

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, January 22, 1990.

The House met at 8 p.m.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—LABOUR

Mr. Chairman (Harold Gilleshammer): Order, please. I call this section of the Committee of Supply back to order. Tonight we shall resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Labour. When the Committee of Supply last considered the Estimates of the Department of Labour, the committee had been considering item 2.(c) Fire Prevention.

Item (3) Engineering and Technical Services \$435,800—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): I am not completely sure that this is the correct area to raise this under, but I would like to ask the Minister an issue which has arisen recently in the province with respect to monitoring outbuildings. I think we touched on it earlier with respect to the fire at College Avenue.

Can the Minister tell the Members of the committee when she anticipates being in a position to identify what her department can do to ensure that the venting systems in those apartment buildings are checked regularly, or at least the officials are able to identify when carbon monoxide is coming into the building?

She had indicated in the House that she would be working on this and would be attempting to come forward with some plans. What time frame is she working with?

* (2005)

Hon. Gerry Hammond (Minister of Labour): The department right now is working actively and we are consulting other groups. I think I had mentioned it before, certainly we are working with the city and with other public safety groups so that we can bring in a regulation that will make sense and protect the apartment dwellers in all areas, but we are particularly concerned with the core area because that is where the older buildings are. We are going to get a list from the city of the buildings that have the masonry chimneys, so that we can immediately know what we are dealing with and how many we are dealing with.

Mr. Edwards: I think I had mentioned to the Minister at the last sitting of these Estimates that it seemed appropriate to investigate the technology now available, which has come to the fore through co-operation with Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.

It has—let me just reiterate if I have already covered this, I apologize, but I would like to know from the Minister what her department is doing to determine if that technology is acceptable as a way of determining if carbon monoxide is leaking into buildings? I think it

is important that we move on this because of the number of deaths we know occur in Canada due to this type of incident, and indeed in Manitoba it has been a regular occurrence. What is her department doing to determine if that technology is reliable, and if it is, to ensure that it is used in this province because it is an odorless gas that pervades these buildings, and as we know can be fatal?

I think it is incumbent upon the Minister to investigate all of the options which are available. This option has been on the market for some time now.

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, we are consulting with Atomic Energy of Canada on this particular issue that the Member mentions and certainly not averse to looking at it, but we really feel that we want to be doing more in this area. We are looking presently at liners for these chimneys.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass. (d) Employment Standards: (1) Salaries \$1,292,300—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Chairman, Employment Standards in the province is a very interesting area, I would submit, to most working Manitobans. I think it is important to canvas some of the issues which have arisen in the last year, and some of the issues which seem to be coming up in the future under this very important area. It is this Act and it is this branch that so many thousands of Manitoba workers rely on to protect their rights as they work in our factories and in our institutions and all over this province. Can the Minister indicate what new initiatives Employment Standards is considering coming forward with in the coming year? What does this branch see as their initiatives and ways that the employment standards for all Manitoba workers can be improved?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, one of the areas has been the construction industry. We got a tripartite committee going which is making recommendations to improve safety in the construction field, as well as compliance with, I guess, the wages, and also a more aggressive public education program.

Mr. Edwards: What form will that public education program take? Does it have any specifics which the Minister can give the committee tonight?

Mrs. Hammond: The next edition of Work Safe will have an issue on the construction industry.

* (2010)

Mr. Edwards: Work Safe, I am not particularly familiar with that publication. Does that have to do with Workplace Safety and Health, or is that related to Employment Standards as such?

Mrs. Hammond: It primarily does deal with Workplace Safety, but the issues cross over. We are using that as one vehicle to get our message across.

Mr. Edwards: One of the real concerns that I have going back to my experience—when I was still in high school, I worked for a large retail company, and I say very quickly that oftentimes the junior manager positions are highly exploited positions. Sometimes what is management in these large operations is in fact an excuse to take someone out of perhaps a unionized environment, but perhaps only to encourage people by holding out the carrot to work enormous hours really for not very much money.

I am wondering what research is going on in the Employment Standards Division on that issue, and if there is any movement in the department to address what I perceive to be a problem for a number of Manitobans who are exploited and given a term and a position and perhaps promises in the future, which never come to fore and in exchange give us, as I have said, enormous hours and really are not remunerated under the legislation as it presently stands in Manitoba, and are protected by that legislation in respect of overtime and other things which salaried hourly workers take for granted. Is there any research being done in the division on that issue?

Mrs. Hammond: It is an area that we do get complaints on. It is a matter of defining what is a managerial job and what is not. One of the areas that we are targeting is youth employment. We are doing some fact sheets on that issue.

Mr. Edwards: I guess it is more a comment than a question, but it seems to me that those positions where individuals are given the title of manager and given certain supervisory responsibilities, but as I have said largely it is a situation where there is a carrot being held out, that a future promotion and some responsibility, and as a result a person is not seen as an hourly employee but a salaried employee and therefore is required to work hundreds of hours and make all kinds of sacrifices. It has literally boggled me in some of these circumstances how little they are being paid and how few benefits there are besides this what would seem to be a minimal salary.

I simply bring that to the attention of the Minister and ask her to consider people in that situation. It seems to me that they are a group that perhaps we could be doing better by under our legislation.

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, Mr. Chairman, this is an area that I guess it would almost be a grey area, but if someone does make a complaint, and it can be proved that they really should be hourly, non-managerial, then the Employment Standards Branch will take up the case.

I think in many cases these are seen as legitimate jobs, and I can understand that they are probably overworked and underpaid with the idea that they will get ahead. Some do and some leave before that can happen.

Mr. Edwards: I agree, some do get ahead. I guess my point is that it seems to me there is enormous opportunity there for exploitation. I simply say again that these people will not have a union. Therefore, when the Minister says, when a complaint is registered, very rarely will one be registered unless someone has already been terminated.

* (2015)

In those situations to complain is often to be terminated. That is just a fact of life in a lot of workplaces. It may call for some sort of pro-active research by the department to find out what is actually happening in the marketplace, and I am not aware frankly of what other jurisdictions are doing and I would be interested to see if the Minister could refer this to the Research and Planning Branch to determine what might be done, what other jurisdictions have done, again to be reasonable to the employer, but also to recognize that there is that opportunity for exploitation in that particular situation.

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, Mr. Chairman, any complaints that we do get we certainly do take them seriously. We handle about 3500 complaints from individuals and about 85,000 telephone and in-person inquiries from persons either requesting information or wishing to file a complaint. We certainly can take a look at any statistics that the department may have. Research and Planning could take a look. I think though in fairness that it is a hard thing to define when they have these jobs and people are anxious to get into them to get the experience and I know in a lot of circumstances they really do do a lot of extra work.

Certainly if there is deemed to be a problem, the department certainly can take a look at this. I am just not sure how far you could get with something like this.

Mr. Edwards: Let me just clarify one more thing on this point, then I will leave it. In the organized workplace, this issue is determined by the Labour Board all the time. I know Mr. Korpesho is here tonight and he can certainly back that up, that this tends to be an area which is dealt with by the Labour Board on a regular basis—what is a manager, what is not management, or more properly, what is an employee for the purposes of unionization. However, in the non-unionized workplace, it seems to me that issue is not raised nearly so often, simply because of the fear of job loss if the issue is raised. It is for that reason that I raise this, because it is the non-organized workplace that I worry about with respect to the title, manager, and what that entails in terms of work and real remuneration for work done.

So perhaps I can just leave that with the Minister and go on to another question with respect to Employment Standards. It strikes me that there might be a better way to funnel inquiries to the department which so often may have to do with the payment of wages, may have to do with employment standards, holiday pay, or the many different aspects which fall under the many different Acts and the different divisions of the department.

Is there a sort of common phone line that is set up for people to call when they have employment problems that the Department of Labour can then have someone available who could direct them to the appropriate department? I have people call me all the time who say, well, I have this problem, this problem, and I just do not know who to call. I guess a lot of times they end up calling whoever comes first on the blue pages or sometimes they just call the Labour Board as the catch-all. What is the department—is this proven a problem at all in the department or something the department has isolated as something that needs to be addressed?

* (2020)

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, there are three intake officers that work on handling calls, and I know that sometimes there is confusion in the public about the Labour Board, and Employment Standards and I think people just think, the Department of Labour. So that sometimes there is this particular issue, but usually wherever they phone, at first, they are directed immediately to the right area.

Mr. Edwards: I am sure they are. I guess my concern is that people, when they need to call—I do not want to put any impediment in their way to making that call. Maybe I will just leave it as a suggestion that there be a number in the appropriate place in the phone book that simply is, if you are having employment problems, call this number.

I mean the intake officers that the Minister mentions, I presume those are under the Employment Standards phone number. That is one of many phone numbers in that particular part of the phone book. I am not sure that anyone would know where the intake officers were. So I just simply ask the Minister to consider a generic number, which is in bold print, and which is perfectly clear to anyone who looks in that area. This is the number to call just when you are looking for information about where else to go, because it is a complex legislative scheme with all kinds of branches and people doing different things.

Mrs. Hammond: I appreciate the Member's concern. It is in the telephone book under "Frequently Called Numbers," I imagine under the Province of Manitoba—is that the area? We will take a look at the phone number and if there is a more efficient and better way to do it we will take a look at that and see what can be done.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Yes, a number of questions I would like to ask under this particular item. First of all, I would like to ask the Minister for the Government's position on the minimum wage. I asked this last year and I am going to ask it again.

During the last year's Estimates I pointed out that there had been regular increases over the last number of years, reflecting the increase in the cost of living.

I asked the Minister at the time, the then Minister, if the Government was looking at any further increases. There was no positive response. Since that time, that is more than a year that has elapsed, we are currently looking at inflation of around the 5 percent level. Since the last increase in the minimum wage, more than two years ago, inflation has increased by at least 10 percent, more in the range of 12 and 13 percent.

We have had other provinces raise the minimum wage, most recently Saskatchewan, which is raising their minimum wage in two steps to a point where they will be higher than the minimum wage in Manitoba. My question to the Minister is: when is she going to call a meeting of the Minimum Wage Board and look at an increase in the minimum wage of the Province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, we will be calling the board probably within the next month or so.

Mr. Ashton: I am glad to hear that, as we have made this call prior to the new year, we made it at the new year. What I would like to ask the Minister, as a follow-up, is: when the board does bring in a report, when does the Minister anticipate making a decision? In other words, when can minimum wage earners and minimal wage earners—those who are close to minimum wage would also be affected by an increase—expect to learn whether there will be an increase in the minimum wage this year or not?

Mrs. Hammond: I cannot speculate on when they would bring in a recommendation, but certainly we will be in line with what we normally do, how it is normally handled, to give people a chance to adjust to the new wage rates. As soon as they bring in the recommendations, then we will certainly deal with it at that time, but I could not give the Member, at this time, a definitive answer.

* (2025)

Mr. Ashton: The reason I am asking is that, as I said, this has been raised before. It has been more than two years since the last increase. People on minimum wage are falling behind.

Just over two years ago we had one of the highest minimum wages in Canada. We are slipping in the process. Other people on low incomes, social assistance, have received—perhaps inadequate—but have received some inflation protection. There are a lot of minimum wage earners in this province and, as I say, a lot of minimal wage earners as well. People maybe earn 10 or 20 or 30 cents more than the minimum wage.

I would like to ask the Minister, what is her target? Are we looking at a decision by the spring of this year, or is this more of a long-term review? Are we looking at the fall? Are we looking at next year? I would certainly argue for as soon as possible, but I am wondering what time frame the Minister has.

Mrs. Hammond: To be perfectly honest, I do not have a specific time frame, except that as soon as the

Minimum Wage Board brings in a recommendation we will plan to deal with it.

Mr. Ashton: I would urge that be as soon as possible. I would like to ask the Minister, since this issue was raised with the previous Minister—in fact, it was raised by the previous Minister—whether she is looking at any change to the decision that was taken by the previous New Democratic Party Government of eliminating the differential that existed in the minimum wage based on age, based on the fact that would have most likely contravened the Charter of Rights.

I raise this question because the previous Minister, the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), had indicated in the House at one time that he was looking at changing that, thought that was unfair. On the Monday he was overruled by his Premier. When we discussed this in Estimates, the Member for Portage was hedging his bets, to say the least, and I can read the passages to the Minister if she has the time.

My question is: will the Minister commit to not changing the differential between the workers based on age?

Mrs. Hammond: We have not had any plans to change the differential.

Mr. Ashton: That is certainly a more categorical answer than we had last year from the previous Minister. I thank the Minister for that.

We will continue to raise the issue of the minimum wage over the next number of months. As I said, we raised it last year, we have raised it again this year, and I would hope that it would be one of the top priorities of the Government.

I would also like to ask the Minister, and this is based once again on a discussion that took place during last year's Estimates, whether she has any plans to bring in any overall changes to The Employment Standards Act. We had indicated that the New Democratic Party had a major review ongoing of employment standards. Last year the Minister had seemed to indicate changes would be brought in to the employment centres legislation. It certainly was my impression that they would be brought in this year.

* (2030)

I would like to ask the Minister, what has happened to the review of employment standards legislation? Are we likely to see any legislation within the next period of time?

Mrs. Hammond: We have been prioritizing in the department the reorganization of the department to improve services. The labour legislation that the Member suggests is not at a stage where we would be planning to bring in any major changes to the legislation at this time, but it certainly is one the areas that is always being looked at in the department so that we can try and keep up with changes in the workplace.

One of the areas that we are looking at very strongly, though, is before we bring in any type of legislative

that it will go to the Labour Management Review Committee. We do not believe that we should be bringing in changes to legislation that does not have some agreement with both labour and management, so that is the way we plan to proceed.

Mr. Ashton: I am not sure I can take the Minister seriously with that comment, because we have seen a number of indications already where the Government has moved without any consultation, or where there has been consultation where there has been clear opposition from, in this case obviously labour groups, given the bias of this Government. So quite frankly, I am amazed that the Minister would even suggest that.

I will ask again because, once again, this was an item that was under review, and there was a comprehensive review that was underway. In fact, it had been indicated that legislative changes were going to be brought in, the material was there. I would like to ask, why is this Government delaying dealing with it?

I am sorry, but I cannot accept that it is due to reorganization of the department; it is obviously the legislative Parties of the Government. We are talking about legislation here. Why is this Government not proceeding?

I want to add to that, in case the Minister is not aware, that Mr. Connery, the Member for Portage la Prairie last year had indicated that the Government would be bringing in what he called "a new labour code," which in this particular case would be changes to The Employment Standards Act. Why is it now, more than a year—in fact it was November 24 that this item was discussed, 1988—later has the Government not brought in any significant changes whatsoever to The Employment Standards Act?

Mrs. Hammond: That was an internal review that was done in the department. It was never given to any external groups to look at. It has been my decision that we would take any major changes to the Labour Management Review Committee and that is the way we intend to proceed.

Mr. Ashton: What deadlines does the Minister have? We are seeing from the Government that words such as "immediate" or "as soon as possible" or "once we have had the opportunity to review it or discuss it" do not really mean that much. I would like to ask the Minister, when is her target date for bringing in changes to The Employment Standard Act?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, I do not have a specific target date to bring in the legislation. We want to make sure that when we bring in legislation, it is satisfactory to both labour and management. We want to try and get consensus on legislation that we bring in. I think that is only fair and whether the Member chooses to believe that is the way I want to go or not, that is the way we are planning to go.

Mr. Ashton: Well, what I know is that in 1988, the commitment had been made in the throne speech by

the New Democratic Party to bring in major changes to The Employment Standards Act to be looking at bringing it into the 1990s. There is a lot of need for changes. I look at the needs in terms of parental leave, bereavement leave, for example, improvements in terms of holiday pay. There are various different items that need to be dealt with.

What I would like to ask the Minister once again is, since the previous Minister—you know, and I do not usually have this much to say in the way of a positive sense about the previous Minister. His record, I think, speaks for itself, and I am not saying that positively, but even the previous Minister talked about a new labour code that was being developed by the Government.

