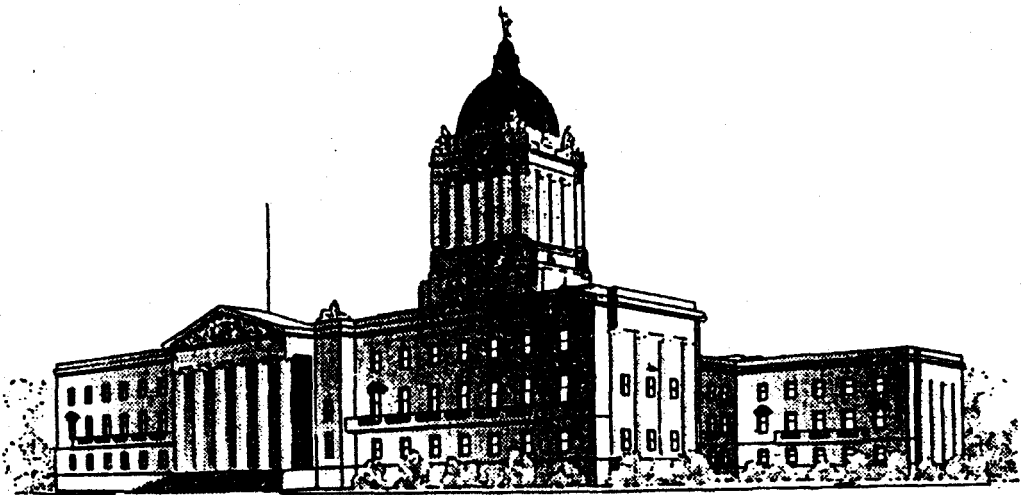




A68467

Fifth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



Vol. XLIII No. 36B - 8 p.m., Monday, May 30, 1994

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 30, 1994

The House met at 8 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(continued)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good evening. Will the committee please come to order. The committee will be resuming consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 6.(b)(1)(a) on page 44. Shall the item pass?

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Are we still on, did you say 6.(a)?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: No, 6.(b)(1) Colleges Secretariat \$214,200.

Mr. Plohman: My colleague critic is going to be here shortly. She is in another meeting that is going to keep her for a short while, but I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the Assiniboine Community College in Dauphin. Could I ask that under this Secretariat line?

Okay, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wonder if we could get from the minister, if it has not been distributed already, the board membership for each of the community colleges.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what is the wish of the member, that I read this in, or does he want a copy of the listings I have before me?

Mr. Plohman: I would appreciate a copy of the list.

Mr. Manness: Table the document.

Mr. Plohman: The Deputy Chairperson is really moving things right along today.

I wanted also to ask—I have not seen the list yet, but it is my understanding that there may have been some major changes in the board and also representation from various areas. Has there been any change in the geographic representation requirements, or was there ever any under this government?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I cannot recall having filled any positions since I have been in the ministry. I understand there is a vacancy at ACC and a vacancy at KCC, but from recollection, we have not added over the last number of months.

Mr. Plohman: Well, it may not have been this minister. It may have been under the previous minister, as well, if there were. My question stands as to whether the government has made any changes as to the representation requirements.

Is there any requirement for Assiniboine Community College to have regional representation on the board?

Mr. Manness: It is not mandated anywhere in the colleges. Is there a colleges act? I guess there is, yes, but we fully expect that both of the institutions in question, indeed, Red River Community College will see fit to reach across not only the local community but, of course, into the district. When we talk about colleges, I would think that there should be an expectation that the board representation be fairly wide.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I look at the—and I thank the minister for the listing for the Board of Governors of the Assiniboine Community College that appears to be: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven from Brandon; one from Souris; one from Rosburn; one from Wawanesa; and one from Minnedosa. But obviously there are none from, as it looks at least on that list, really north of Riding Mountain or what is commonly known as the Parkland region. Rosburn could be considered part of the Parkland,

but it certainly is not part of the northern portion of the greater part of the Parkland region. Of course, Dauphin has the Parkland campus and yet no representation. I find that rather odd. Does the minister have any comments or rationale for that?

Mr. Manness: No, I do not, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, but given that I understand we have one vacancy, we will endeavour to at least try to have representation coming from the north Parklands area. Certainly the member's point is well taken.

Mr. Plohman: There has been a suggestion, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that the Progressive Conservative candidate for Dauphin, the provincial constituency, be offered the position—I do not know whether he wants to spend his time on that right now or not, so it would be something—I guess I appreciate that the minister will give an undertaking to try to fill that position with a representation from the Parkland north of Riding Mountain Park or in that area. I would hope that the Dauphin area could be represented in addition to others from the Parkland region.

I guess I want to ask the minister whether, perhaps, there should be some consideration for at least two positions from that area. The minister may be able to provide us with some information as to the number of students serviced at the Assiniboine Community College campuses, and that would give us an idea as to the degree that they are utilized. I know there was a tremendous demand for Assiniboine Community College services in the Parkland. When surveys were done by the Regional Development Corporation prior to the establishment of the Parkland campus, there was a tremendous demand.

The minister may be aware that the studies that have been done by Workforce 2000, Assiniboine Community College and the Employment and Immigration offices in Dauphin, there is a tremendous demand for training, as a matter of fact, a lower than average completion of Grade 9 education in the Parkland as a whole than the average for Manitoba. The surveys that were done showed a very great demand for the technical courses that are being offered at the community

college now and obviously room for expansion there.

I am not sure whether there were more representatives in the past, and I would like the minister to give us some historical information on this, if he could, from his staff as to whether Dauphin has been represented on this board in the past—I believe it was at least with one member, well, perhaps more—and if he can, any other rationale for only considering perhaps one member from there.

Does he not think, out of a board of 12 people, that there could at least be two from the Parklands region?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this is not an easy exercise. The member has been in government long enough to know that Section 9.(2) of the act says, and I quote: Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council shall have regard to the desirability of achieving on the board an equitable representation of the diversity of the educational and community interests in the region in which the college provides programs and services.

