 6 p.m.

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Time being six o'clock, Committee rise.

Please call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m., tomorrow morning (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 14, 2000

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