What I would really like to ask the Minister is, what has happened to that labour code more than a year later? Why can the Minister not bring in changes in some of the areas that I have mentioned and in a number of other areas that need updating in terms of employment standards of Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: As I said before, it was an internal document and my deputy will be meeting with the Labour-Management Review Committee to go over some of the areas that they were looking at. As far as the maternity-paternity leave, the UIC changes that are going to be made, we plan to bring in legislation to be compatible with the changes in that area.

I believe I mentioned that to the Member before, that that is what we are looking to do as soon as that is finalized.

Mr. Ashton: I am talking about the broader question of leave for whatever family purposes. I think we are at the point in our society, especially with more and more single parents, more and more couples working, both working in the workplace, that family matters have become an increasing pressure on individuals. What I am talking about is looking at employment standards, changes to for example, parental leave in cases where children are sick. Right now many people in this province either have to put their jobs at risk or lie, say they are sick themselves, when in fact what they are doing is taking time off work because they have to care for sick children.

That is one example. Right now in the Province of Manitoba, unless you are covered by a collective agreement you put your job at jeopardy if you take time off for bereavement leave. If you have a close relative or friend pass away you put your job at risk. I remember there was a case in Manitoba just over a year ago in which somebody was laid off, was fired from their job, because their employer thought that they would not want to be working with the fact that they had had their son killed in a traffic accident. So the employer went ahead and unilaterally laid this person off, fired them for that reason, once again because there is no bereavement leave.

That is what I am really asking for, not the situation in terms of UIC. I am quite aware of that and I remember the discussions with the Minister, but whether she is

looking at some broader changes that will, as I said, bring our employment standards legislation into the 1990s.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, these are areas that certainly, as we move along, we would be taking a look at, but there again when we do this we do want to consult and we do not plan on bringing in any type of legislation that deals with labour that we do not take before the Labour-Management Review Committee, certainly if we can help it. We want to make sure that we have a broad consensus on what is happening to our employment in Manitoba. I certainly sympathize with those areas that the Member is talking about. In a lot of cases it is women who are single parents that are caught in this type of a bind, but at the same time we are going to consult on those issues.

Mr. Ashton: I sure wish the Minister would apply the same standards to some of the Government's actions in other areas affecting working people, whether it be in terms of labour legislation or whether it be in terms of workplace safety and health, whether it be in terms of safety regulations, et cetera, because I really find it unfortunate that the Government will choose this type of reasoning—they have to consult in this area—because it would positively impact on working people, when in other areas they have chosen completely the opposite route, starting from final offer selection, moving through to some of the changes that have been made in terms of regulations affecting workplace safety and health, which you have just seen in the last few days, decisions that have been taken unilaterally.

* (2040)

What I would like to ask is, well I realize the Member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) does not like that, but it is true. It is true. The facts are that when this Government decides it wants to make changes, it makes the changes regardless of what the consultations would say, regardless of whether it is Opposition or not, but in this case it has decided it does not want to move ahead with changes at this point in time, so it is using the reason of consultation. You can have it one way, you can have it the other way, but I believe that the Government cannot have it both ways. I really believe they are getting an increased amount of criticism on that.

I wanted to focus in on one other area that had been discussed in terms of changes again, that is in terms of regulations involving individuals who are working alone, in particular involving transportation for employees who are working late hours which are specified in legislation. There was pressure to have this either removed or at least watered down or changed. Pressure was placed on the previous Minister who had asked for a review of this and a letter was sent out asking for that. What I would like to ask the current Minister, and this follows from questions in the House, is what is the status of that review and is the Government contemplating any changes that would reduce the current requirements on the part of employers related to both transportation for employees and working alone?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, the subcommittee of the Labour-Management Review Committee dealt with this issue and they came in with two recommendations that they could all agree on that they could come to consensus with. One was to exclude police officers from the regulation and the other one was the geographical limitation. In other words, within the municipality. We have accepted both of those changes and the regulation changes will be made.

Mr. Ashton: Is that the finality of the changes? Is the Government rejecting earlier suggestions that, for example, the requirement in terms of transportation either be deleted or restricted? Will that now remain in place in regulation in Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: That was never the intention of the Government, to delete that regulation. It was put down as one of the terms of reference to look at. It was rejected by the Labour Management Review Committee, and we agree. We would never have agreed to make a change to delete that. The other point that was suggested was to allow reasonable pick-up, drop-off point, rather than requiring door-to-door transportation.

We did not agree with that because we did feel it was unsafe, especially for women, to be walking the streets at night at all.

Mr. Ashton: I would certainly concur with the Minister's reasoning in what I hope is a final decision. I would just refer her to the previous Minister's letter because, if it was not the Government's intention to look at changing or eliminating this requirement, I for the life of me do not know why the Minister would have included that as one of the terms of references in the review. If you rule something out right from the start, then you do not put it in and request that it be one of the terms of reference for the review.

I do give the Minister credit, if this is the extent of the changes, for rejecting out of hand some of the items which had been considered by the previous Minister. I can show the current Minister the letter he sent. I know it created a great deal of concern among people representing workers in this province, who had said it could have some very major consequences. This was, once again, part of the previous Minister's letter.

I do commend the Minister for not falling forward further on this. I hope this will be the end of it. I believe, if anything, we need to be looking at strengthening the current system in terms of working alone. It is certainly something we should be reviewing. I say that because the current regulations have been in place for a number of years, but we are still obviously getting incidents occurring. I know it has been a concern that has been expressed to me. Given the continuing incidence of especially violent actions against individuals working alone, working late, we may want to look at possible further strengthening of the legislation.

I would like to ask on that point, just as a final question, whether the Minister will be not only not rolling back the regulations, but looking at possible review, not to eliminate them, but quite the opposite review, with the mind of improving those regulations.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, the consensus was that the regulation was working quite well. These were two modifications that all Parties could agree on. We have chosen this route to consult with the Parties, and we have gone along with their recommendations. We will be bringing those regulations in.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass; 2.(d)(2) Other Expenditures, \$139,800—pass; 2.(d)(3) Payment of Wages Fund, \$320,000—pass.

2.(e) Manitoba Labour Board: (1) Salaries, \$441,000—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the note under the objectives in the notes which we have been given, I note that it says one of the objectives is to assist in the development of sound labour-management relations by providing expert information relating to The Labour Relations Act.

Has the Labour Board been asked to give an opinion with respect to final offer selection and how it is working in the Manitoba labour market? Specifically, I note for the Minister that the Research and Planning division is doing none of it and is not tracking the experience with final offer selection. Is the Labour Board doing it?

Mrs. Hammond: No, Mr. Chairman, that is not the role of the Labour Board, to make comment on that type of a legislation change.

Mr. Edwards: I am using the words—and I appreciate it is taken from the supplementary information. It does say that one of the objectives is to assist in the development of sound labour-management relations by providing expert information relating to The Labour Relations Act. Final offer selection provisions are in The Labour Relations Act. The Labour Board, no doubt, has the expertise to comment on that. Research and Planning is obviously doing nothing. What is the Labour Board being asked to do in respect of giving advice to the Government?

Mrs. Hammond: Before I go on, I apologize, I had not introduced my staff that was here from Employment Standards, Bob Moggey, who is the director, and I would like to introduce John Korpesho, who is chairperson of the Labour Board.

Because the Labour Board is an arm's length board, they are ruling on the FOS legislation as it stands and the agreements, so it would not be right if they were also giving us advice on the legislation. They do hold seminars and they provide information to the public.

Mr. Edwards: I guess I agree that they are charged with the duty of ruling over the final offer selection provisions as they are with respect to The Labour Relations Act. But I think, in fact, that none of these has had to go to the Labour Board as yet. The selectors have been appointed, I believe, by consensus throughout—and maybe this is an appropriate time to ask the Minister if in fact the Labour Board has had to appoint selectors in the final offer selection process.

Mrs. Hammond: They have appointed four selectors to the process.

* (2050)

Mr. Edwards: With respect to the cases which come under the Labour Board, we, in Manitoba, I think, are making some improvements with respect to the accessibility to the case law which comes out of the Labour Board, which is very important to not just the lawyers, who of course know where those cases are, but to the employers and the employees or unions who want to read case law as it comes out of the Manitoba Labour Board.

Of course labour law is going to be tied to The Labour Relations Act in a particular province or other acts specific to that province, and so it is often very important to understand what the local Labour Board has decided on various issues. What progress has been made at the Labour Board to make available and accessible the case law, and index it and have it available and easily accessible to interested Manitobans?

Mrs. Hammond: A topical index, a case index, is being produced now and will be ready to be distributed. Oh, it has been distributed.

Mr. Edwards: Is the idea that that will be updated and distributed on a semi-annual or annual basis? What will be the time line?

Mrs. Hammond: Quarterly.

Mr. Edwards: With respect to the Labour-Management Review Committee, can the Minister indicate if the Labour Board has given her any advice on how that committee might be improved, beefed-up or be given more resources which might enable it to play a greater role in the development of Manitoba labour relations policy? It strikes me that is a very useful forum which has been around in this province since, I believe, in the 1960s.

It has fluctuated in its level of activity, and I think a lot of that has come from the attitude of the Government of the Day. I would hope that committee would not be so tied to the political process but a body which is given some autonomy and allowed to do its work aside from the particular agenda of the Party in power. My Party has not been in power in those decades, so it is easy for me to say this; but on the other hand, we have gone from one extreme to the other in this province, back and forth, back and forth. Either the unions will not talk to the Government or cannot talk to them, and the Government cannot or will not talk to them.

It is the same situation with respect to employers. So I certainly believe that the Labour-Management Review Committee can be an important instrument in getting the parties together and being preventative with respect to controversial issues which come up, and also assisting Government in playing the role it should play. Not to be devoid of the policy area but with respect to the actual ongoing process of discussing these issues, play that role of a promoter of debate in good faith between the parties to try and resolve as much as possible the issues which face the parties in a labour

relationship prior to the Government having to step in with the hammer.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Korpesho has been invited to attend and has attended one of the recent meetings for that very purpose. We really do see the Labour-Management Review Committee as a very important function that they can have, and we want to make sure that it works very well. One of the areas that they have worked extremely well and done is in the Essential Service Agreements in the health care field, and also the training of arbiters so that people are available to take their role if called upon to help out in labour relations in Manitoba.

We see a very essential role for the Labour-Management Review Committee and intend to use them. In that line my deputy has been meeting with that board. We want it to be working well, and we want them to feel that they have a necessary and good function for the Government to use.

Mr. Edwards: I am sorry to go back to the final offer selection issue. One further question struck me. With respect to the appointment of the four selectors, how does the Labour Board set up the list of selectors and come to appoint a particular person to an area? Is that an issue which is debated amongst the board itself, or is it the prerogative of the chairperson?

Mrs. Hammond: They are agreed to by the Labour Board and the Labour-Management Review Committee. The selectors are Martin Freedman, Wally Fox-Decent, Lou Plantje, and Jack Chapman. They work on a rotating basis.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: One last question. I outlined last year my concern about the fact that this is an area where there have been increasing demands in terms of pressure on the Labour Board and some of the decisions that are dealt with. Yet one of the first things that the current Government did when they came into office was actually to cut back in terms of the staffing for this department.

What I would like to ask is: what allowance is there in the current budget for the increased workload that the Labour Board has had to undertake in recent years? Final offer selection being an example of new legislation, the other change is The Labour Relations Act, which put an increased amount of time. I would just like to ask whether there is any allowance that is being made or will be made for the Labour Board in terms of their increasing responsibilities and, unfortunately, a fairly static budget on the other side?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, I understand that the cut was made by the previous administration, which the Member was a part of. Although we are always looking to make sure that we keep the staffing functions at a place that is manageable, we are always reviewing these areas as well.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass. (e)(2) Other Expenditures \$219,100—the Member for St. James.

* (2100)

Mr. Edwards: One quick question. I notice that it states that increased travel requirements have been experienced by the Labour Board. I see that as not reflected in the transportation increase which is a mere \$500.00. Am I to take it that that is reflected in the other operating increases which go from \$9,900 to \$17,600.00?

Mrs. Hammond: Travel does include transportation plus other operating costs.

Mr. Edwards: Does this mean that the Labour Board this year has been able to sit more often outside the City of Winnipeg than in the past? If so, to what is that attributable? Perhaps it is simply increased workload, or is there a decision to try and sit more often in rural Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: They have had an increased workload outside of the city, and their policy has been to meet as often as possible outside the Perimeter.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass. (f) Conciliation and Mediation Services: (1) Salaries \$347,600—pass; (f)(2) Other Expenditures \$47,100—pass.

(g) Apprenticeship and Training: (1) Salaries \$888,600—the Honourable Minister.

Mrs. Hammond: May I introduce Jim Davage, whose Conciliation and Mediation Services have just been passed, and we want to say what excellent service we have had from that branch and the resolution of 80 percent to 90 percent of the cases in which grievance mediation assistance is provided.

Mr. Chairman: Back to Apprenticeship and Training, (1) Salaries \$888,600—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: I have a question in terms of the way in which standards are set for apprenticeships. A concern has been expressed to me over the fact that there are a number of private training establishments, one in particular here in Winnipeg, which is providing supposed apprenticeship training. There is a great deal of concern as to the standards that are being used to determine whether this is in actual fact providing people who are taking these courses with anything that is of any particular value. I want to ask the Minister what the Government's policy is in terms of these types of operations, private operations indicating that they will train people to be apprentices. I would like to ask what the policy is of the Government and what kind of reviews are taking place to ensure that people are not being misled as to the true quality of training that they are receiving.

Mrs. Hammond: We deliver training through the community colleges, certainly as much as possible, but there are occasions when we have used private training establishments. Two people have been through a private training establishment for apprenticeship, that is in all

of the apprenticeship. I would like to take this moment to introduce Marilyn Kenny, who is director of Apprenticeship and Training.

Mr. Ashton: I am wondering what the future has to hold in terms of private establishments providing this type of training because I know at least one case where people have been told that they can sign up, they can receive apprenticeship training from a particular operation. There have been a lot of questions raised as to how legitimate this operation is, and whether people will be able to become journeymen in this particular trade. It is one thing to say you can have someone signed on as an apprentice, but I think it is misleading in the extreme to have people feel that they are receiving training, say equivalent to what you would receive at community college, but that is happening.

Mrs. Hammond: I have been advised that it has not been an issue as far as the Government is concerned, but if the Member has any particular examples that he would like to tell us about, we certainly could give him further information.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I certainly will provide details on that because I have a very real concern about maintaining our apprenticeship system. I think it is an excellent system and I do not want to see us go down the route of, to use a word that is used quite extensively, the privatization of our apprenticeship system. I believe that we need a public system of training and of apprenticeships.

Just one other brief question in terms of apprenticeships I would like to ask the Minister, and that is that one of the most significant developments by the previous New Democratic Party Government was in terms of apprenticeships in northern Manitoba, in particular with Native Northerners in Manitoba. In fact, statistics showed I believe at one point in time 30 percent of apprentices in this province were Native people, in many ways the result of the initiatives that were taken by the previous Government in regard to Limestone.

What I would like to ask the Minister is, what the current statistics are in terms of apprenticeship, in terms of Northerners, and in terms of Native Northerners, and also if she has any other further information on the situation, perhaps including the statistics involving the number of apprentices who are women?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, there are 450 apprentices now. Out of the Limestone there were 1,658 apprentices, and only 16 completed their apprenticeship. I understand that they were indentured to LTEA, so they did not get any on-the-job training. What we are doing now in the department—pardon me, they did not get enough training. What they are trying to do now is to put them together with specific employers so that they will be able to complete their apprenticeship, and they will be journeyed.

Mr. Ashton: I was asking for a breakdown of the current number of apprentices in terms of—

Mrs. Hammond: 450.

Mr. Ashton: —that number. So, 450 out of how many?

Mrs. Hammond: There are 450 apprentices now in the North out of 3,100 across the province.