That is quite a mandate. When you try to balance obviously gender considerations with ethnic representation and then geographical representation and then program representation, it is a pretty tough process. I do not know why it is that Dauphin does not have a representative on the board, but I will undertake to try and find out and see how it is that we can bring a fair balance because, again, the member's point is well taken. I know there are a larger number of enrollments in the Dauphin region, and we will do our best to fill a position again from somebody that is in the north Parklands area. The member is asking for two, but let us find one first if we can.

Mr. Plohman: Well, I am looking not only at the immediate, and I hope that the minister will attempt to and I thank the minister for the undertaking for filling the one vacancy, but I am looking in the longer term here, and I see seven out of the 11 that are there from Brandon.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, all I know is that I understand there are roughly between 9,000 and 10,000 students enrolled at

ACC. Roughly 1,000 of those come by way of the Dauphin campus. So, if the member wants to go to strict arithmetic, that is one in 10. One to 12 is closer than one in six. So I do not know how to do this, but again, the member makes his point.

* (2010)

Mr. Plohman: Would the minister say that about seven-twelfths or more of those come from Brandon? Of the 9,000 or 10,000, do we see about 6,000 from the city of Brandon? That would be rather high, it seems to me. I notice there are seven representatives there, and I guess what I am bringing to the minister's attention that this draws from a large rural area. I appreciate his statements about finding gender balance and regional balance, but at the same time, it seems just with the main campus located in Brandon that perhaps we have an overabundance of representation from Brandon. Of course, it is more convenient to attend meetings and so on in terms of board members being there close by. It is something that we all struggle with with boards that perhaps sit in Winnipeg and trying to get to regional representation knowing that it is very difficult and expensive to get people together from large distances.

But it seems to me that a community college such as this, which really is rural based, should have a better distribution of representation on the board. That is really my point, as primarily raising it from Dauphin's perspective. Since there is no one there, but certainly just looking at the preponderance of representation from Brandon, perhaps it is skewed a little bit too much in that regard.

I understand the minister is going to review the—or will he? I guess I will ask the minister if he decides the question he answered for me dealing with Dauphin specifically whether he will review the overall representation with a view to ensuring fair regional representation on this board if in fact that is not the case now.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it does not work, it is not quite that simple. My remarks stand. It depends what the greater priority is at the time, because if I try to give equal weight to all of

the factors that come into play when you select representatives, sometimes one has to give.

Sometimes it is a regional one. You have got a good person who would serve well representing a region, the next thing you know you look at the balance around the gender basis which you try to bring to the board and some of the other areas of expertise you want to see represented, and all of a sudden a good representative you have that you know will do a good job to represent that particular district is no longer acceptable, not because of the academic background but because maybe somebody else has more of the other calling. My early remarks stand.

Mr. Plohman: Well, this is something that I think the minister could commit to over time, and certainly we can find good representatives from every region of the province if we were to look hard enough. We have qualified people, I am sure.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think I would also like to know, are there any other satellite facilities such as the Dauphin facility currently for Assiniboine Community College?

Mr. Manness: Yes, there are three others. They are located in Russell, in Neepawa and in Virden.

Mr. Plohman: Does the minister have the enrollment numbers for each including Dauphin as of this past year?

Mr. Manness: Yes I do, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. Russell 175; Neepawa 260; Virden 220; Dauphin, as I said before, was in the range of a thousand.

Mr. Plohman: Well, I think that makes my point. Not one of those communities is represented on the board, and it would seem with the satellite campuses that would be a logical place to ensure that there is representation from each of those communities, although Rossburn is close to Russell. I think that is an important point.

Is there an advisory board in place for each of these satellite facilities, and can the minister provide us with a copy of the representatives on those boards for each of those locations.

Mr. Manness: The answer to the question is yes. Each has a regional board, I guess, of appointees, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because we do not

appoint and, therefore, we do not even have a listing. So those are put into place by the boards and they would have that information.

Mr. Plohman: I think the Liberal critic said that we should pass the public schools capital while he is away. Is that what—[interjection] Oh, do not pass it.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what I would like to do is ask the minister whether there are any plans to expand the number of sites that are presently there insofar as satellite campuses, and also whether there is any intention for major expansion at existing sites.

Mr. Manness: These locations have been in place for a year. Right now, there are no business plans being developed towards further expansion, at the present time.

Mr. Plohman: Is there a report that has been done that makes recommendations with regard to the future role of these satellite campuses, and can the minister share that with us?

Mr. Manness: The answer is no, and that consideration or request for analysis certainly would be within the purview of the boards.

Mr. Plohman: Is the minister saying that the individual boards are undertaking either a study or a business plan, as the minister called it? Is that a requirement for each of the boards?

Mr. Manness: All three colleges have strategic plans and probably long-range planning subcommittees of their boards. There is no doubt in my mind at least, as far as looking for off-campus sites in the traditional sense, we are not aware of any pressure building to add to the list. Certainly the focus today is on distance education, delivering by signal, at one fashion or another, programming into areas, much different than the off-campus design that we have talked about over the course of the last few minutes.

Mr. Plohman: Does the minister see then a phasing out of the kind of campus-style satellite locations that have been established or perhaps no further expansion due to distance education? What is he suggesting by his answer?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know the member is hard-pressed for questions. I am not suggesting such a thing. I do not see a great change, but resources today do not allow for an expansion of sites in an off-campus sense.

* (2020)

Mr. Plohman: I do not appreciate the minister reflecting on whether I am hard-pressed for questions. I am very concerned about the impact. It just shows the minister's arrogance. I hate to say that, but it deteriorates to that point when he gives those kinds of answers.