Mr. Ashton: The reason I am raising that is because at one point 30 percent of the apprentices were Native Northerners. That figure does not include other Northerners who are also part of the apprenticeship program. We have expressed some very serious concerns about the fact that the Limestone training authority has been terminated by the Government, and its function supposedly absorbed by KCC, although we already know that the number of the key people at Limestone Training had been laid off.

We have seen that it may be a function as well of the fact that Limestone is winding down, that the number of Northern and Native apprentices is decreasing. I would like to ask the Minister what recommendations is she making to her Minister of Education. He seems to be bringing a whole series of changes affecting this area—has brought a number already—without any consultation at all with Northerners.

(Mr. Darren Praznik, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

What recommendations does she have to ensure that we do not see a return of the situation prior to Limestone, in which there were very few Northerners, would it be Native Northerners or other Northerners, in the apprenticeship training program, and as a result, very few journeymen. What recommendations is the Minister making? Is she standing up to the Minister of Education who thus far has made changes which, I believe, are jeopardizing the future of apprenticeship training in northern Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Acting Chairman, we have been working co-operatively with the Minister of Education. Our own apprenticeship staff have been going into the communities to consult and deal with this. I just have a hard time when I see that only 16 people out of 1,658 from Limestone completed their apprenticeships. 16 have been journeyed. I am sure that we will be able to improve on that record.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I mean it is quite obvious why the 16 people graduated. It was because of the length of the Limestone project. It takes a number of years for people to complete their training. It takes a number of years, depending on the trade, for them to have the work experience. One of the reasons we set up this program, the Limestone Training Program, was with Conawapa in mind. It was always the goal to have those 16 people, yes, and dozens, if not hundreds of others, ready to work on the Conawapa site.

* (2110)

But what this Government has done is that it has eliminated the Limestone training authority. They have eliminated it. Its function has supposedly been picked up by KCC, but there has been a dramatic change here. I believe it is having a negative impact on apprenticeships.

So, before the Minister makes comments like that, let us put the shoe on the foot that it belongs here, and ask the Minister, what plans does she have, and her Government have, for Conawapa because if anything, the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) has moved us backwards to the situation prior to Limestone when there was very little in the way of long-term planning. What has she in place to ensure that the many other northern and Native apprentices who are waiting for Conawapa, waiting on this Government for some clear direction in terms of training in northern Manitoba, what is she going to do for them?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Acting Chairman, we are working actively with the apprentices right now to attach them to businesses so that they are able to complete their apprenticeships. Before, they did not get a sufficiently broad experience so that they were able to complete their apprenticeships and be journeyed. What you have ended up with are a number of people who are neither fish nor fowl when it comes to job opportunities. They can only be helpers when they are in the workforce. I think Limestone started training in '86-87. Is that when they started training? I have to ask what kind of foresight was shown if that is the case, because obviously they started training too late to do anybody any good. What we are looking at now is to try and improve on that situation.- (interjection)-

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Order, please. Order.

Mrs. Hammond: I recognize that the Members feel that they are the only ones that have the interest of northerners at heart, but I do not think the record speaks for itself, and I think that the -(interjection)-

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Order, please. The Honourable Minister has the floor.

Mrs. Hammond: I believe what this Government is doing right now is actively getting people into the workforce, and that they will be journeyed and they will have that experience when Conawapa comes on-stream.

An Honourable Member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I recognize my Liberal counterpart is trying to justify from his seat the "Lemonstone" policies of the Liberal party which opposed the construction of Limestone from its inception. He might want to, by the way, try and justify -(interjection)- If I may complete my—

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): The Member for St. James, on a point of order.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairman, I cannot let that comment lie from the Member of a Party who played politics with northerners in their reign—thank heavens, it is over—and kick-started the Limestone project ahead a year purely for political advantage without any respect or concern for the workers who suffered.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): I would just advise the Member for St. James that this particular chairperson prefers to be addressed as such, rather than "chairman." The Member for Thompson has the floor with his question for the Minister.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I was just going to point out that the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) had said it would cost \$5 billion to construct Limestone. It actually cost \$1.6 billion, and if the Liberal Member would like to explain how the construction of Limestone showed no concern for the position of workers—

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): I would advise the Member for Thompson that I have ruled on the point of order. If we could return to the matter at hand—(interjection)—this committee would greatly appreciate that. The Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Chairperson, once again the Liberal Member is talking about training the Native people only to do menial jobs, which is completely inaccurate if you would look at the record of Limestone training. That is why I am asking the Minister, who obviously does not understand that you cannot have apprenticeship training involving a dam unless the dam is under construction, because apprenticeship by definition involves training and work experience, so I am quite frankly surprised by the Minister's comments, but let us leave perhaps our three-way political arguments to the side here—and then I will not get into the fact that the Conservatives also opposed the construction of Limestone. I can leave that aside for now. I can look ahead to the future. I am glad that the Conservatives have changed their policies and have come to recognize the need to construct Conawapa.

My question is, what is going to be done to add to what was already in place, an innovative system of training, particularly apprenticeship training, that saw record numbers of people brought into the apprenticeship system? I might add, for the Minister, that I consider it an achievement, the number of people brought into the apprenticeship system. Many of them are going to be dependent on Conawapa to complete their apprenticeship, because there are people who entered in 1987 and in 1988 and in 1989, who did not have the length of time under Limestone to be able to complete their apprenticeship. That is where Conawapa comes in. What I want to ask the Minister is, what is she going to do to ensure that her colleague, the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), does not deprive those people, who are in the apprenticeship system right now, of the opportunity to complete their training and become journeymen on the Conawapa dam?

Mrs. Hammond: The Minister of Education has no intention of depriving Northerners of anything, and certainly not their right to be apprentices. They have the Northern Training Employment Agreement. Also, it

is the apprenticeship branch that calls the apprentices to school, and they are actively working to identify the need and to make sure that we have people who will be apprentices for the upcoming Conawapa project.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Shall the item pass—the Member for Churchill.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): I would like to just follow up on a bit of questioning on the part of my colleague, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and ask the Minister, how many of the apprentices who have been involved with Hydro-related activities, either in the North or outside of the North, are still in the apprenticeship program? How many started and how many are still continuing along?

Mrs. Hammond: Approximately 400 are still active, out of the 1,658.

Mr. Cowan: What happened to the other 1,250 then?

Mrs. Hammond: Their file is held in abeyance, and when they get an employer, they will be called back into the program.

Mr. Cowan: How many of those would the department anticipate will be called back into the program when Hydro construction starts again, in a meaningful way, in the North?

Mrs. Hammond: They are working on those figures now, but they are not comfortable to give an accurate figure right now. As soon as they are close to it, we certainly can supply that information.

Mr. Cowan: Could they give an approximation of how many are ready for recall?

Mrs. Hammond: It will depend on which trades are needed as the construction is phased in.

* (2120)

Mr. Cowan: It takes a certain amount of time for an apprentice to pursue his apprenticeship, and I believe there are different periods of time for different apprenticeships. Can the Minister give us some indication of where people have dropped out, even if it is temporarily, or where people who were involved are not involved at the present time? At what level of the apprenticeship did they drop out?

Mrs. Hammond: Most dropped off at the first level. They did not have enough on-the-job hours to be able to continue, and so that is where the majority are sitting now then. My staff is advising me they are trying to get agreements with the communities so that they are able to give them some job opportunities, so that they will be able to go a little further in their apprenticeship training.

Mr. Cowan: Actually, that is nothing new. In fact the apprenticeships were allowed, and it was an innovative approach to either apply on-the-job hours at Limestone

or in the community right from the very start of the program. It was not just so that they could get enough hours, by the way. It was because people who had skills were desperately needed in the community. And what was going to happen when we started the construction of Limestone is that we were going to pull people who had those skills out of the communities, bring them out into Limestone where they could make a lot more money than they could in the communities, and then restrict the ability of the communities to grow through self-improvement because we had taken the skilled people out, not purposely, but because there was just more opportunity for them outside of the communities.

That was one reason for the extension into the communities for on-the-job hours or approved on-the-job hours. There was another reason as well, and that was because the individuals themselves oftentimes would come out to Limestone training to get a start, but would have to go back to the communities for personal reasons. When you live in a community where you do not have running water, where you do not have electric heat, where you do not have all the amenities of life, it becomes very important that you are able to cut the wood, haul the water, get the wood in in the winter time.

There are times when you can be outside of your community in the summer, and there are times when you have to be back in your community in the winter. So it was set up because of the way construction went at Limestone. It was set up so that individuals who came in the apprenticeship program would have an opportunity to choose whether they wanted to stay at Limestone or whether they wanted to go back into their communities.

That was done not only to help the communities and the individuals but also to help the program. If you forced individual Northerners to make a choice between their family on an immediate basis in getting wood for the winter and hauling water in the winter when it is difficult to haul water and doing the things around the house that have to be done around the house and working on Limestone for a more futuristic reward, they will choose their families, as would you and I. Anyone in their right mind would choose their families. The program had to have that sort of flexibility to allow them to get the hours in the community so as not to penalize them for wanting to do what was best for their own families. That was the second reason.

There was also a third reason. There was a lot of money going into the communities with respect to job creation, building houses, building facilities. That was the thrust of the New Democratic Party; we believed very strongly in that. We know that we differ with the other Parties on that, that they consider that to be short term make-work projects. We saw those sorts of projects, even although the work itself was short-term, to be far more than make-work projects. They were make-community projects, they were make-communities-stronger projects. In order to ensure that we did not make the communities stronger by importing labour from outside the community, we had to give workers who were getting Limestone Training Employment Agency training to be able to work in the communities.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

So those are the three main reasons why there were approved on-the-job hour extensions into the communities. It was not just to make certain that an individual worker got their hours. I make that point because I believe it is important that we not lose sight of the overall objectives of the program to begin with, which are somewhat different from the normal objectives of an apprenticeship program.

Normally apprenticeship programs do not concern themselves with the fact that an individual may need to haul water. They do not deal with individuals who may need to haul water or haul wood. Normally apprenticeship programs do not concern themselves with the impact of withdrawing labour from a community because they are taking place in the same community where the labour is being provided for. So it is very important that the program retain those objectives and the flexibility, and it was flexibility that was not needed before in the apprenticeship program, but it was flexibility that was very important to northern objectives. I do not want that flexibility to be foregone or the original objectives to be lost sight of.

Having said that, however, we also knew that it was going to take much longer for an apprentice to work their way through their individual apprenticeship than they would if they signed on with an employer and stayed with that employer for two, three or four years, because in the normal practice, where an apprentice comes in and indentures to a specific journeyman or an employer, they are with that journeyman or employer for a length of time—in the construction trades it may be somewhat different, but they are working within a much tighter framework.

So the fact that there are only 16 who have graduated, at this point in time, I do not think is a condemnation of the process or a condemnation of the program. I would not want the Minister to believe it to be such. I think it is a reflection of the circumstances and it is important that those circumstances guide the program. The question I had asked earlier, as to how many had dropped out of the program, was intended to determine if there was a readily available pool of apprenticeships that could go back in, if Hydro construction started again, or if we saw the type of job creation programs in the communities that we think are important for the communities, to allow them the opportunity to continue on with their apprenticeship in those communities.

I would ask the Minister if the department is consistently monitoring the apprenticeships, the 1600 that were involved in the original program, to ensure that they know of opportunities and are able to take advantage of opportunities as they appear. Secondly, I would ask her, and I understand I am asking for a judgment call on the part of staff more than the Minister, and accept it as such—it is not something we would hold them to—but how many of those apprentices do they anticipate will make it through the program if we embark upon major Hydro construction activity and job creation programs in the near future? In other words, would we have an 80 percent success rate, a 60 percent success rate, a 100 percent success rate? What is their sense?

Mrs. Hammond: As far as monitoring the files, yes they are, and 450 apprentices are active now, and those are the 450 that they felt could get through the program at this time. I think that the Member—I do not doubt that the idea probably was very good, and we believe in flexibility as well. But I do not think it helps a northern worker to come out of an apprenticeship program as a second class citizen as far as apprenticeship goes. There are national standards, and they should be able, when they come out of these apprenticeship programs, to work anywhere—if they want to go anywhere in Canada, outside of their communities, that their apprenticeship program will stand up anywhere.

We will go to great lengths, the department will go to great lengths to make sure that Northerners, as well as anyone else in Manitoba, do get the flexibility that they need, but when they come out of the apprenticeship program they will be an apprentice, no matter where they are. I think this is very important too, because I think that what happened was the level of expectation was very high when the program started and there were a lot of frustrations that had been found for people who had thought they were going to get a program, thought they were going to come out as apprentices, but there was not enough supervision in some of the communities to allow that to happen with so many of them.

So we are actively working with the people that were in the program, and certainly as many as we can get on-stream we will, because it is to our best interests as a province and as a Government to have these people educated and working. Certainly that is the goal—they have handed me a paper and it says our goal is to develop tradespeople second to none in Canada in sufficient numbers to meet industry needs at the leading edge of technology, capable of advancing as changes in the marketplace occur. I think that aptly describes what is happening in the apprenticeship branch.

Mr. Cowan: How many tradespeople, journeypersons have interprovincial tickets, as a percentage?

Mrs. Hammond: Sixteen thousand, approximately, in Manitoba.

* (2130)

Mr. Cowan: Of the total number, what would be the percentage? How many have interprovincial tickets?

Mrs. Hammond: We will have to get back to you on that.

Mr. Cowan: The point that I am making by the question—and the answer is not really required right away, it was more rhetorical than immediate—is that not all journeypersons can travel anywhere in Canada and work. Just because you are a journeyperson does not mean that you have an interprovincial ticket, that you have interprovincial qualifications, and therefore, while that is a good goal and one would recommend that goal, it is not necessarily the best goal for the circumstances that you are going to confront around hydro development in the North.

I happen to think if a person goes through an apprenticeship for two years, goes back into the community and decides that they do not want to travel around the country, that they want to be an asset in their own community, and in those two years of apprenticeship they have learned how to do things that provide their community with resources that they never had before, and the community does not have to fly someone in to fix a pump, or fly someone in to develop the plumbing system that is coming into the communities now, or fly someone in to do the electrical work when they are building houses, or fly someone in to construct the houses, or even fly someone in to supervise the work, then we have accomplished something. We did not get a journeyperson, tradesperson out of that process, but we have accomplished something very important for the North.

That is a type of chance and opportunity that a lot of the Northerners never had before, and that is why we had such problems with hiring Northerners for northern construction projects and with having to import Southerners into northern communities to do work that could have been done if there was a skilled body of workers in the community, and that is part of what the whole apprenticeship program with respect to Limestone intended to do. It was not necessarily singly minded with the objective of only having journeypersons or tradespeople come out of it.

It also was intended to give people skills that could go back into their communities, and whether or not they are the best in the country on the leading edge of technology means very little when it comes down to fixing the pump, or to building the house, or to working on the water treatment plant when it comes in, or to building the airstrip, or to doing all those sorts of things that have to be done in a community. Again, I do not want that to be something that the Government loses sight of over time.

I am making the point not to be critical of the Government in any way whatsoever but to try to provide some insights into how we felt when we were developing the program, and why we think it is important that the program continue in the most flexible manner possible without becoming transfixed on one single objective of producing tradespeople, but look at the broader, more overall societal goals that are important to fill the very specific and very unique needs of the North.

One of the things we found wrong with the apprenticeship program when we entered into it and one of the reasons why we felt there were so few northern Natives in the apprenticeship programs historically was that they were not suited to the needs of the North, nor were they suited to the conditions in the North. Certainly, one would want to see people go through the standard apprenticeship program whether they are Native or non-Native, whether they are from the North or the South, and come out with papers, but on the other hand, it is not so wrong in the North, under the circumstances that we confront, for them to just go back to their communities, maybe spend three or four years working in those communities without their papers, and maybe five or six years down the road deciding they want to do something else when

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there are new people coming into the communities who can take up the skills, and go on and get their papers. So the 16, the 1,600, the 450, the 1,658, the 415 numbers, they are not the important numbers. What is important is building those communities.