He has to remember that we are dealing with an important issue that is important for the Dauphin constituency. It is extremely important that we have representation on the board. I think the minister has been derelict in his duties that he has not, in fact, ensured that that campus, the Parkland campus, was represented on the Board of Governors of the Assiniboine Community College in Brandon. It is unfortunate that I would have to raise this with him instead of him seeing that for himself. He has four communities that are not represented and each of those had a satellite location campus for Assiniboine Community College.

When I ask questions about the boards and the expansion plans, if any, or in fact if their plans are such that there will be a reduction in the activity at these satellite campuses, the minister says I am hard-pressed for questions. I would suggest that the minister should take these questions seriously. He could do a lot worse than take these questions seriously. I believe he has done worse in terms of his attention paid to the community colleges over the last while as the Minister of Finance and, certainly, worse since then.

An Honourable Member: Do not say worse, sir.

Mr. Plohman: The minister does not have to worry about me calling him sir, I am in no mood to do that.

Let me tell him that we would like to see a long-term plan of expansion at the Parkland campus. We are a region that is underserved, I believe. The fact that we have 1,000 students, in the minister's words, receiving some degree of

training at the Parkland campus indicates that there is a tremendous demand there.

I want to know from the minister whether he has any plan whatsoever in place to ensure that there is a major expansion of the services in the Parkland region? Can we expect any expansion, or in fact are there going to be reductions?

The minister has increased the budget, after a major cut a few years ago in community colleges, now by 3.3 percent I believe this year. How is that going to manifest itself in terms of the services delivered at the Parkland campus of the Assiniboine Community College?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am just so thankful I did not criticize the member for his questions, or that I did not say they were ridiculous, or that I did not say that he had no business asking them, then I really would have been attacked. I accept the words of wisdom from the member for Dauphin.

Again, as I have stated before, how the new board handles the additional support that they will enjoy as a result of this budget, I cannot say. Certainly, if it is a program expansion, we will want to see where it—not where it is, but what program offerings that might be contemplated if there is enough money to expand program offerings.

As far as locational expansions, my earlier comment stands. As far as trying to see a wider representation on the board taking into account the Parklands region, bearing in mind, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that there are regional committees appointed, certainly within the Parkland area, that gives direct impact to, I imagine, the board. Again, my remarks are stated on the record.

Mr. Plohman: Does the minister receive any reports from the community colleges as to offerings that have been made there in the past year in terms of courses or plans for the upcoming year? Is that part of the information the minister routinely receives?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are always aware of the programs that have been offered in the past year, but in terms of '94-95, we soon expect to be receiving an indication of what

the colleges are offering in programming for the new year.

Mr. Plohman: Is there any effort made to co-ordinate the programs that are offered? Are these entirely within the purview of the regional boards?

Mr. Manness: In a sense there is, because I have the ability to approve new programming. So to the extent that there seems to be unwarranted replication of offerings beyond the market demand for skills, I have an opportunity to reflect on the decision because, obviously, the plans from campuses may be put in in isolation from each other. So there has to be kind of a clearing-house, and that happens within the ministry.

Mr. Plohman: That is good to hear because that is one of the concerns we had when the new system of governance was established, that there would not be the co-ordination that is desirable, it would seem.

Is there any plan to offer LPN upgrading or an R.N. course for LPNs who would like to get their R.N. designation, particularly in light of the uncertainty about the future role of LPNs, at least as this government has presided over that issue?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the ACC context, the Brandon General is in charge of the nursing program, so I do not think the question applies in this case.

Mr. Plohman: The minister may not be aware of the historical background on this issue, but there was a desire, certainly, I believe, is a desire, to have an R.N. course offered in Dauphin out of the Assiniboine Community College and in conjunction with the Dauphin Regional Health Centre, which in fact can quite, I think, comfortably provide the variety of experiences for R.N.s or student R.N.s. In that context, is the minister aware of the background on the issue, and is there any roadblock from his end of it that would prevent this from happening?

Mr. Manness: It seems to me that this was being discussed three years ago, and then it kind of fell apart when one of the major players, in this case, Brandon General Hospital, did not see fit, by my

recollection at least, to maintain their involvement in trying to plan toward a different system.

So I know the aspirations of regions to see this type of training and this type of upgrading, if I dare use the word, certainly leading to higher certification or standing, but the whole health reform process also will have to have an involvement in passing judgment as to whether these courses ultimately are sanctioned.

Mr. Plohman: Is the minister plugged into that process then at the present time, and is he recommending anything with regard to training of certain professions—in this case, I am discussing registered nursing training—or is this something that will be dictated by the policy of the Department of Health, the ministry of Health to the Minister of Education later?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there is no doubt that Health has a significant influence and lead here, because the fact is there is no use training and retraining a number of individuals who would be practitioners when there may not be the opportunities for them to practice. So this is an area where obviously there has to be a stricter balance brought into place, and as far as scarce resources being directed towards training, hopefully then with the expectation that there will be employment at the end of the day. So yes, Health has a significant influence in these decisions.

* (2030)

Mr. Plohman: What advice would the minister give to people in the Parkland who might want to have a course offered for the training of registered nurses? There are many LPNs who want to take this course, and perhaps others. What advice would you offer as to the potential for this to happen, what action they should take, and so on?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know what the member is focusing upon. Is he focusing upon whether or not in generic terms, individuals who have LPN standing should try to improve their status, or is he saying what approach do they take to make sure that there might be an additional offering with respect to nursing located in Dauphin?

I have no advice to give other than try and stay close to the whole reform process in Health and see where the shortages are. Certainly, there seems to be greater shortages of nurses, there seems to be greater opportunities in northern Manitoba, and bearing in mind that I know Keewatin Community College is also very interested in focusing some additional training in this area.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, well, I understand there is quite an extensive demand, certainly there is in the Parkland region from representation I have had made to me.

It is a question of who is going to be able to make this happen. What is the limiting factor here? Is it strictly dollars, or are there some other political considerations, not necessarily large P political, but within organizations that are involved? What precisely is involved in making a decision, and how can the minister help in this regard?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not have to tell the member, he knows what the issues are. Obviously, dollars are a dimension of it.

Right now, the member knows that there are two R.N. programs being offered in Keewatin Community College. He also knows the broader issue is, what is the preferred level of entry into nursing? Is it the Baccalaureate or is it the registered program? I mean, there are a lot of issues swirling around the whole nursing spectrum these days.

Mr. Plohman: I do not know if the minister is seeking to avoid the issue.

I am working from the basis that there is a considerable number of LPNs who want to take their R.N. training, and they want to take it close to home, in this case in the Parkland region, more specifically in Dauphin because of the facility that is there in terms of the hospital and the community college, so I am just asking the minister how he can help facilitate that.

There are no promises. I am not asking him for a promise it is going to happen. I just want to ask him whether there are certain actions that they should take. Should they make representation? Should they sign a petition? Should they write

letters or meet with certain groups, with the nurses' professional organization, or with Brandon Hospital? Who are the most appropriate people for them to see?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, naturally the member's constituents are welcome to contact the college and obviously contact the department, but again I state for the record, there are many locations that would like to have this type of training within their community, and I can understand why, but ultimate demand by the system for registered nurses, ultimate financing or resources available to reach out to obviously not all of the requests, but to some share of them will determine the location.

Right now, would the member then care to suggest which ones give up their programs so that they can be shifted? Because that is basically the period we are in. We are not in adding on new programs. We are basically at a time of shifting program from one location to the next, and if he has some recommendation that he would like to make as to where we shift, I will certainly gladly receive it.

Mr. Plohman: The minister knows that there are not many locations or not every location that can accommodate the practical training for registered nurses because of the lack of diversity of experience in rural hospitals. So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think the minister realizes that there are not an awful lot of locations where this can be accomplished, and Dauphin is one of those, in addition where there is not now.

What it means is that a certain number of placements, if there are only a certain number being trained, would have to be transferred from perhaps Brandon if in fact those students are coming from Dauphin in the first place and have to travel. That is the whole idea here I think with satellite campuses, to provide the training close to home so they do not have to live away from their families in many cases. These are women who have children and who are having to travel distances, making it very difficult for them and their families. They would like to be closer to home.

So what I am looking at here and asking these questions is whether in fact there are a sufficient number of these who could be transferred to take their course and register in Dauphin as opposed to in Brandon, and it would not be offered every year. It could be offered every few years or as long as the demand was there. I am working on the assumption that the demand is there now, and on that basis, I am asking the minister whether in fact some of these positions could be reallocated to Dauphin so that the training could in fact take place there closer to home for most of these students.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, two points. Firstly, the member now wants us to take control of the boards again and dictate where it is they should be offering programs and what programs. But secondly, he ignores the fact that, and he might not be aware of this although I sense he is, that the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, the professional arm of the nurses, has never approached the government with respect to increasing the number of registered nurse offerings, because it seems to me that their point of view, and again I could be wrong, but their point of view is that entry level into nursing should come along with or be equivalent to a B.N.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if that is the case, then it is not just the system that the member is reflecting upon. He is reflecting upon the professional arm of the nurses in Manitoba because, again, they have not seen fit, at least, to recommend to us that there be an expansion of the offering of the registered nurses program.

Mr. Plohman: To conclude this, I am reflecting on the minister's lack of initiative and lack of clarity in his answers, not on any other organization, so let him not try to deflect this. I was simply asking the minister for some straight answers insofar as how he could be of some help through his good offices. Obviously, he is not prepared to offer too much in that regard. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I just have one question in terms of community colleges. I know that part of this has probably been covered in some

of the discussions taking place in the Roblin report. The reason I am raising it under this particular item is because the Roblin report specifically pinpointed an expanded role not only for community colleges generally but also for Keewatin Community College vis-à-vis the whole question of post-secondary education in the North, and I want to indicate that there are many different models that could be adopted.

For years, many of us in northern Manitoba in talking about the need for northern polytechnic, which essentially would combine university and community college programs—it has often been described as northern university, and that is true in the generic sense, but it would go beyond that.

* (2040)

In the ACCESS Programs, we had discussions about the need for co-ordination between programs. This is one of the areas that has been pinpointed by people in the ACCESS Programs themselves, as a way of saving money and also allowing those resources to be put forward for expanded education.

What I want to focus on in the question is exactly that, bringing together existing programs and improving educational access, and by the way, not just in northern Manitoba but across Manitoba as a whole. I have often called for the equivalent of an Inter-Universities Manitoba, so to speak, which takes some of the many advantages that we have in northern Manitoba in the form of IUN, which has transferability of credits, flexibility, et cetera, and would apply that to rural Manitoba where there has been some expansion of accessibility through the FYDE program but where much more could be done.

I want to ask the minister what his response is to the Roblin report in the context of KCC, northern polytechnic, co-ordination of services, and second of all, what his response is in terms of not just northern Manitoba but all of rural Manitoba, as I said, in terms of co-ordinating existing programs and expanding them as was recommended by the Roblin report very clearly in its conclusions?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I cannot scoop myself because I will certainly be making a

more definitive statement with respect to this whole issue when I release on Roblin. Obviously, I support the member strongly when he calls for even greater general co-ordination between all of the educational activities that are trying to be provided to northern residents.

I support his call to all our institutions to work more closely together, to take the existing model and build upon it, but as far as how far we go beyond that in providing a centre with powers beyond those that exist today, the member will have to wait. I regret having to say that, but I will be trying to provide some greater insight into our thinking once we bring down the statement reflecting upon the recommendations of the Roblin report.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Roblin commission's perspective on community colleges was one of encouraging expansion and putting some very specific goals for the government, and I know the minister has already discussed this with the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray). I wonder if we could look at particularly the programs that Roblin targeted, and those were the diploma programs. These are the ones where we are able to have consistent numbers and a consistent record over the years of the changes in enrollment patterns and graduation patterns.