Mrs. Hammond: I think that we agree. We certainly want to see qualified workers in the North, but I think one of the areas that we are able to, is we can deliver education in the communities and are doing that. I think it is important, though, to understand as well that what the Member says about people being able to work in their own communities even though they have one or two years is important, but I think it is equally important to these people that they end up getting the skills that they thought they were going to get in the first place.

I think it is important to their, maybe self-respect is not the word, but for your own satisfaction, to know that you are able to do this sort of thing—what they started out to do, that they are able to complete. Then no matter what kind of job comes up, these jobs are not pulled in from the south because these people have had the opportunity to be trained. While I agree with the Member in some areas, I think that it is really important for people who start off in a program to be able to feel that they can complete it to their satisfaction as well.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—(Pass); (g)(2) Other Expenditures, \$128,700.00—(Pass);

(h) Pension Commission: (1) Salaries, \$231,000—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: Just one brief question on the Pension Commission, and just in terms of pensions in general. I have raised this before, but I know it is something that has been raised with myself as Labour Critic by a number of people, and that is just the continuing development of national standards related to pensions. Two particular issues: one is in terms of indexing the private pension plans, which I know was one item that was indicated last year as being under consideration by the Pension Commission itself. The second is in terms of development of national standards generally, particularly in regard to the whole question of early retirement.

I am getting an increasing number of people, for example, in my own constituency, who worked 30 years at Inco and are really in the position of not being able to obtain work anywhere else but because of their age cannot really retire. It is particularly a problem in the mining industry and other heavier industries, where after 30 years—I can tell you in the mining industry—if theoretically you could find other work, it is virtually impossible. It takes such a toll physically.

One question I would ask is what the Minister is doing in terms of the whole question of early retirement, because I believe it is a logical thing for our society—as we grow older and with also the pressures in terms of youth unemployment—to assist people to retire early and, on the other hand, make those jobs available for younger people who are more than anxious and willing

to get into the workplace. So I would like to ask on those two questions. One is the indexing, and the second is in terms of early retirement.

Mrs. Hammond: Before I answer, I would like to introduce Mr. Cumberland, who is the new Superintendent of Pensions.

As far as the indexing of private pensions, the Pension Commission is presently looking at the position that Ontario has taken, to see what is happening there, and they are reviewing it themselves. As far as early retirement is concerned, the Commission has taken the position that that is a private area of decision and they have not really delved into that.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Edwards: I received a visit from a lawyer assigned to the department some months ago, and it was with respect to legislation which was potentially going to be proposed to bring our pension legislation in line with the other jurisdictions in Canada. There was at that time, and I think we had some conversations—there was some discussion that the deadline was January 1, 1990. Has that in fact gone by the wayside in terms of this Government's agenda?

* (2140)

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, we asked both Opposition Critics for some measure of support on that issue because if we were going to do anything at all, it had to be before the new provision came in as of January 1, 1990. Since I did not receive that from either Party, then it has died.

Mr. Cowan: When the list for LynnGold creditors was published for their meeting, the pension fund showed up as one of the creditors in the list. There was no amount ascribed to it at the time, but it did show up. I am wondering if the Minister can indicate if any of the pensions are at risk as part of the creditor body at LynnGold Resources.

Mrs. Hammond: I am informed that we do not believe there is any risk to the pension plan at the present time. This was a precautionary measure that was taken by the Pension Commission, to make sure we were on the list if there should be some problems that arise.

Mr. Cowan: What possible problems could you anticipate with respect to pensions and LynnGold Resources?

Mrs. Hammond: There is always the possibility, when a firm goes bankrupt, that all the contributions had not been made. We just wanted to ensure that was not the case, that the pension plan was protected. We just wanted to make sure we were on that list.

Mr. Cowan: Has the Government so assured itself?

Mrs. Hammond: We are waiting for an actuarial report from the carrier.

Mr. Cowan: When does the Government anticipate it will receive the same?

Mrs. Hammond: We are expecting it in the near future.

Mr. Cowan: We have all heard those words. Some of us have used those words. They are very subjective words, no matter who is hearing or using them. I tell you that it is a very serious concern for workers in the community who have lost a great deal already. If they felt their pensions were at risk, they would be very much concerned. Now for the most part they do not believe their pensions to be at risk, and I do not want to create any concerns or fears by this line of questioning.

What I do want to know is when will there be a definitive word, because the question itself has been posed by the inclusion. Whether it be a precautionary matter or not, the intent is not important. The fact that workers saw the pension on the list of creditors gave rise to some concern.

Mrs. Hammond: The carrier has been asked for a wind-up report and hopefully it will be the next four to six weeks. When the company declared bankruptcy, we made sure that somebody from the Pension Commission went up to Lynn Lake. We wanted to be assured that the pensions were protected, and we were doing it as a precautionary measure to start with.

Even though we recognize that it may be a concern to workers, we felt it was better to go that route than to leave that measure uncovered.

Mr. Cowan: But at this point in time there is no definitive concern. As a matter of fact, one would be fairly comfortable in saying that there is for all intents and purposes most likely no threat at all to any pension of any worker at LynnGold?

Mrs. Hammond: I am sorry, did the Member suggest I am saying there is no threat to the pension? Would he repeat the question?

Mr. Cowan: For all intents and purposes, one would be comfortable in saying there is no threat at all to the pensions of workers at LynnGold.

Mrs. Hammond: That is the preliminary indication, but we cannot say for sure until we get the report.

Mr. Cowan: The Cabinet gave the Minister authorization to enter into an agreement with Canada on a program for older workers adjustment on December 6. I asked the question of the Premier the other day, Friday, in the House. I would like to know if this would be the appropriate place to ask questions on this or if the Minister would—

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, under the Labour Adjustment Unit, if—

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass.

Item 2.(h)(2) Other Expenditures, \$58,800—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Edwards: A quick question, I wanted to ask the Minister, in the Other Expenditures, Personnel Services (Fees) went up substantially. What was that due to?

Mrs. Hammond: Those are actuarial fees.

Mr. Edwards: Why were the actuarial fees this year more than double what they were last year? Is there any particular reason for that?

Mrs. Hammond: The answer to that question is there have been more meetings and there have been more members of the board and that includes their per diems as well.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass.

Item 2.(j) Grants, \$6,500.00—the Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: I just wanted to indicate here that I am bitterly disappointed that the Minister has not chosen this area to reverse the course of her predecessor. This is the section under which funding was provided to the Manitoba Labour Education Centre. One of the first things the Government did was cut this item from \$283,400 in the '87-88 budget to \$6,500 in last year's budget. We pleaded with the then Minister to reinstate this funding.

Quite frankly I am very disappointed that this Minister has not reinstated this funding. I believe it is a worthwhile project, it deserves ongoing funding, it supplies services to workers, it supplies services to employers. If the Minister is not going to reinstate core funding, what I would like to ask is, will she at least consider funding the Labour Education Centre for some of its many worthwhile projects, because as I said, it has not just provided a service to workers although primarily it has, it has provided a service to employers as well and is well respected in the field of education involving workplace issues, labour issues. So will she at least look at providing some funding, if not on a core basis, in terms of project funding for some of the many worthwhile projects undertaken by the centre?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, we have embarked already on a program with the MFL and it is the anti-racism program that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson) has given a staff person for two years as well as space in the archives building. As far as working on a project basis we have already indicated to the Manitoba Federation of Labour that we would be willing to look at programs on a project-by-project basis with the idea that we may be able to help out in that area. The Labour Education Centre has asked if we would nominate someone to their board from the department and Mr. Jim Nykoluk will be sitting on that board. So we are working with labour to do some of these very things.

Mr. Ashton: Now that the Department indirectly has somebody on the board I hope they will learn the error of their ways and perhaps next year we could be looking at debating the Grants section with a line item including core funding for the Labour Education Centre. I say

that because I really believe that one of the more petty cuts that this Government made and the previous Minister obviously made was the cut in this particular area.

I see absolutely no reason, and this was made by the way in the same year that the provincial Government was able to establish the fund that it set aside, the fund that was to include the excess revenues from the particular year that this funding was cut. So no one can argue that it was because the Government was short of funds. It was one of the better years fiscally for the Government. With those few comments I hope the Minister over the upcoming year will take time to visit the centre, familiarize herself with the many good projects, the very good work it is undertaking and reinstate that funding in the upcoming year.

Mrs. Hammond: I would like to indicate to the Member for Thompson that we did fund Professor Nuttall to the tune of \$130,000 to do a study on labour issues for the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister is no doubt aware that the federal Government in Ottawa has abandoned the Canadian Centre on Health and Safety as an appropriate body to fund. That body is suffering greatly under that financial strain and indeed is making some very persuasive cases around the country that the funds were well spent. The centre, which I believe is located in Hamilton, has published regularly materials which go to employers and employees respectively and keep people up-to-date on the latest technology.

* (2150)

Mr. Chairman: Excuse me, perhaps this should come under the Workplace and Health line.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Chairperson, I simply raise this at this time because I know the province does give a grant to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. At least I am under the impression they gave a grant of some, I believe it was \$4,000 last year. I am referencing my question to determine if that came under this area last year and why that amount has not been paid this year.

Mrs. Hammond: I would like the Member to clarify, were you talking about CCOSH or the labour college?

Mr. Edwards: I am talking about neither of those. I am talking about the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, which I believe the Government gave some money to last year and I believe it was this Department. Now perhaps I am mistaken in that.

Mrs. Hammond: No, that is what they call CCOSH. I apologize for using the short name. I hate it when people do that. That \$4,000 went to the Labour College of Canada in the form of a grant for a student. I believe it was a woman from Safeway that attended the college and received the grant.

Mr. Edwards: Has the provincial Government been approached by the centre for any funding, in particular

in view of the fact that the federal Government has abandoned it in terms of funding?

Mrs. Hammond: We re-established the position of a governor to go on the board of governors and he is working with CCOSH to come up with a business plan to keep that particular institution operational. We certainly still feel that it should be federally funded the way it was started and feel very strongly, but at the same time we do not want to see that centre disappear, because it really is important to Workplace Safety and Health.

Mr. Edwards: I am glad to hear that vote of support. I certainly feel the same way. Realistically on the federal scene the federal Government is not likely to re-establish funding for the centre given the way that they are going, given the early time we are in their present term.

Is the Province of Manitoba envisaging a financial commitment to the centre in the future? You have indicated that they are going on the board of governors to establish a financial plan. Is that a signal of some future commitment to the centre as a participant with other provinces in the funding of this centre?

Mrs. Hammond: As a province and as a Government we feel very strongly the federal Government should certainly be funding that centre, but at the same time not wanting to see the centre go under we have someone on the board of governors who is looking to have a business plan in place. Then we will see what they come up with in terms of funding or if they have some other way of dealing with this issue.

Mr. Edwards: Finally, Mr. Chairman—and you will have to appreciate that I was not the critic last year during Estimates—I am wondering what has happened to any initiative within the department to see some form of assistance for people who are dealing with unemployment insurance. We have seen the demise of the unemployed help centres.

I am not sure that this is the particular area in the Estimates to deal with this, but I would like to know what analysis the Government has done to determine what has been lost in terms of service to Manitoba workers as a result of pulling back from funding those centres, because it is my experience and view that they served an invaluable service to Manitoba workers in dealing with a very complex and often intimidating system. Indeed, it is likely to get a little harsher in the very near future if the federal Government has its way.

Mrs. Hammond: That was an area that came under Family Services Department. It was a judgment call by the provincial Government that this was a federal matter and should be dealt with with federal funds.

Mr. Edwards: Let me suggest that it should be very much a concern of this Minister and this department. Let me also suggest that, given what I have seen and what most Canadians have seen of the federal Government, it is very unlikely the federal Government is likely to show any sympathy for unemployed workers in this country in the very near future.

With that in mind can this Minister indicate what, if any, plans are being made in her department to deal with some of the problems that people are having in dealing with unemployment insurance? We are going to have more problems as time goes on. It is going to get worse, we know that, given that the federal Government is insisting on ramming through their reforms, which I believe are going to make a much stronger case for worker assistance to help them fight a bureaucracy which fundamentally is going to be geared towards not having them on unemployment insurance and getting them off of it as soon as they can.

Mrs. Hammond: We are certainly concerned about workers. We have adjustment committees that are put in place when there are plant closures or if there are layoffs within a company. Our first priority is to make sure that people are re-employed, but that does not say that we wish to use—shall I say it—the Liberal blank cheque to fund everything that is going. We have to have priorities. We are putting our priorities into the adjustment committees, into education and training. These are the areas that we feel best serve people who are unemployed in our province.

Mr. Chairman: The hour being 10 p.m., committee rise.

* (2000)

SUPPLY—FAMILY SERVICES

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Neil Gaudry): Would 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 Family Services.

We are now on item 5. Income Security, (a) Central Directorate: Provides central program management, policy direction, program analysis, program audit services and administration for the Income Security Programs. (1) Salaries, \$1,085,800—the Honourable Member for St. Vital.

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): Mr. Acting Chairman, might I first say that an item that concerns me is the Minister has been going around very boastful that she has been doing great things in the economic security for the people of Manitoba that are disadvantaged. There is a piece of legislation that went through that let children of parents on social assistance keep their earnings from paper routes and cleaning sidewalks and babysitting and everything. I think that is a real charitable thing for the Government to do.

The only thing I say is that it is very cosmetic. It is very welcome, but it is something that the Government should have done certainly when they first came into office. They knew that situation existed when they were in Opposition. They talked about those things when they were in Opposition, and then it takes them a year and a half to do anything. I do not think that the Minister should be very proud of that.

The other one is they are now allowing single parents to go immediately on to provincial welfare. I am not

so sure, Mr. Acting Chairman, that was a good move, because certainly my office has been getting a lot of complaints from people that the service they have been getting from the provincial welfare office versus the city welfare office has been downgraded.

I wonder if the Minister knows that is true. I am wondering whether she knew the pitfalls in the switchover and whether this is just another game of smoke and mirrors or whether there really was a sincerity on the Government's part to alleviate the problems of people, because it seems to have added to their problems rather than eliminated any.

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Acting Chairman, it certainly is not my intention to add to the problems of the people on social assistance. That was not the intention nor do I believe in the vast instance that has happened.

I had a couple of pieces of correspondence indicating to me one or two problems that have occurred. I think the Member should be aware that with any change that takes place there will be bound to be some wrinkle in that system. We will certainly make every effort to be sure that people are served.

I certainly do not agree with him that the service has been downgraded. I do not agree with the Member that this is a smoke and mirrors. This was something very important to people that raised the issue with the Women's Initiative. They felt it was very important, or they would not have raised it. The Women's Initiative group felt that it was very important or they would not have put it as one of the recommendations that they made to me when they tabled that report with me when I was the Minister in charge of the Status of Women.

So I do not think the Member should belittle that initiative. We looked at it and saw, yes, that is something we can do. We have spent a considerable amount of money on it, and hopefully it will work out well for people in that situation.

If the Member has some particular concerns or something of particular note that he would like to raise, I am not asking that he raise it with regard to individual cases, but if he has something specific, perhaps he would like to share that with us. If it is something that he does not care to raise in the House, I am sure he would like to share it with me or my staff at another occasion. We certainly want to see the system run smoothly.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Minister talks about wrinkles. Well, they talked a different tune when they were in Opposition. Everything was wrong and they had all the answers.

Now they introduce legislation and ten days later they say there are wrinkles in it. They do not even explain what they are or how they are going to fix them. I see some of the things, and maybe the Minister can explain, and hopefully on some of the points I am wrong, but why they were originally on the City of Winnipeg welfare—and I acknowledge that certainly those in rural Manitoba because of the wide discrepancy that this Minister continues to allow a two- and three-tier system

in Manitoba, which is contrary to the Canada Assistance Plan.

I can see where there was a solution to some of the problems, but as far as the City of Winnipeg is concerned—and that indeed is where the bulk of the people getting assistance are—it appears to me that they lost their right to maintain some of their 55-Plus Program, their CRISP programs, the province does not give a Christmas bonus package like them.

* (2010)

The city on occasion allows other deductions, or payments without deduction from Autopac, Workers' Compensation, settlement payments like that. Those are some of the things they have lost apparently, and hopefully the Minister has acknowledged that. Hopefully she can say that I am wrong in that, but that is the word that we are getting at the present time.

One of the things that they do have is the same service that they were getting before, versus the city, and this Minister can in no way argue that the provincial service is as good as the City of Winnipeg. She knows that all points and all people that are knowledgeable in this know that the reverse is true. They now for instance cannot directly deal with the receptionist at a welfare office. Apparently, they have to get directly in touch with an in-take worker for an appointment. This takes ten days, ten very critical days for people on social allowance—at least ten days incidentally, depending on how the holidays fall.

They have to wait these ten critical days, and if you call those offices, what do you get? You get, all our lines are busy, recorded calls, music on there, which nobody is really interested in, but basically what we have here is a system that is not nearly as caring as the City of Winnipeg one for the majority of the people who are on social assistance in this province. Instead we have reverted to an entire system.

Rather than taking the best that came out of the city, what have we taken? We have taken the worst from the provincial offices, that callous, uncaring devil-may-care attitude of her department, which she has not been able to correct. In fact, I alluded earlier, and I think actually the total system is worse than when the NDP—and that has to be really saying something. So I am wondering how the Minister would respond to the things, both that they have picked up and that they have lost during that process.

Mrs. Oleson: I really do, Mr. Acting Chairman, take exception to the Member's constant remarks about the attitude of the people in my department. I certainly hope if he has something of a specific nature that has been a problem, or one particular person, he would come and speak to me about it, and we will see if we can get it ironed out.

I think it is very unfair to the staff in the social services department to paint with a broad paintbrush and say that everyone is uncaring and all the other adjectives which he used. I do not think it is fair in a forum such as this to do that when those people cannot come here and defend themselves. If the Member has really

something specific, then I would appreciate hearing it in a private conversation, because I do want the system to work well and people to be treated properly. I would be disappointed if I really believed that they were not. There may be instances where there are difficulties, but I would be very disappointed to learn that the staff were not treating people politely. I think the Member should really be careful when he makes those sorts of accusations in such a broad sense, because there are very many caring individuals who work for the department on a daily basis serving people in need and often under very difficult circumstances.

With regard to the transition with the single parent program, the system is generally running smoothly. There were a great many people to switch over from one program to another. I understand that it is going fairly well. I think the Member surely would realize that there will be from time to time a problem with a changeover like that, and something may emerge that in one individual or so many individual cases where there needs to be some special attention paid to that.

There was no one cut off as a result of this changeover. The people coming onto the provincial program have quicker access to some of the employment programs that we do have in place for people on social assistance. They would have earlier access to those programs.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Minister says she takes exception to the remark. I want to tell her that the thousands of people who have to live under this type of regime take exception to what is going on in this province too. I would like to say for the record that the Minister should soon learn that she is in charge of that department, and any criticism that comes from this side is aimed directly at her and those staff. She has lots of competent staff, but when that Minister's department does like they did in Brandon, put a gag order on the people that they no longer can talk to us, that is what I take exception to. That is what my Party takes exception to.

Mr. Acting Chairman, if this Minister wants examples, she can look at almost any week's newspapers; she can look at the Sais case; she can look at the Border case; look at the many, many cases that we have had where this Party has changed the direction of Government. She will readily admit that in the Sais case.

When we do deal directly with the Minister, do we get replies? No. Here is a letter in reply to my comments in committee. I think it was the 17th of December, letters and inquiries to her department that go back to August. People have a problem. They may not seem very big to the Minister or her department, but these problems are important to these people because it is the roof over their head or the food in their children's stomach. They cannot wait for six months or seven months or eight months for replies.

I want to reiterate, Mr. Acting Chairman, that there is no criticism directed at the staff. As a matter of fact by and large when we have been able to communicate with the staff for the benefit of everybody -(interjection)-

No, we can communicate with staff just like any other citizen in Manitoba can. The Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) seems still not to be able to understand the system of caring for people and helping people, which this Party does on a regular basis. When we have dealt directly with staff we have a lot of co-operation, but the fact of the matter is they quickly see our position.

What we see here is a complete lack of leadership on the part of this Minister. This department is obviously way over her head and she does not have control of it. She is not giving direction to her staff so do not slough this off and say that I am criticizing staff. I am criticizing the Minister when I stand here because she ultimately is where the buck stops. If there is a problem in the department, Mr. Acting Chairman, it is her problem, not her staff's problem.- (interjection)-

I have a question of the Minister if they are so caring. She has a letter here. She says, contact the Minister. Here is a fellow, a paraplegic in a wheelchair who just underwent surgery. Under any conditions under doctor's orders these people are entitled under the Canada Assistance Plan even to a special diet. We seem to have almost no standard for special diets in this province. What is the Minister's position on that and why are we so stingy in our application of that form of assistance to people, particularly the disabled in this province? -(interjection)- Never mind.

Mrs. Oleson: I wonder if the Member completed his remarks. May I join in the debate please? Mr. Acting Chairman, first of all the Member says that he is criticizing me. Well he certainly has every right to do so and no doubt will continue to. The Member is right. He should be criticizing me and not individual staff members. I do not care what he wants to say to me but I will tell him that we are, the staff are doing the best they possible can, sometimes under difficult circumstances, to serve the people that they are in charge of serving. Now the Member says that he has had a gag order from somewhere or other, he does not specify.

An Honourable Member: From Brandon.

Mrs. Oleson: From Brandon. Okay. I do not know really what the Member is talking about. If he is implying that I have been issuing gag orders, he is completely incorrect. I have issued no gag orders to anyone, but I would like to pass some comments to the Member which may be helpful to him when dealing with these cases because I know that he gets a lot of referrals to him. I used to when I was in Opposition also. A lot of people write to me with individual problems, which is certainly their prerogative. I think the Member has perhaps had difficulty in getting information because of the way in which he asks for it and because of the type of information he is asking for.

* (2020)

We are dealing here with very delicate matters. We are dealing with individual case files. We are dealing with every essence of people's lives. I am sure the

Member would not want to encroach on privacy nor get information that was really of a privileged nature and that staff are rather under a difficulty if the Member phones and demands that type of information from line staff. They cannot really give him the information legally. They can attempt to work the problem out and I am sure they do.

These matters the Member said they were not important to me, they are important to me, every single one of them. The Member should remember there are 25,000 cases at least and so to have an intimate working knowledge of every one of them would be very difficult for that Member or for myself. I am sure he will understand that. If the Member would like to get, and I am sure he does, help for people in a more expeditious manner, I have invited him on several occasions to call my office staff, my special assistant, who will then put someone in touch with him, put someone in touch with the staff involved, and make sure the Member's concerns are addressed. I think it is important to note here too to the Member that sometimes it takes a long time, a great deal of searching through files and reviewing of files, to get the information the Member may wish to have.

I think really, is it not more important, at least it is to me, maybe not to that Member, that when the Member raises an issue, the staff immediately look at it, and they immediately try to rectify it if it is rectifiable? Is it not more important that the person you are inquiring on behalf of gets the service than that you get a reply in a hurry? To me it is more important that person who is in need of assistance gets that assistance immediately. Then if maybe in the run of things and the turmoil of everyday life if a letter is a little slow getting back to the Member, would he not rather that the person received the help and the information than that he received the letter on time?

Anyway now the Member raises a matter of special diet. There certainly is room in the system to address those sorts of needs and they are addressed as much as we can. Each case has to be looked at with its special need. We do look at that.

If the Member has a concern that has not been rectified, then I hope he will bring it to my attention by letter or speaking to me in the House about it. We do make attempts to deal with, particularly where a medical opinion states that this person is in need of some particular diet, then we certainly try to address to that.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, let me say that the Minister makes certain statements which she knows full well are wrong. That is that this Member has never asked any staff for any information that is confidential or sensitive without certainly accompanying letters.

An Honourable Member: But we are not sure about that.

Mr. Rose: The Honourable Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) says, we are not so sure about that. Well, he is sure about it. I think there is no time for joking. These are very serious matters and the

Government time and time again snickers and laughs at things like this because they do not really care about the people. But let me say this: I never yet, and the Minister nor the Government will be able to document one case in 20 months where I solicited confidential information on behalf of a client, nor will they be able to document one single case or sentence where I demanded information either in letter or verbally.

If the Minister can document such, she better do it. Do not take six months to do it because she should not be making statements like that unless she can back them up. It is typical of her, typical of her leadership and typical of the Government, the arrogant attitude they have towards the people of Manitoba.

Anyway, Mr. Acting Chairman, she wonders about the gag order. Well, I sent a letter to the Minister. There is a case where a lady in Elgin has a home. She wants to give it to the poor people. She gave it to a lady to use, a family to use on social assistance and eventually they make payments on it. The owners of the building do not even ask for any down payment or any interest payments, but the money coming from social assistance is so mediocre, so poor, that the family even has to abandon that home and move into Brandon at a higher rent. The family owning the home offered it to another family on welfare. The Minister's department said, no, you cannot occupy that home until the \$6,000 lien is lifted. These people were willing to give their home up for nothing and yet this department, this uncaring department, could not care less.

Now the Minister says, I would like to clarify the issues. I think she had better sit down and get some staff and clarify this issue herself, because this letter is just mumbo jumbo. The Cliffords have not lost the home at this time. Who ever suggested they lost their home at this time?

She said the interested family is no longer interested in the Elgin property, that is the second party. Why are they not interested, because they have not been allowed to take occupancy of it. Do you think they were going to wait for six months in the wintertime for occupancy?

Then she goes on to say, and no social assistant families have expressed an interest in it. Of course they have not shown an interest in it, because your department will not let them occupy it without the lien being lifted. A simple talk to one of the lawyers would simply indicate to the Minister what she could do to solve that problem.

Mr. Acting Chairman, I do have a question to the department if the Minister—and this is a serious question that I would like answered, because time and time again we get calls from people who say we have a problem with the department. As soon as we start to get some solution we are shifted to another worker. Then when we start to get somewhere we are shifted to another worker.

I do not know why—because I know when I have become involved over I think it is at 880 Portage in four or five people in three or four days, and this seems—I think all the experts in social services agree that is the wrong way. There should be one worker dealing all the way through with a certain client.

Here is a lady who has written to me. I hope you can prove it wrong, but she seems like a sincere lady. I will give a copy of this to the Minister. She says that within a one-week period she was through four workers. Before she even got half resolved on the matter she had gone through, I think it was, nine workers. It is all documented here. That is how much they get shifted around.

How could the Minister expect, even with three—yes, there is a number nine. I do not know whether that is a worker, but there was certainly in excess of six. How does the Minister think those clients of social assistance are served with that kind of juggling around of workers?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Member is indicating a problem with some of them. He said they had in excess of six workers. Well that may be high and that maybe is not ideal. The Member should realize that where we have one primary worker for an individual case there may be other people in the office or in that area with some specific expertise who may be able to help that client.

Now, if the client felt they were being shoved from person to person, I do not think that is the way they should be made to feel. Perhaps those people who they were being assigned to, or were being assigned to them, had some particular expertise that they could help them with some matter. I would hope that would be the reason because it does seem like a lot of people to be involved with one. There may have been some circumstance in which it was felt that another field of expertise could help that person.

Mr. Rose: I want for a minute—in regard to that I hope the Minister will look into this and see if there is not some sort of a system wherever possible, the original intake worker or assigned worker is the one that follows the case through. If there has to be consultation, certainly that person can consult with the other, but it is a very—the Minister would know that. How confusing it would be for somebody to even have to work with three different workers, never mind nine, as is documented in this case.

* (2030)

I would like to go back on a case, which I brought to the House some months ago or some weeks ago anyway, and which eventually had gone through all the way to the courts and the appeal system and rejected. That was the Ryan Sais case, where both the Minister and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) had indicated that they would be looking into that case to see whether they were doing what was proper for not only Ryan Sais but other people in Manitoba under a similar situation where they received some sort of an award. In this case a court award for damages to them, but that was intended for their use because of their accident when they became adults.

I wonder if now the Minister has taken the time to finalize that Sais case, and indeed what direction they are going on other such like cases in Manitoba?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Member was following up on his last question about the number of

workers. I tend to agree with the Member that if the person could have one worker that would maybe be the ideal case, and they could relate to them. However, the Member should really be aware that from time to time, someone may be away and it would be not fair to ask the client to wait till the person was back from sick leave or back from a holiday. There are lots of circumstances that would indicate that perhaps it would be expedient for more than one person to deal with it, with a client. We hope that in most cases that this happens.

With regard to the case that the Member had raised, the Sais case, about the trust funds, he had indicated at the time, or shortly after, that we are reviewing that whole area, because it is a very complicated matter. There are legal implications. There are cost implications, and do we deal just with infant trusts or do we deal with all trust accounts? It is not something that one could just take one quick look at and make a quick decision. We want to get it all sorted out. It is being reviewed and I am expecting a report on that matter.

In the meantime, the family is getting the assistance for that young man. We do have to look at the whole thing as it relates to cost-sharing and what implications there may be on the whole matter of trust accounts. So it is not something you could make a quick decision on. While that case is being reviewed, of course, we are reviewing all the cases of a similar nature that are encompassed in the department.

Mr. Rose: I am not surprised that the Minister would study and study and study the matter. She took that sort of a cavalier approach when they brought it in. As a matter of fact I think Hansard says that I should not bring such foolish matters to this House. So I can understand that it would take a long time. I would like to know from the Minister how long it is going to take her to deliberate on a decision that should be made. I think the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) said, the Brink's truck again.

I want to tell you, I have said before in this House and I will say it again, that money for those people to cut down on illiteracy and crime, the improvement to their health and the social benefits of it, that is an investment. You take after the Liberals in Ontario, you will find it is an investment, not a cost.

I think that we should put that one to rest forever. On that issue, I wonder how long it is going to take the Minister to make a decision on that, a decision that should come not with the small amount of dollars involved, because she knows that this is a small amount of money. This is a decision that the Minister should have made in her first few months in office, because she knew about those certain problems like that when she was in Opposition. She makes an ad hoc decision when this Party brings it into the Legislature, we still have not solved the problem. There are still dozens if not many more people out there that are on pins and needles and hurt because of these decisions.

When is the Minister going to make a decision on this type of matter that affects the lives of so many Manitobans with some disadvantage?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member says there should be a quick decision on this and I agree with him. It would be nice if everything could be done quickly, but I think it is a matter that deserves some study. It has been in place for some time. We have to think of the cost implications of what changes we make.

I wonder if the Member would, he says it is a small amount of dollars. I do not know how he knows how many dollars would be involved. For instance, if there had been a settlement of \$200,000, we will just say for want of a figure, is the Member saying that if that family had access to that type of funds we still would be wanting to pay them social assistance? All those things have to be considered because there are varying decisions made by the courts and they would impact quite heavily on the system. We certainly want to take a good look at it before we make a decision on it so that we do the right thing and do not have to redo it.

Mr. Rose: I think the amounts are relative. You know that is up to the Minister but I think she should get on with the job. The 12 or 13 cases that have been in the courts and been decided on, and I am sure there are other ones that did not go to court, perhaps that the Minister had in her department files, but the 12 or 13 I have researched do not amount to large amounts of money.

They are important to the families, because they are given usually when the children are young and they gain in interest. This particular one has gone from about \$10,000 to \$20,000, and of course that is not all gravy because you have to take into inflation. The amounts that I have studied are not burdensome from the Treasury standpoint, but they are very important to the families involved. I would say that if the Minister feels inclined to be afraid of figures like \$200,000 or even \$100,000 that certainly there is some ability on her part and her department's part to put a cap on that if she so feels.