Could the minister give me an idea of what the numbers of graduates were and enrollments in those programs in perhaps the last couple of years, whatever numbers he has available at the moment, and what he anticipates those enrollments and graduation rates will be in the diploma programs, not talking about the market-driven strategies or the Canadian Jobs Strategy or all of the short-term courses that are offered, but those diploma programs which are comparable year to year?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in broad terms, within the diploma area, 3,500 enrollments, approximately 950 graduates.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, which year is that for?

Mr. Manness: '93-94.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister have information for the previous years, say, '92-93?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have comparable in the graduate numbers, 915 in terms of '92-93, so the total number of graduates has increased by a total of 35.

Ms. Friesen: So what Roblin is suggesting is a very precise number of over 1,800 graduates five years from now. The minister has suggested that that is not what he is interested in, that he is looking at that as a general recommendation.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I did not say I was not interested in that. That is nonsense. What I said was I do not see how the government can commit to a hard goal in keeping with the recommendation. I said we are very interested to see what we can do to reach that goal, but certainly there have to be other considerations. Do not let the member put words in my mouth and say I am not interested in it because that is the furthest from the truth.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister is getting rather sensitive. I was not intending to put words in his mouth. I was saying that he was interested, that he had a general concern in that area. He is being very testy.

How does the minister intend to address the Roblin commission's recommendations then of moving to 1,800 graduates in the two-year diploma programs?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is a repeat of a question earlier. We said within the guidelines of the framework for economic growth, within the additional funding that we are going to try and provide, although Roblin also said that there should be no more dollars overall as a percentage term directed towards post-secondary education. Within those guidelines and watching carefully to make sure that the expansion, of course, is in keeping with the general economic thrust of the province and those targeted industries, we will try to ensure that we work in a significant fashion towards that objective.

Ms. Friesen: How does each of the colleges determine the needs in their particular area? How are these approximately 1,800 places going to be

allocated? How does each of the colleges within that general allocation, that general goal that Roblin is setting for them, determine what is needed? For example, as the colleges have gone to governance and in relative independence from government, they have had defined geographical areas. So could the minister tell us how each of those boards determines the needs of its community in the absence of labour force development strategies and in the absence of the community economic initiatives which the STAC report recommended.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I guess my responses would be no different than I gave many times before, when we were talking about Workforce 2000 in the general context, but there is a market-needs analysis done in a global context that would lend itself to greater usage by the community colleges, probably in other areas. So that is being done in some dimension. It might not be a quantitative objective method of dealing with it, but some are trying to do that. Again, as I said many, many times, it is up to the colleges and their leadership, administrative and at the board level, to try and parallel at least some of the thought process that went into the framework for economic growth. Also, there are department objectives that have to be taken into account.

The member says, well, how are they dealing with industry? How do they know? Well, there is an awful lot of consultation. We have many members of the board, of course, who reflect quite closely the requirements of industry as a whole, and they make their views known to the board. So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, those are the general guidelines. The board of governors, in their long-range planning functions, committees thereof, will earmark those areas they think may be worthy of expansion or expansion into. They will make recommendations to government by way of their yearly plans, and government will accordingly accept or reject. So that is how the process works.

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

Ms. Friesen: How does the community make known its needs to the colleges? What I am hearing from the minister is effectively that he is devolving the overall responsibility for a labour force development strategy to each of the regional colleges. It does not seem to me from the outside that there are the mechanisms for the colleges to do that. Yes, they can speak to the individual people on their boards. Yes, they may have committees of the boards which perhaps go marginally beyond the areas that the board represents.

* (2050)

How is each of these boards equipped, say, in the case of KCC—well, any of the boards for that matter? The Red River Community College, which has a huge mandate in geographical and in industrial terms, how is it equipped to deal with creating that labour force development strategy, evaluating the needs of all of the industries of Manitoba, evaluating the educational needs of the employees as well as those of the employers, which is the only one the minister seems to be concerned about? How are those employees, for example, to make known their educational requirements and how they see their economic future in this new process?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, there is a good process in place. The member does not like it because she believes there are an awful lot of resources that are available and that all courses and every course that a person wants to take should be offered. That is the old way. We have discounted that approach. That approach does not work. The member is then trying to say, well, how do you know for sure that the courses you are offering and keeping is what the community wants?

Well, what we are saying, these committees—and I can think of Keewatin Community College as going throughout the north country bringing in input, doing the consolidated process, trying to determine what it is the community thinks it requires in a large fashion, but keeping in mind what the framework for economic growth says is the most important area as a priority for wealth creation in this province. So, Mr. Acting Deputy

Chairperson, there is a process. It is a very in-depth process. It is a very meaningful process, and it is reaching out in a fashion I would think the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) would be most supportive of.

Ms. Friesen: Well, if I were to offer any support, I would like to have some information first. There is no evidence, and there is no information. That is what I am asking the minister to provide.

Mr. Manness: I cannot give much more information to the member. She has drawn it all out of me. She has it all, and I have just given her the process.

Let us face it, what the member dislikes is the fact that we have gone to more of a market-driven type training that takes into account wealth creation in its purest form. What the member wants is she wants the plan, she wants a plan hammered out in some policy section, and she wants that of course hammered into the consciousness of all the political appointees to the board and indeed to the administration.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, well, yes, the minister does indicate I am interested in planning, and indeed I am. I thought governments were interested in plans. I thought that was one of the responsibilities of government.

The minister says that I have plumbed his depths. That surprises me. I thought there was perhaps a little more to be drawn out of the minister, but if this is all he is prepared to offer, if he is prepared to tell me that the range of planning, the range of connection with communities of Red River Community College is a committee of employers—

Mr. Manness: Employers?

Ms. Friesen: Yes.