Let us make a start on this, let us make a decision and let us get on with the job for people like the Sais, who still do not have piece of mind because they do not know where they are going. Will the Minister give some sort of a direction that she can get this into effect in 30 or 60 days, or what time frame is she looking at?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I agree with the Member. This is very important to the families, and that is why we are taking the time to make sure that we make the right decision. We want to look at it in light of the families and of course the Treasury.

The Member should be made aware that we make a \$14.2 million increase year over year in Social Allowances in this province, so we have to weigh very carefully any decision that we make and how it will impact on the Treasury. Also we have to of course have a look at how it impacts on the individuals, so we have to take all those matters into consideration when making any decision.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, I would like to know for instance from the Minister if she could give me an

idea and if she has the staff available to let me know, since this Government took office, what the increase if any, indeed if it has not been a decrease, but I would be interested in what the figures are as to those people who are handicapped, how many employees we have increased in the Civil Service in Manitoba since this Government took office? What has been the result of their affirmative action in that area of the handicapped in Manitoba?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I do not have the number for the Member of an increase, but I can tell the Member that 3.04 percent of the employees in my department are from the disabled category and the Government average is 2.28. Of course, we would be wanting to increase that, but that is the way it currently stands.

* (2040)

The Member was asking about the whole Government Civil Service. Well, I cannot really give him that number. I have the departmental numbers. He would have to get that from the Minister in charge of the Civil Service (Mrs. Hammond), the entire Government thing. The Government average with regard to disabled I can tell him is 2.28 percent.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, I do not quite understand that. She says the figure is 2.2 but I would have to go to another Minister, maybe she will explain that. More importantly, I would be interested in the question I asked and how does that compare with, when this Government took office, the 2.2 and 3.4 that she pointed out? What were the figures when they took office?

Mrs. Oleson: We would have to provide that to the Member. I do not have that with me this evening but we could provide the Member with that information.

Mr. Rose: So much for the handicapped. I would like to point out some of the figures that we received in a new report last week to do with estimated welfare income for single persons, disabled, including earning exemption by the province's 1988 figures. We have to keep in mind certain things, that \$415 million more was pumped into the system in Ontario where there is a Liberal Government, that certainly other provinces have maybe not done so well but they certainly would not be doing much to surpass what this Government and this Minister has done in giving barely if at all the cost of inflation, because they have not even done that. The new food basket that came out from Agriculture Canada showed an increase of some 17 percent and the overall increase was just some one-quarter of that.

The Minister indeed in committee, in Hansard, says something to the effect, well, they are lucky to get that, we could have given them the budget food basket. She is talking about, she has thoughts for special diets for people but she is not even willing to give those people on social assistance in Manitoba what Agriculture Canada considers in 1989, in 1990, to be the minimum requirements for dietary purposes for good health in this country.

Keeping that in mind, Mr. Acting Chairman, I might point out the income that I pointed to as a percentage of the poverty line is 61.8 percent in Manitoba. That compares in 1988 of 66.1 percent in British Columbia, 83.5 percent in Saskatchewan and 93.5 percent of the poverty line. She says that costs are up in Ontario and inflation is high and all these other things, but she does not realize that they are at 93.5 percent compared with our 61.8 percent. Certainly she would acknowledge the poverty line is also different in Ontario than it is quoted in Manitoba.

Did she ever get figures? Could she give me some sort of a figure as to when you look at these indications. Certainly in regard to Ontario we know that is much improved. In fact I would be surprised if they are not over 100 percent at the present time, of the minimum poverty line in Ontario. Has the Minister got any figures, or could she give us an idea if a person was living in West Hawk Lake, or maybe a better example, if somebody living in Creighton, Saskatchewan, at 83.5 percent of the poverty line versus 61.8 percent in Manitoba where they are almost, well, they are virtually twin towns, what the difference would be for people living in one province or another vis-a-vis their social assistance payments?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I should point out to the Member that when we did our increases for this year and for last year, the cost of living increases for basic necessities last year was 3.3 and we increased the rates by 3.9 percent.

This year the same sort of thing took place. The cost of basic necessities, basic food items, was 4.4, but we increased it 4.9 percent which—I guess once the Member—is very difficult, I am trying to say, to compare province by province. There are varying ways in which other provinces calculate their rates and so forth. They have different age combinations, and it is very difficult to compare them line by line. We are not as high of course as the richer provinces and we are not as low as the lowest provinces. We sort of rate somewhere I guess in the middle. I am not saying that is wonderful. I am saying that is—we have increased the rates each year that we have been in Government.

In the same sort of way as they have been increased as in practice, I do not know that every other province—I am not conversant with the rates personally, but I do not believe every province increases their rates automatically every year. You may want to dispute that with me, if you like. I do not think that does automatically take place.

This year we did increase by 4.9 and last year by 3.9. This year, the 4.9 makes a cost of \$5.3 million. So the Member can see that when we increase the rates by even 1 percent, the impact is over a million dollars. There is a huge cost implication when we go to look at the rates.

Mr. Rose: The Minister says that she is not sure whether the other provinces increase year by year. Well, I want to remind the Honourable Minister that she is in charge and I would think that is one of the things that she should know. She should use that as a guide when she

is setting her rates in Manitoba. To my knowledge, there is no province—in fact, I think that the figures that I have are that we are the lowest province in Canada versus the rate of inflation.

The Minister also says that in regard to a direct question as to how the people—and this is some 40 percent of these people are not on social assistance because they are single parents or what have you. There is almost 40 percent of them because they have a major disability. They are, therefore, treated as handicapped because the Government will not move quickly enough to find jobs and training for these people, make sure that there is affirmative action and indeed start by setting an example in their own department, in their own Government, of affirmative action for them.

What has she done to eliminate the discrimination to these people? Has she made access to the workplaces for them? Has she seen that industry, has she shown that Government has shown the leadership, or is it the type of leadership we have seen around here where we have handicapped people come over for an award and they cannot even get in the ramps built here because nobody cares enough in the Government to clear the snow away?

I wonder about those things. Does the Minister really care to get these figures, because she says that these things are hard to compare? Well if it is to her advantage she will sure compare it and she will sure find a way and so will that Government.

* (2050)

If they would buy for about \$7 or \$8, if they have not already done it, there is a book that came out just a short while ago with the whole rundown of it, and when they do compare provinces and say that Manitoba again is at the bottom for estimated welfare income, direct income without other payments, Manitoba is at 56.6 percent; Saskatchewan at 67.1 percent; and Ontario at 75. She would see, and I will send her the book over to use it, if they have not got it in their library. On this one page are 19 notations to compare the differences.

So if somebody wanted to go to the trouble they could find out what somebody in West Hawk Lake got in Manitoba from welfare versus somebody two or three miles away in Ingolf. Maybe if the Minister went to that trouble she would be able to go convincingly to Cabinet and see if she could not get part of that \$200 million fund that they have set away for the next election to help the impoverished in this province.

Has the Minister got access to this book, has she read the Insecurity and Disabled Income System by Allan Rowan, the G. Allan Rowan Institute?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, no, I have not read that particular book and I will take note in Hansard of the name of it and try to get hold of it. I am sure someone in the department has it.

When the Member was talking about comparative figures and so forth and when I answered him I guess he misunderstood me. I did not mean to say that those

figures were not available. I meant to say I did not have them with me at the moment in a chart that I was going to be quoting and comparing. There are all kinds of information in the department. I am sure they have the book that the Member referred to. They have all kinds of data with which they make their calculations and then we have to make a decision based on the funding that is available. I could go through again and give the Member a list of the increases. I do not know whether he wants that information again. I could certainly provide it for him.

We do have, and the Member also made mention of the mentally handicapped and said we were doing nothing for them, which of course is wrong again, programs that help mentally handicapped people to get some basic training and prepare them for the work force, should they be able to or want to be part of that program. So we are not going to, I do not know whether the Member wants me to take everyone regardless of their abilities and capabilities and force them into employment programs. I do not think that is what he means, I hope not. We do provide programs as much as we can for those who want to enter them.

Of course we could do more. There is always room for doing more. We have increased funding to programs this year and last year for the Single Parent Social Assistance Program and for the Gateway Program to aid people on social assistance to find meaningful jobs. Those programs continue.

So for the Member to say that nothing has been done is really I guess you would say unfair for lack of another word at the moment.

Mr. Rose: I guess I will be accept being called unfair if it brings some attention to the plight of the people who are handicapped in this province, but I indicated nothing is done. We know that there are some programs, but what we do know is that they are woefully inadequate and this callous Government does not seem to care. What I am trying to do is wake them up to the fact that it is a problem. They can invest some money and not only bring a better standard of living to these people but increase the standard of living for all Manitobans by eliminating this poverty, this ongoing cycle of poverty, that exists here, the unfairness and the inequity that exists. We thought that this Tory Government, they got elected and said they could manage. They do not manage. Instead of spending money where they should be, they put the money in the bank.

I alluded, Mr. Acting Chairman, earlier that for the first while when single parents go on social assistance that the city would allow them to keep certain benefits, 55-Plus, CRISP and some other benefits that I had talked about. Now that they are on provincial welfare, right from the beginning of Day One, I am wondering if the Minister will stand behind what she said in Opposition when she supported that those payments should not be deducted, and will she be bringing through changes that will allow the people, to keep that type of payment, that are on social assistance in Manitoba.

Mrs. Oleson: Those two programs which the Member mentions, the two in my department, the CRISP and

55-Plus, the Member should be aware were instituted for low-income people who were working. That is the criteria we are still using with that program. It has certainly been brought to my attention the concerns that people have about that. It is something that we look at when we are doing our Estimates, and so forth, for another year. We look at all those things, but the Member should be aware that was the original intent of those programs. It has not changed. We have not changed the criteria at the moment. There is a complaint, I believe, before the Human Rights Commission on this subject, and we will be anxious to hear the outcome of that.

Mr. Rose: I did not ask if the program was changed. I know the programs have changed. What I have asked and I think I was pretty clear, has the Minister changed her position since she was in Opposition when she did not agree with those deductions? That is the question.

Mrs. Oleson: When I was in Opposition I was very much in the same position as the Member is. I did not know the cost implications and all the implications of this. If the Member ever is in this position, it will be interesting the things that will be read back to him, I can assure you, about the statements that he has made. When one is in a position where they have to find the dollars, sometimes it is a little different.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, I alluded to figures that came out in regard to 1988 figures. I reiterate that certainly this province has done nothing. In fact, in some of these areas they have not done anything for over 20 years, both the NDP and the Tories. That shows their caring attitude, both of them, toward the poor.

In the table of monthly earning exemptions for a single person who is disabled, in Manitoba they allow \$50, Ontario \$175, Saskatchewan \$150, and Alberta \$165.00. Even those figures are very meagre as far as monthly earning exemptions. We know they have been increased in some of the other provinces, but we do not have the figures handy. Does the Minister anticipate bringing that up to something that is reasonable in 1990 levels, above \$50.00?

* (2100)

Mrs. Oleson: The Member should also realize that as well as the stipulation about the \$50, there is also—the earning portion allowance is the greater of \$50 per month, 70 cents for each hour worked, or 30 percent of gross monthly earnings, whichever is the greater of those two. In many cases that is better than some other provinces. I just wanted the Member to be aware that is in place. It is not just the \$50 part, there is a 30 percent thing in there as well.

I should also remark to the Member when he is talking about these other programs that the City of Winnipeg does allow for their recipients. The City of Winnipeg while allowing 55-Plus and CRISP, it does not allow its recipients to have any assets, so there is a difference there.

Mr. Rose: From the same document, liquid assets that are allowed—I am enunciating policy right now the things that should be done, somebody with some heart.

An Honourable Member: Does your Leader know you are doing that?

Mr. Rose: The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) seems to want to get into the debate. I imagine that he would like to answer some of the questions. If he took notice he would know some of the things that I am bringing up today have been brought up in the House before. Certainly if the Minister of Health did not hear them and took the same disrespect for the questions and the answer as the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) did when he said, I was just crass politically, politicking and that I did not care for the people on that evening, if he takes the same attitude—there is no doubt that this Government grins and laughs and thinks it is a funny matter, but we will soon show you where our policy is. It will not be long now.

I do, Mr. Acting Chairman, want to come back if we could get some order in this Chamber—

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please.

Mr. Rose: —to the liquid assets, and that is that in Newfoundland, which is supposed to be not anywhere near as affluent as Manitoba, \$3,000; Ontario \$3,000; Nova Scotia \$3,000 per person assets; Manitoba \$400.00. The next lowest to us is \$900 and that is Prince Edward Island. That is something the Minister should really be proud of. When is the Minister going to allow an increase in the amount of liquid assets for people who are disabled?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member should realize it is \$400 per person up to \$2,000 per family unit, so it is not just \$400.00. I am glad the Member raised it because that has been in effect for some time, it probably does bear looking at, but we would have to look at it in the context of how much it would cost us and other implications. We could certainly look at it, but I would caution the Member it may be something that is very expensive.

Mr. Rose: I wanted to know, some time back, against all the advice and all the speakings of people who are knowledgeable in the industry and in society indeed, the Minister said that transients in the school system—and we know how serious a problem it is in Winnipeg particularly and is brought about by the woefully inadequate housing allowance that this Government expects people to find a reasonable, just reasonable, roof over their head, because of the inadequate housing allowance and the fact that many of these people must supplement their housing to get anything that is livable at all by their food allowance it hits them in two ways—the Minister has said that in her estimation, the transience by students in particularly the core of Winnipeg has nothing to do with that factor and has no effect on the ability of the children to learn there. Would she clarify that statement because I have problems?

Mrs. Oleson: I do not recall on any occasion saying that it absolutely had no effect. I think the Member is wrong in that regard.

The information that I had at one time was this had been raised with the Winnipeg School Division. The school board chairman had indicated that it was not necessarily correlated. The chairman did not say that it had nothing to do with it, but it was not necessarily correlated. It probably has some relationship. I do not remember ever indicating that it had absolutely no relationship.

Mr. Rose: I have one other brief question and then I will turn it over to my colleague, the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill). To an earlier question on statistics, the Minister indicated that the figures were not available in the House but that she had a plethora of figures available in her office. I presume from that she is meaning that we will be able to be supplied with the requested statistics tomorrow.

Mrs. Oleson: We will look at your request. You were talking about the one to do with employing handicapped, was that the particular one? We will make every attempt to get the information to the Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Rose: I am referring to questions in regard to social allowance particularly between border points in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and Ontario and Manitoba. She seemed to indicate that they have all those figures available. I would presume if that is true, that she has them in her office, that we could get them expeditiously.

Mrs. Oleson: I do not recall telling him I would get the comparison of specific towns. That may be rather difficult. What I did say—the Member had indicated to me that I did not have any knowledge of figures from other provinces. I had indicated to him that we do have that information.

We may be able to get the information for him if he has specific towns, but remembering that our system is a two-tier system we would have get the information from—anything outside of provincial we would have to get that from the specific municipality, if that was what he wanted. We would have to get that specifically. We would not be able to provide him with it tomorrow is what I am trying to say. We will check back in Hansard on what exactly he asked for and try to get the information for him.

Mr. Rose: I would suggest that the Minister read Hansard in the morning or in the afternoon and see just what she did commit to, because she seemed to indicate that she had everything that was available or anything that anybody asked at her fingertips in her office, but she did not bring them here. Thank you very much and I turn it over to the NDP.

Ms. Maureen Hemphill (Logan): Mr. Acting Chairman, I wanted to spend a little bit of time with the Minister talking about one of the crises facing inner city residents, many of whom are on social assistance, and a growing crisis in the inner city which deals with all aspects of poverty. Those living below the poverty line are increasing. The subpopulations that are the most

disadvantaged, like Native, single parent and visible minorities are increasing. The income of the low-income earner is going down, while the income of the high-income earner is going up. Rents for the low-income people and those below the poverty line are going up, and incredibly rents at the high-income level for those people who are making more money are going down. We have a serious crisis with the growing number of single parents in the city and particularly in the inner city.

Of all of these I think unemployment is at an alarming rate with some catchment neighbourhood areas having unemployment rates of between 12 and maybe 40 to 50 percent, with target populations in the inner city such as single parent and Native having unemployment rates of up to 70 percent. All of these are very, very serious issues.

One of the issues that is of the greatest concern to people living in the inner city and people working in inner city residents is the high cost of low quality inner city housing and the question of whether the social welfare rates are adequate to cover the existing costs of housing. I know that the Minister has had a number of representations made to her and one particularly from SACOM, who was presenting information that suggested that they were not. There are a lot of people who feel, in fact it is not even a feeling, we know that a lot of people on social assistance and those below the poverty line are the ones who incredibly are paying above 25 percent, some of them between 30 and 50 percent of what they get for housing which means that they are forced to dip into their food and their clothing allowance for their families.

I want to know, after having this information presented to her, if the Minister believes that the social welfare rates for housing are adequate and will cover the costs of housing that people have access to in the inner city, and if she believes that, why does she believe that?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, I empathize with the serious issues that the Member has raised with regard to the problems in the inner city. Before I comment on the rent part, I would remind the Member that the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey) has initiated an Urban Native Strategy group that is looking at the full range of problems with Native people in an urban setting. It is one of the ways in which we will look at this problem.

With regard to the rent, the department indicates to me that in 77 percent of the cases, we pay the full rent cost for the client. I will remind the Member that last year we raised the rent by 3 percent and this year again at the 1st of January in concert with the Rentalsman Office we have again raised those rentals by 3 percent. That should go some way to help that situation.

* (2110)

Having said that, I will agree with the Member that there are not absolutely terrific living accommodations for every person of low income, but the department makes every attempt where there are some particular special needs to go above the regulations to help people who are handicapped and so forth to acquire some

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specific type of accommodation they need for their particular handicap. We do try to take into account the special needs of people in many instances. We do, as I indicated, in 77 percent of the cases pay the full amount of the rent.

When you talk about percentage of income paid for rent, I think the Member is really referring to people who are not on social assistance, families who are paying varying percentages of their wages for rent. In the case of social assistance recipients they are treated as two separate categories. There is a rent category and then the other needs as well. We increased as I indicated to the Member the basic necessities part of the program 4.9 percent and then with the rent 3 percent.

Ms. Hemphill: Mr. Acting Chairman, I am wondering when SACOM had a meeting with the Minister, I think they were trying to make the point that first of all we have lost 2,500 houses, accommodation in the social assistance level of housing, a tremendous loss of social housing. I think they were trying to demonstrate that they could not find, they were having a great deal of difficulty finding accommodation within the amount of money that was made available. I think that meeting was held about April of 1989. It is my understanding that they had gone to the Free Press just as a demonstration.

They had 534 units listed, a total, and only 37 of those 534 were within the rent guidelines for social assistance people in whatever category the people were in, whether it was a two bedroom they needed or a three bedroom, depending on the size of the family, which is only about 6.9 percent. None of those were in the three bedroom area. They were two bedroom and bachelor suites. I think that there were 200 two bedroom suites and only six of those were within the range.

I was wondering if the Minister had her department look at that information after it was presented. Did the examination confirm what SACOM was saying that there really was very little to choose from within the social assistance guidelines?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, to the Member, I recall a meeting with SACOM on that issue. They had met with me before, I believe that was the second meeting I had with them in which they discussed several issues, rent being one of them. What they did was take the Free Press for a given day and do this. They themselves indicated of course that it was not a scientific study. You had all ranges of rent from very, very high rental accommodations to you know all the range. It would not be something that you could use as a concrete research tool but it gave an indication and I agree with them. It gave an indication of what was available that particular time. It was sort of a snapshot of availability, and the department did look at it. That day I asked the department to provide information to SACOM of how we arrive at our rent structure.

I believe subsequently there was a meeting with members of SACOM with my departmental staff in which they tried to share some information with them so that

both the department and that group could have a better understanding of just how the rents were arrived at.

That is something that is of course of ongoing concern in the department, all these matters, and we will certainly be looking at again. It has been raised by that group and by others that the rents, the system may not be quite adequate.

Another aspect that comes in with the condition of the rental accommodations, and I think with the Bill that the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) has brought forward, that there should be some help in that regard with insisting that landlords do keep their premises in better condition. That should go some way to help the problem, because I know that is one of the things, that the place may be available, but not kept in the condition that most of us would like to see it.

We are hoping with that particular legislation it will go some way and also that we can discuss with the City of Winnipeg health officials some more vigilance on their part to be sure that when there is a work order on a building that work is in fact done.

The Member will recall, I believe she asked me before Thanksgiving about one of the particular accommodations that the Winnipeg Department of Health did close down because of the condition of it and people that were living in that particular facility. There were some of them on provincial assistance and my staff did assist them in getting other accommodations. It does happen that those accommodations are just not acceptable and the City of Winnipeg did act in that case. I think with some more urging they could be insisting—not saying that places necessarily have to be closed down, but they may certainly have to have the improvements that have been ordered by the city Health Department.

Ms. Hemphill: Just on the point the Minister made before about the fact that the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) was setting up an Urban Native Strategy to examine the particular very serious problems of urban Natives, we appreciate that. I think the questions that were raised are dealing with the adequacy of the social allowance, a large number of whom are Native, but not all, and so the question is the adequacy of the allowance, not just addressing it through an Urban Native Strategy. I think that needs to be addressed through the Minister's department.

We did not intend, nor did they intend, the Free Press article to be a research document, but if I was a single mother for instance on that weekend out on the street and I had to find a house, and this is the source that I had to look for the housing that was available, this would be all I could find, which would be very little.

To that end, I am wondering what the Minister's attitude, response or position is on SACOM's request for some support from the Government to fund a housing advocacy group. One of the things we know in the inner city is that if there is housing available, the people that really need it the most have very little ability to get information to find out where the housing is.

* (2120)

I think that SACOM wanted to establish a rent registry that would list suitable housing within the guidelines which would be a great help. It has already been done by organizations in the inner city and has been very helpful to monitor landlords to make sure that they keep rents within the rent control guidelines. I will be talking about that in a minute because rent controls are not working in the inner city.

This Minister needs to concern herself with that, also to educate renters of their rights concerning landlord and tenant affairs because the other thing we know is that the people that are most disadvantaged are the ones that need the most help, have the least access to information about their rights. They have the least energy to seek out information because they are so busy just trying to put food on the table and keep a roof over their head that they cannot really deal with anything else.

Has the Minister been sympathetic or supportive of supporting money going to this organization to help establish the rent registry, the education program and the monitoring of landlords for the rent controls?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, that issue has been raised with me but I do not think that I have had a formal proposal from them on that with that regard, but certainly we could certainly look at that, might be of assistance to them. I should remind the Member that we do fund an organization, the MAPO, an anti-poverty association who does some work with giving out assisting with people with information with regard to social assistance. They do some of that function that the Member is talking about but not the registry part. I would certainly like to take a look at that and see what sort of a cost it would be and how effective it would be. It is something that certainly could be looked at.

Ms. Hemphill: I appreciate that answer. I was under the impression that they had submitted a specific proposal. If they have not, I will raise it with them in the next couple of days and suggest that they do so. To the point that the Minister made in her response about giving some funding to MAPO and the fact that they carry out some of this activity, can the Minister tell us what support. I think that the organization has met with her and has asked for some additional financial support in the next fiscal year, believing that if they do not receive it they are going to have to lay off staff and scale down their operations.

I know that we are dealing with this set of Estimates, but so late in the year that we are almost into the next one. Maybe we could get out of here faster next time if we allowed the Ministers so late in the day to answer the question on this set of Estimates and the next set of Estimates at the same time. Then we would not have to come back again for a little while. Could the Minister indicate the attitude towards MAPO and additional funding and support so they could carry on the very important activities at the same level of services as they have presently?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, we did support MAPO with the same level of funding as we have had

in the previous year. We certainly are supporting them in that regard. I did meet with them recently to discuss some of the problems that they were having. We discussed ways in which they could increase their funding without having to lay people off.

They have taken a very responsible attitude to how they can deal with their problems. I am looking forward to working with them in the future because they do provide a very necessary and worthwhile service. Of course with regard to next year's funding we certainly are looking at how we can help them in that regard. I certainly do not anticipate any cuts in that regard. I will have to sit down with them or staff will be sitting down with them again to go over what their needs are for next year.

Ms. Hemphill: I appreciate that the Minister is not quite in the position of making financial decisions in the next budget year. I would just like to make the point, I think they are getting something in the neighbourhood of \$65,000 or \$67,000—they are nodding, yes—and they have requested something in the neighbourhood of about \$75,000.00. I guess I just want to say, although we recognize that money is tight and there is not a Brink's truck to back up to give everybody everything they want, a small increase of \$5,000 or \$10,000, which is not a huge amount of money goes a very long way with an organization like that.

In other words, the kind of benefit that we get out of the direct support for people who we do not actually have access, the Government often does not have access, to help these people directly, it is people that are on the street that are working directly with them that can do that job.

I just make the point that when she is looking at all the needs, an organization like this might be one that would be considered to get more than the percentage increase perhaps that is being allocated to most organizations because of the work that they do.

I would like to talk for a couple of minutes about rent controls. While it may seem to be outside of this Minister's area, I guess I am back to the point that there is still a belief that there is a great amount of difficulty for many people to cover it on social assistance, not just people in general, but people on social assistance having to pay very large percentages of their income for housing.

One of the reasons is that rent controls are not working in the inner city, I think that is well documented now. Although, it was not really known previously until perhaps about six or eight months ago when the picture of the inner city was so clearly painted through the Statistics Canada five- or six-year study.

What it shows is that the rates are going up. For instance, when you have a 4 percent rate, which might be the rent guideline outside of the inner city, but a 10 percent increase inside the inner city, and when they looked over that five- or six-year period, the average rents went up 41 percent in that period of time. Social allowance went up 38 percent in that period of time. Rent controls allowed 31 percent in that period of time.

In some of the areas, like central north Winnipeg, during that period of time rents went up 74 percent.

Point Douglas went up 75 percent. In Rossbrook area, they went up 94 percent. These are the poorest areas in the inner city. These are the poorest people. To look at rent increases like that, which nobody would stand for in the suburbs, they would be screaming their heads off. They do not even know what these are about, what is allowed.

I think that we have to find some way of having compliance. The reason is that most of the landlords in the inner city are not even registered, so that there is no way of keeping track of them. I think that you have to find some way of having a compliant mechanism that does not require the people to know to apply, to know to complain, or to know what their rights are, but something that kicks in automatically.

I am wondering if in the course of discussions between Cabinet colleagues in looking at social allowance rates for housing, whether there has been any discussion or any recognition that the rent controls are not working in the inner city, and that this is a problem and may be one of the things causing serious pressures on the money available to pay for them, since most of the inner city, 85 percent of them, are renters. That is another serious situation. They cannot afford to buy. Most of them are renting, and most of them are not being protected the way they should be through the rent controls.

Mrs. Oleson: I would certainly tell the Member that I will raise that issue with the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) and have some discussion with him about it, and ask the department also to take a look at this when we are planning our budgeting for the coming year.

Ms. Hemphill: Mr. Acting Chairman, just one other point that I wanted to make is that there was a study done by Dr. Barstow (phonetic) not too long ago, and it showed that 66 percent of the people in the inner city were paying rent that exceeded the guidelines. That is a very, very, I think serious figure. I wanted to, and in terms of getting the research to support those statements it does exist, I think the Social Planning Council has developed very good statistics and information that we all should be looking at in terms of dealing with inner city issues.

* (2130)

I wanted to touch for a few minutes on a point that was made by the other Member about the mobility rate of students in the inner city, relating it to the difficulty of people, many of whom are on social assistance, of getting adequate housing and having to move a lot for one reason or another. I do not know what the basis was of the chairman of the board saying that it was not necessarily caused by inadequate social allowance rates, but I think that people know that they are moving generally for two reasons. Either the housing is unsanitary and unsafe, so they move for those reasons, or they move because the rents are jacked up and they cannot afford the rates.

To give you some idea of how serious it is, in the suburbs outside of the inner city for elementary, the

mobility rate is about 20 percent. In the inner city it is 53 percent. But in an area like Aberdeen, there are some areas where the mobility rate is extremely high, it can be as high as 106-111 percent. We have to start finding out what the reasons are, why these parents are moving two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight times in a year, moving their children into different catchment areas, different neighbourhoods, different schools, with the children having absolutely no possibility of maintaining or receiving an education because of that kind of difficulty of change.

I guess I am not trying to sort of dump everything, the children's education and the mobility and everything, all on the Minister who is responsible for social assistance, but to say that their social assistance rates are a factor in the increasing numbers of people in food banks, the parents, children and women, the increasing numbers of people in the inner city moving, trying to find adequate and affordable housing within the rates that are applied.

So I would ask the Minister if they are looking at these others factors when they are looking at the social allowance rates for housing. Are they measuring things like this, trying to find out what they can attribute to whether the rates are inadequate or not, giving really proper serious consideration to the adequacy, or what we believe is the inadequacy, of the present rates for housing?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, I think it is important to look at these things because we all know children do much better in school if they are in a stable situation, whether going to the same school all the time and so forth. So it does cause difficulty for these children if they are moving, particularly the number of times the Member was indicating. So stability is very important for children. I think perhaps it would be wise to have discussions with the inner city school officials, between them and my department also, to get a better handle on this. We will certainly look at it with a view to what this department can do to assist those people.

Mr. Rose: I want to read from an article that the January 2 edition of the Neepawa paper—and I know the Tories always put a great deal of stock and like to wave the Neepawa paper as the Bible in here. I wonder if the Minister agrees. She probably read that they were publishing the new welfare rates that the Minister put out.

They say that perhaps if a person cannot raise a family on this budget they should examine where they spend their money. A pack a day of cigarettes will cost over \$150 per month for example—fast food, booze, junk food, all a big hole in the budget, too.

From a strictly dollars and cents point of view a lot of wage earners and self-employed people might be better off on welfare. Now I do not suggest that people want to be on welfare, but they should not complain about the rates. I wonder if the Minister read that article and whether she agrees with that philosophy of the paper in her constituency.

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairman, I read the article. I do not necessarily agree with it line by line.

I would have to look at it again, because I just gave it a quick read, shall we say.

Really I am not in a position of having to cast an opinion on writers from Neepawa or anywhere else. We did raise the rates, and there are varying opinions on the adequacy of those rates. I suppose the person who writes for the Neepawa paper is entitled to his opinion as well.

Mr. Rose: I wonder if indeed the Neepawa paper did not get the idea from some things that the Minister has been saying, like when she was replying to Nick Martin (phonetic) about the food banks. She said in reply to the amount of social assistance: there is certainly no great generosity in it. That is certainly an understatement, but she said: it is adequate.

There are a lot of people—and certainly I disagree with that, that it is adequate, when we see 60 percent of the children in the inner core of the city going to school hungry. Unless the Minister really believes what she says here and what she alludes to, and that is that even if social assistance was increased 20 percent some people would still use food banks and spend money on other things, Oleson said. What does the Minister mean by other things?

While she is answering that question could she tell me if she disagrees, which I certainly do—and I think the people of Manitoba disagree with the banner. Did she take the trouble to write them and correct their sort of thinking, for the record?

Mrs. Oleson: I am not in the business of correcting anyone's thinking. People are entitled to think what they wish.

With regard to the article that the Member is talking about and my remarks of adequacy and so forth and what people spend their money on, this department does not dictate exactly what people spend their money on. They make their choices.

They may decide to spend their money on something else, that is their decision, and use a food bank to get food. We do not cast in stone exactly what they spend each dollar for. We calculate what the rates should be, what we can set the rate at, and we pay those rates to people. They make their choices about what they buy with them, what type of food and so forth. We do not dictate to people exactly. We do not go with them to the grocery store and choose their purchases for them. I do not think the Member is really wanting me to do that, but that is almost what he is sounding like.