Mr. Manness: Look at the list of employers—tremendous representation across the community.

Ms. Friesen: I do not see any employees on that. I do not see any representatives of Bristol Aerospace workers, for example.

Mr. Manness: Which one are you looking at?

Ms. Friesen: The Board of Governors of Red River.

Mr. Manness: Oh, Red River. Employees of the college?

Ms. Friesen: No, employees of industry.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we have a different approach. The members of course like to stack all of their public institutions with employees. We like to have a little different balance. We are in position to govern, so that is why we are different.

Ms. Friesen: That is exactly right. We are different. What the minister is doing in his educational policy in fact is enhancing and expanding the role of employers in determining education, in determining—

Mr. Manness: Hear, hear. That is exactly what we are doing, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson.

Ms. Friesen: Good. I am glad we have that on record.

This is public money which is enhancing the role of a particular sector of the economy which has—[interjection] Who do you think creates the wealth? I do not believe it.

Well, it is clearly a very deep divide between us, and I do want to put on the record that the minister seems to think that only one portion of the community has the right to direct education, only one portion of the community, quote, creates wealth. It is a very, very narrow perspective on the life of this province, and it is certainly a very narrow perspective for the planning of any educational futures for this province. But it is certainly the direction this government is taking us in.

Mr. Manness: The member does not have to become so exercised. She can try and cast my commentary in black and white terms, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson. I recognize that the colleges are a community that is to reach out to most, but there is change, and the change—the member of course she cannot accept it. She cannot accept the fact that the public institutions in post-secondary education are being challenged for once. Her solution for years was shovel more money at it, let them do what they want, give them academic freedom. She does not ask the universities what

plans they have. What consultation do they do with the communities? None. Yet the member stands up and says, my goodness, what are these community colleges doing, you have given them too much freedom; my goodness, you have given an emphasis to the employers and to the wealth creators, the people who we tax the living daylights out of so they can take that wealth and redistribute it.

Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we have a different philosophy obviously at work, but I dare say we reflect our philosophy by virtue of the decisions that we have made, and we stand by our record.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, of course, what has happened is the public money has been transferred increasingly into the hands of one section of the community, and public education, that which made us equal, that which was equally accessible to all, has in fact become controlled and determined by one section of the economy. That is what I am asking for. Where is the evidence that the other part of the economy, the other portion of the community has some opportunity for input into college programs, into diploma programs, into the creation of additional programs?

For example, should one of the large corporations which is represented on these community colleges say no to a particular proposal for a diploma program or an additional part of continuing education? What would be the recourse of the community? How does the community in fact exert an influence upon those kinds of decisions?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, by two ways. They make representation to the board directly or indirectly in the manner which they see fit. Secondly, they make representation to the government of Manitoba. Ultimately, if they are not happy with the action, they have got that ultimate freedom, thank God. They can go to the polls, and they will, and they did, and what they did in the last election in 1990 is, they said once again that they did not want the Liberals or certainly the NDP to govern their interests. That is

the ultimate expression of individuals in our society who feel that changes that have been made are either in keeping with their philosophy or in some cases are not in keeping.

Ms. Friesen: What does the minister see as the role of adult basic education in the community colleges?

Mr. Manness: I mean, lifelong learning obviously has to be practised in all of our educational institutions including our community colleges. I see, there is no doubt in my mind as I look into the next century that there will be incredible not only demand but expectation and indeed a call for significant additional adult education training. It fits right in again to the lifelong learning concept that we all know is coming, and to the extent that colleges have additional resources and can expand their programming in any respect and in a timetabling that will be in keeping with adults who are requiring this type of training, it will happen.

Ms. Friesen: I am not sure the minister understood the question. The question was related to adult basic education, that is, the basic literacy and numeracy programs which until two or three years ago were taught by community colleges on location and in the community colleges. There seems to have been a shift in the government's policy towards ensuring that this is done in high schools or at least by school divisions rather than the community colleges. The government at one point, in fact, over a few years has promised a report on this and a review. We have discussed this in earlier parts of the Estimates, and I want to now look at what the community college role is, will be from the perspective of the government. Is the government at the point of moving adult basic education away from the community colleges?

* (2100)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, this is a repetitive question. I have said that we cannot go much further in this area until the federal government lays before us the plans as to how they are planning to remake and to reshift the Unemployment Insurance program and indeed some of the other basic social programs that have been in place for a long-standing period of time. So

until the federal government gives us some clarity as to where they are going to be taking these basic programs of support it is going to be very difficult to give greater response to the member.

Ms. Friesen: These are Manitobans whom we are talking about. These are Manitobans with specific needs which have not changed over the last 10 years, the same type of people presenting themselves for the same kinds of programs. In the last few years the government has moved these programs back to the high school level. The last minister argued that people should go and talk to their own high school principals or to their school divisions, although in fact I think in at least 30 percent of the divisions in Manitoba there is not provision for those kinds of adult students in the regular classroom.

I am asking, does the minister have a policy on this? What is he saying to the federal government? What are the implications of the actions of the government over the last two years? Has it come to a halt as he waits for some oracle from the new federal government to speak, or does he actually have a policy on this? Where is the best place? Where is the most effective place for the education of those adults in need of basic education?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, my previous answer stands. The member, of course, wants solutions to all of the world's problems. I know in her perfect world, of course, that can happen with a snap of another planner; bring in another social engineer and instantly you have a plan. But this takes great skill, to try to take into account all of our society. Indeed, the member thinks you can house this neatly in one place and fix all of society's ills, and again, we have said our general model—[interjection] We have a situation where the member for Wolseley is again getting exercised. I do not know what her problem is tonight. I feel sorry for her, but the reality is she is having great difficulty.

Let me say that with respect to adult-based education, Mr. Deputy Chair, and trying to provide greater opportunity, trying to provide greater equivalency, I think that becomes the task of all of us. Indeed, the member of course would like to see

it housed in a formal institution, and I tell the members of all of the great outreaches in literacy training that are taking place in many of our communities. We spent a long time on this subject in another part of the department. We talked about the incredible success stories that are occurring in Manitoba, and that is taking some of the pressure off the community colleges.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it seems to me the minister is right; I am increasingly puzzled by his answers which seem to be veering further and further away from the question. Adult basic education is what we are talking about. I am asking for the government policy. I am not asking him for it to be lodged in this institution or that institution. I am simply asking, what is the direction of the government in this area?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if the member wants the full load, I will give her the full load. ABE programs at community colleges are designed to prepare students for further training at the college. Secondly, Adult Basic Education programs are offered leading to recognized equivalency at the Grades 10, 11 and 12 levels. Thirdly, curriculum content is determined by consulting instructors in the college program for which the student is preparing. Fourthly, students attending on a full-time basis attend approximately 25 to 30 hours per week. Fifthly, certification is granted as (1) recorded grade equivalency or (2) correspondence certification or (3) through articulation agreement with a school division. Sixthly, college Adult Basic Education programs are specifically designed to serve the learning needs of adult learners.

Now, the member asks what the role of the college is in adult basic education. Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am prepared to share six of those items with the member. Firstly, community college Adult Basic Education program is directed primarily at the provision of the academic skills and competencies necessary for admission to community college programs. ABE program provides instruction to the Grades 10, 11 and 12 levels consistent with the admission requirements of college programs. Grade 12 level programming is flexible and can accommodate students entering

at a Grade 7 equivalent preparation level. ABE programs are flexible, offering full-time classroom instruction, approximately 25 to 30 hours per week, and part-time individual study options.

Although ABE programs target students seeking admissions to college programs, students can also prepare for admission to post-secondary programs at other post-secondary institutions. College ABE programming also includes off-campus training offered on a contract- or market-driven basis and as part of integrated college programs which incorporate ABE training within the curriculum of a college certificate or a diploma program.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, you may be interested to know, I know the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) would be very interested to know this, colleges provide a flexible adult-directed ABE program specifically designed to meet the learning needs and styles of adult Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members wanting to carry on their private conversations to do so out in the hall. The honourable minister to continue.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, colleges experience an ongoing demand for ABE education as preparation for post-secondary training programs.

Now, I know the member has asked a lot of questions about curriculum. I will give her a couple of items on curriculum because she is very interested in that as it impacts Workforce 2000. Adult Basic Education, No. 1, curriculum is determined primarily by the requirements of college programs; and secondly, curriculum content is determined by consulting instructors in the college program for which the student is preparing.

Now I know the member would be keenly interested in knowing about the certification of ABE programs. They break into three areas, and I know the member would want me to put this on the record: Certification is granted as recorded grade equivalency; or (2) correspondence certification; or (3) through articulation agreement with the school division. Also, recorded grade equivalency is the predominant means of credit recognition.

Grade equivalency is recognized by Manitoba post-secondary institutions in most cases, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and I have that in brackets.

Thirdly, I would say to the member, Assiniboine Community College, I gather, provides certifications though the Brandon School Division in the subjects English, physics and Math 300, in addition to recognized grade equivalency.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is a full, full response. It certainly indicates that the government has a policy framework around all of its education programming, and I would expect the member for Wolseley to applaud the actions of the government.

An Honourable Member: We want more of that.

Mr. Manness: I have got books of it.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, now that we have heard the Greek chorus from the other—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. You know the decorum is starting to lack in here a little bit—just starting. You know I have been allowing a little bit of leeway, but I think we are going to have to harness you in a little bit. The honourable member for Wolseley would like to ask some questions, and I would like to have just a little bit of quiet, please. The honourable member for Wolseley to continue.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to thank the minister for reading so much into the record. Perhaps what it shows more than anything is that the revolving door of the Department of Education has swung yet again because that sounded like more than anything, I think, the last Minister of Education who could only read written material into the record. I had hoped for more from this minister, and I had hoped for a discussion of his Adult Basic Education policy, but I gather that is not to be the case.

Could the minister indicate how the colleges are fulfilling the area of tourism in the government's economic strategies?

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, within the setting of the Assiniboine Community College, they have a course, a program of study in the hospitality tourism administration area. That is

in keeping with the focus on tourism, and I am led to believe that Red River Community College also has a tourism marketing and management program of study, too, obviously in keeping with the tourism target area.

* (2110)

Ms. Friesen: When the minister says course, does he mean a single course, or is that a program with a diploma attached?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, ACC has a diploma program offering.

Ms. Friesen: How many graduates are there from that each year?

Mr. Manness: I cannot answer that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. The member will have to contact the college, and I am sure they will be able to provide that information for you.

Ms. Friesen: How does the college connect with the tourism industry in Manitoba? Since that is the one diploma program for the province, what industry-wide strategies and connections are there?

Mr. Manness: Through the Manitoba Tourism Education Council.

Ms. Friesen: How are those connections made? Are any representatives from that council on any of the boards of the community college, in this case, presumably Assiniboine Community College?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I can remember Mr. Hoover was a board member of Assiniboine Community College up to a short period of time. Whether there are other directors at this point or board governors at this point in time, I cannot say with certainty.

Another good partnership in place, Human Resources department of the federal government in conjunction with—as I was saying, this partnership that draws funds from the Human Resources development department of the federal government, Workforce 2000 and also the Manitoba Tourism Education Council, they all work together to make sure that the program is in place, is in keeping with the needs, the tourism and

hospitality needs, in support of our province's economy.

Ms. Friesen: I was not quite clear how the minister was expressing how those links are made, and I do not see, by the way, on the present make-up of the board of Assiniboine Community College or any of the other colleges, any representative of the tourism industry.