I do not say that the rates are terribly generous. I never have said that. I am saying that we do increase them with the rate of inflation. We try to keep them adequate. On any given day there would be, at any given time, many people who have varying opinions on what was adequate.

Mr. Rose: The first part of the answer—Mr. Acting Chairman, I guess what I hear the Minister saying is that this information, this demeaning information that is distributed in that part of the country—and I know that some of these papers get into the Minister's

constituency, if I am not mistaken, and she is content to let people say what they want about the motives of people on social allowance even though it might be her position as Minister to look out for the rights of those people.

I heard some conversation earlier from the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill) about MAPO. I might have missed an answer and if so I would like a clarification. In the meeting of committee, I think it was December 19, the Minister mentioned, in questioning by myself, about funding for MAPO, because they were in very bad financial condition, that she had arranged or was shortly arranging a meeting with MAPO. Has she had such a meeting or has her department had such a meeting? Is she in a position to share what came out of that meeting, the results of that meeting?

Mrs. Oleson: I indicated to the other Member, the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill), when we were discussing it, yes, I did meet with MAPO, and we did discuss their financial difficulties in which they find themselves.

I should make the Member aware that we did pay them the same grant as we had paid them last year, the 61.8 thousand we paid to them. They have those funds. They were having some difficulties because some of the decisions, the management decisions or whatever. For whatever reasons they were having financial difficulties.

We are not the only funder of that organization as the Member may know. We are also discussing what other increases or what other funding might come from the other funders of that particular organization. The funds that we had allocated to them for this year have been paid.

I did meet with them, as I say, and we discussed their difficulties. They discussed varying solutions they might come to with that regard. They were going to get back to my department about it. I am not sure that they did get back with the information. It is indicated to me that they have not. My department will be in touch with them again.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, I want to refer for a minute to a specific case of a gentleman who has been told he is going to no longer be on social allowance, as I have contacted the Minister's department about this. I have some concerns for the record.

This fellow has a disability pension, which of course they have been deducting from his allowances all along. They feel if he gets into subsidized housing that he will be better off. I agree with that. It is the right direction by the department. They say he will be better off that way, and he will be able to live better on his disability pension.

* (2140)

I am wondering in that particular type of case if there is a flexibility in the department because this gentleman in particular, in question—I am sure there are other Manitobans out there in a similar state. Is there any flexibility to further assist those people other than their

subsidized rent and other than their disability pension, which is certainly inadequate, something in the nature of \$500 a month? Is there any flexibility or allowance in the department to allow a person like that a bus pass? What about if in this particular case they have not allowed a bus pass or hydro and they have not allowed him to keep his medical card, is there some discretion? Does the department allow that sort of thing if conditions warrant it?

Mrs. Oleson: It is difficult to answer a question like that without knowing the specifics of the case and so forth. So we will have to find from the Member the particular case that he is talking to at another time. Hopefully he can give us that information and we will take a look at that particular case. We try to be flexible. We try to help people within the guidelines that we have set down. We have to treat people fairly and not be in a position where we give a certain benefit to one person and then deny it to another, but we try to be as flexible as possible.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, I will rephrase that. Is there—I do not think the Minister needs the specific case—an opportunity under your department that if someone is off social allowance but was on it before, that they are having a disability pension—and I am sure there are many cases of it—are there cases where those people are able to maintain their bus pass, their hydro payments and their medical card even though they are not receiving social allowance cheques?

Mrs. Oleson: If they are really off of our program, it is very difficult for us to keep them on part of a program and not another. If they are not on the program, they would not really be entitled to a medical card for instance. I would be very happy to look at the individual case the Member is alluding to because every case has some different specifics, so that there may be a way we would be able to help this person and there may not.

Mr. Rose: I think it is something the department should look at. I think there should be some allowances. I think it is easier administration and more equitable for the people. It would not apply in all cases, but I am sure there are some cases where we could get the people off social allowances and onto other programs by helping them out in some small ways like bus passes and hydro and what have you. In this particular case, when the chap gets off social allowance, he will have an overpayment from the department because of income tax and what have you of some \$1,200.00. At the present time the department, contrary to the Canada Assistance Plan, has been making a deduction repayment of the overpayments to this gentleman.

My question quite simply is, in a case like this where a person is off social allowance completely, is that the end of the road as far as trying to recover overpayments, or will the Government or her department pursue in some other manner, for instance against the disability pension, to continue to collect the reimbursement of that overpayment?

Mrs. Oleson: If the person is off of social assistance, we do still try to collect overpayment, but we would

not want to cause anyone any undue hardship. If they owe that overpayment we would make some effort to collect it, depending of course on the individual circumstances. The Member says that it is contrary to the Canada Assistance Plan to collect overpayments. The Member should be aware that the Canada Assistance Plan insists that we have some method of collecting overpayments. Until that court case is completely decided, it is not really fair to say that we cannot do it or we can do it. It is a gray area right now because of the court case, but the Canada Assistance Plan does insist that we have some method of retrieving overpayments.

Mr. Rose: It brings us down an alley that I was not really going to go. We have brought this up in the House before and that is, yes, indeed there is another way to get overpayments to clients, and I presume the most direct one. We really do not suggest that is the necessary one or the proper one, but I think what the Canada Assistance Plan is that if there is an overpayment that was obtained fraudulently that person should be so charged and prosecuted.

The Minister's reply to that is, well, we cannot do that. It is the same as the Minister of Autopac says if you steal from the Government under \$100 it is really not theft, and you cannot lay a charge because you will clog the courts. Yes, there is a method and that is by prosecution. I think that if people do defraud the Government of money whether they be on social assistance or whatever, depending on the severity of the overpayment, we have to use some common sense there.

I wonder if the Minister could tell us in the past year rather than taking the—you know, both methods are callous, because we say that we have the very basic necessities and yet we gouge this money back from him from some overpayment or whatever reason. So that is why I say it is contrary to the Canada Assistance Plan. Quite simply, that is what the federal court of Canada has said. I would wonder if the Minister has considered that and what action she plans on doing on overpayments in the future? Is she going to wait for the Supreme Court case to address that matter?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, no, we are not waiting till the case. The various administration's jurisdictions across Canada, the Ministers, the Deputy Minister level and other staff levels have been discussing how we could change this. I do not think anybody wants to take back money, but there are some circumstances in which we find it necessary to do so.

When the NDP were in Government, they instituted a policy that if it had been a mistake on the part of the department that caused the overpayment, then they did not retrieve it. We are still following that policy. There are cases for one reason or another why there would be an overpayment and it should be collected back. We try to do it so it causes the least possible strain on the people, but I think if we completely lost the ability to be able to retrieve overpayments, we would cause ourselves some difficulties with the integrity of the program.

Mr. Rose: I wonder, since the Minister has been in Government, if some overpayments—and I imagine that

these would be very, very rare, because we know that the abuse of the system is very, very small in Manitoba. Has she run across any cases where the fraudulent overpayment was so severe that a charge was laid, and if so could she say if there were any prosecutions because of that?

Mrs. Oleson: We do refer some cases from time to time to the Attorney General's department when we have a feeling that it was fraudulent, but many times overpayments are done not as a result of fraudulence but a person feeling they were entitled and in an emergency situation and so forth we have given them payment. Then we find and draw it to their attention that, no, they are not entitled. That is one of the ways in which an overpayment could occur. So there are many ways. From time to time, there are cases referred to the Attorney General's Department because we feel there is fraud involved.

Mr. Rose: I just want to come back to what I consider one of the real serious problems in Manitoba, and particularly in Winnipeg where most of the problems exist. That is this item of inadequate housing, inadequate rental allowances and the fact that people use, in a great many cases, their food allowance to make up for housing.

I would like to quickly, Mr. Acting Chairman, quote some of the quotes. From the principal of the Strathcona high school: the highly migrant families in our schools are families that receive welfare.

A migrancy teacher, Strathcona: the vast majority of migrant students in our school are from families that receive social assistance. I always ask them if they would want to share with me the reasons why they had to move. Invariably, it is because they cannot afford the rent or that the building is kept in poor condition, no heat or plumbing, or that the inadequate rent allowance forced them to get a place that was too small for their family.

The principal of King Edward School: most migrant children at our school are from families that receive social allowance. One of the barriers to learning is student mobility.

* (2150)

These are from people who are right down on the firing line, who should know the cause and effects of this problem of inadequate housing.

The principal, John M. King: some kids move in and out two or three times a month, disgraceful in this day and age. Often the plumbing freezes and the families are forced to move. There is no question that just before family allowance and welfare cheques, there are more kids in the breakfast program. Often families have to take their food allowance and use it to pay towards the rent. The most serious problem in this school is the children that move a lot.

Principal, William Whyte School: there are no two ways about it, there is a direct linkage between student migrancy at our school and inadequate social allowance, rent allowance. Families often move every two or three

months because they cannot afford the rent. Many families have to take money from their food and clothing budgets to pay for the rent that is not covered by the welfare rent guidelines.

We have heard earlier that it is 66 percent of the cases, at least.

Migrancy co-ordinator, Winnipeg School Division—they should know: at least half of the kids who live in the inner city move because of inadequate housing. People want to stay in the same neighbourhood. They are desperate for affordable housing. A mom with five kids under the age of five lived in a one-bedroom suite because that was all she could afford with her rent allowance. Another parent with five kids lived in a two-bedroom suite and stayed there deliberately so her kids would not have to switch schools, because she knew how harmful it was for them—those are my words, the last part. When it is really cold, some kids come to school dirty because it is too cold to take a bath.

I wonder if the Minister has read this survey: the health of children is definitely affected by poor housing. They are sick a lot. There is definitely a connection between the inadequate housing and student migrancy.

A migrancy teacher, William Whyte School: the inadequate social allowance, rent allowance has a definite impact on the student migrancy.

It goes on and on and on about slum landlords.

The Winnipeg School Division says that unless the issue begins to be addressed, children will continue to be the victims of long-term effects of the problems related to student migrancy.

This Minister, this Government, is proud that they have put up a rent ceiling of 3.1 percent and then they gave these people 3.1 percent. What is the incentive to improve the housing, to update it, to improve the plumbing, the heating, the roofs and what have you, when they are stuck with 3.1 percent? This is what the Government thinks is very generous.

This is what the Minister is quoted as saying: While I sympathize—well, they cannot go to school with a full stomach with sympathy. They need food and they can only get that with money. While I sympathize with your concerns for the disruption to children's education by frequent moves, our research—I wonder where the people come from who do that research, I wonder if they have ever been in the north end of Winnipeg—our research does not seem to indicate a clear connection between social assistance shelter allowance and transients.

That goes against all that the people are saying who should know that are down there on the firing line, and I want to know what does this Minister plan to do? What does she expect to do in 1990 to alleviate this problem of these people in Manitoba?

Mrs. Oleson: We had a long discussion, the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill) and I, about this issue just half an hour, three-quarters of an hour ago. Perhaps the Member was not able to hear that discussion, but I indicated that I do have definite concerns about this

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matter. I think while we are doing our deliberations on next year's budgeting, it would be profitable to have some discussions—and I am sure people in the department probably already have—with the school officials in the inner city and talk to them about this issue.

I indicated to the Member that with regard to the repair and condition of rental accommodations that the Bill the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) has before the House should in some way help that matter. This department does not get into capital projects in paying for repairs and so forth to rental accommodations; that is something we do not get involved with. We do in a vast number of the cases pay the full rent of clients for this department. I do have some concerns that I will reiterate to the Member. We will be taking all these matters into consideration when we are doing our plans for the future.

Mr. Rose: One last question for tonight, and that is the Minister in her report alludes to the fact that her research does not seem to indicate a clear connection. Would it be possible for the Minister to table that research document, the information there?

Mrs. Oleson: I am not sure exactly which research document the Member is indicating, but we do have a lot of internal documents within the department that we use in order to make decisions and make plans for the future. I do not really think I am in a position to table a specific document because we use varying forms of data to come to our decisions.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Acting Chairman, I am flabbergasted. This is a major issue in Winnipeg. She says she was at meetings. She says she has read the document. She says she cares. Did the Minister research the subject to come to that conclusion? Was she misquoted? If she did the research, can she file that document in this House so we can all peruse it and find out what it contains?

Mrs. Oleson: I have expressed my concern. I am concerned with the matter. I would have to table a great many documents, if we were to meet the Member's request, because it is not just one document. We do a great deal of research in the department in order to make decisions. There would not be any one specific document that would lead us to this decision, there would be several. There would be the Social Planning Council studies. There would be others that would lead us to a decision on specific matters. Also I had indicated earlier, to the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill), that the school board had indicated this sort of opinion as well. It is not an isolated opinion on my part. It is not a firm conclusion. I mean, we do not draw a straight line from A to B and say this is the only reason there is for children moving. There are many reasons that may be a contributing factor.

* (2200)

Mr. Rose: What are we to expect here? What kind of an answer are we getting from the Minister on this?

It is a major problem. It is one that she should have addressed a long time ago. She is clearly on the public record. She does not believe, because of some research that she has, that there is any connection between social assistance allowances and transients in the Winnipeg School Division. I do not care whether the Minister has one report or 1,000, I am prepared to read them.

Will she table the documents that she made that conclusion from? Will she table those documents, no matter how many there are, because we are interested in seeing how the Minister came to such a ridiculous conclusion?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member says he wants any number of documents. There is a large research department in my department that does research. We read papers from other areas and there is no one specific document that says A or B, with research. It does not say, "A" research document led us to believe this, it says research, research at many levels. I do not think the Member really wants the whole research department of my department landed on his desk.

Mr. Rose: Could the Minister put clearly on the record, is she saying now that this major problem in Winnipeg, that she has not taken the time and trouble to do any research, look into it at all, and there is no document that she can supply that would come to the conclusion that she is going to let this sort of deplorable condition continue in Winnipeg No. 1 School Division?

Mrs. Oleson: I did not cause the deplorable condition, nor would I want the deplorable conditions to continue. I said that the letter he is quoting, I believe it was a letter I had written—is that the case? I do not have it in front of me, so of course I cannot quote it, but from his quoting back to me that research indicates—the word research could mean any number of documents.—(interjection)—The department research. Okay, we have many, many documents in the department that we read from time to time. The staff provide me with information, after they have done the research.

I do not think the Member really quite understands what he is talking about. We do have a concern and we are hopefully addressing the situation. It is not something that happened yesterday or the day this Minister walked into the office. It is something that has been building for some time.

Mr. Rose: We must remind this Minister once again that she is the Minister. She is in charge and when she says this is our research, it is her research. What we are asking her now is she came to that conclusion on the public record. If she has internal documents, we would request and ask her, for our edification and our knowledge, if she would table them?

If it is outside research, maybe she could give us the reference numbers, and we could go to the library and look it up. That is all we are asking for. If we are not able to get that information, I can only come to the conclusion that this Minister has spent not one minute to look into the problem.

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Mrs. Oleson: If the Member comes to that conclusion, he is wrong. There are internal documents within the department that are used to come to varying conclusions and it is not the custom of this Government to table internal documents.

Mr. Rose: This is open Government. The Minister clearly has on the public record that she has research, that certainly it should not be of a sensitive nature or confidential, that she has come to a certain conclusion, a very important conclusion, involving the lives of thousands of people in Winnipeg, and thousands of children who go to school every day hungry and therefore cannot concentrate on their educational studies. No wonder we end up with illiteracy.

All we are asking, this Government document that she has in her possession or documents indeed, will she table them for us to examine and study?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I will undertake to ask my staff to check within the research files of the department to see if there is any specific piece of information that we could table. But I mention to the Member again that there are internal working documents that are not usually tabled in the House.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Gaudry): The hour being ten o'clock, is it the will of this committee rise? (Agreed)

Committee rise, call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): The hour being 10 p.m., I am interrupting proceedings according to the Rules. The House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).