I am raising this because this is one of the six strategies that the minister is concerned about. There is one diploma program of we-do-not-know-how-many graduates per year. If this is one of the directions the government is going, one would expect to have a little more direct representation on the boards, and perhaps a broader representation in say at least two of the colleges, of the tourism industry.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have got greater respect for the mentality of the member for Wolseley than that. Obviously many of those people who are studying management courses, business management courses, they very well may find, and I would expect a large number of them would find, their way into the tourism industry.

The member tries to make it sound as if the tourism industry receives its only people, its people who practise on a daily basis, from those who graduate from a tourism management course. That is nonsense. They come from all walks of life, so I do not know what point it is the member is trying to make.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I am trying to take the minister's direction of the six economic strategies of the government. I am looking for the ways in which the educational institutions of the province are being oriented in that direction. Yes, I am sure the minister is right that people from some of the management courses will find their way into tourism with or without an educational background in tourism.

What I am looking for is that connection between the economic strategies and the educational directions of the province, and I am saying I am surprised, given that that is one of the six, that there perhaps is not a greater representation on the boards of the colleges or

perhaps a broader representation in diplomas and courses across the colleges, particularly perhaps at Red River where the particular relationship is to the Winnipeg region, where at the moment, the broader sector of the tourism industry finds itself.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what is the member saying? Is she saying for sure that she knows that Mr. Ron Tate, for instance, from Thompson, who is in industry and training, might not be able to reflect on the needs within the tourism industry? The member is passing judgment. I have a listing here, and we have these types of category settings. We have business, we have education, we have teacher, municipal. I would think anyone of those three might be able to bring special skills with respect to the tourism industry and reflect upon decisions that have to be made. What a foolhardy statement by the member for Wolseley.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would think many of our board appointees to a number of colleges bring with them a wide spectrum of background and knowledge, and that is why they have been put there. They are not put there as political hacks. They are put there in keeping with the wide array of skills they bring, and I would think the member reflects negatively on these people when she asks the question in the fashion she does.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that was totally unnecessary. It was the minister who raised the issue of political hacks. I have never suggested that about any single member of any board.

My very first question in this line of questioning is, what was the representation of the tourism industry on those boards? The minister had every opportunity to put on the record the reflection of the tourism industry across a broad sector, whether it was of business or whether it was specifically of some aspect of the tourism. So it is really uncalled for for him to come with those kinds of unnecessary and unpleasant comments at the end when I had asked him that very question at the beginning.

Again, pursuing the connection between the economic strategies of the government and the educational directions of the government, if we are

to assume that Assiniboine Community College and, to a lesser extent, Red River Community College are taking the tourism focus of the government's economic strategies, could the minister indicate where he anticipates that the universities should be going in tourism? If we are having the educational institutions moving in parallel with the economic strategies, what should be the role of the universities in the development of tourism?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, obviously, as it is one of the major strategic industry initiatives, any calling to arms of all of the players within this industry will be done so by Industry, Trade and Tourism. I understand that that will be done in a public forum setting sometime in the next month and a half.

The member has tried to generate a little heat with respect to what representation you had from the tourism industry and the board. I have to point out, as I said earlier, one of the first statements—the member might not know who Ray Hoover is or was, but from recollection, Ray Hoover was the head of TIAM, which is the Tourism Association of Manitoba. That was the direct connection. He has left just recently, over the last few months, and it is up to us now to try and fill in one of our vacancies on the board with that type of individual.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I said that in the very first answer. I guess I assumed that the member knew who Ray Hoover was. I guess I assumed too much.

* (2120)

Ms. Friesen: I was pointing out that the government had not replaced Mr. Hoover with anybody related to the tourism industry. So equally we each had a point, and I do not think again it is necessary for the minister to introduce those kinds of comments. I in fact had no intention to generate controversy over this area or to generate heat. My goal was to try and understand what the link was between the economic strategies of the government and the educational strategies of the government. I realize it is getting late. I realize the minister spent a long time here, but it is not necessary to deal with questions in that way.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know what the member says, getting late. I believe we have considerable time left yet, and I do not know what she means when she says it is getting late. The member may be tired; I am certainly not.

Ms. Friesen: If the minister wants to deal in these kinds of issues, it is not necessary and I do not think particularly helpful to furthering the public discussion or debate.

I wanted to ask the minister about the Six Thinking Hats program at Red River Community College and if he could give us an indication of what the results have been.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have answered this question in another section dealing with Workforce 2000. It was a joint agreement, as the member said. I understand the emphasis was on lateral thinking and it reached out and brought in—the member knows better than me. She likes to have fun in this. She lays on the record how serious this is and all that, and here she sits here laughing her head off because she thinks she has got a real juicy issue. So, you know, she contradicts herself from question to question. For the record, she admits she is chuckling to herself. It is getting late for the member, and I feel sorry for her. We better be careful how long we go. But this was done for boards and management. It was Edward de Bono's lateral thinking course.

Ms. Friesen: Well, the minister keeps referencing the late hour and I think wants to put on the record something about his own macho propensities for late hours. My reference to late hours was in fact late in the length of the amount of time we have spent in Estimates. It was not of a particular hands on the clock, and yes, I do chuckle a little bit at Six Thinking Hats. It is something of an amusing title, and yes, the minister has told me before what he believes that course to have been. What I asked this time on the colleges line is what he thinks the value to the colleges has been and what the implications have been for college programs or for college faculty and administration of such a course.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member is asking me to speculate on what the

colleges think. I think she is well advised to pick up the phone someday and ask the colleges what they think of this course.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us what he considers—no, let me phrase it another way. The labour force development strategy that is being done in Selkirk with Workforce 2000 money and federal money, how will that connect into the regional mandate of, I assume, Red River Community College?

Mr. Manness: I cannot answer that question. I will try to find out more information, but I cannot answer that question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 6.(b) Community Colleges (1) Colleges Secretariat (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$214,200—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$41,900—pass.

6.(b)(2) Grants \$40,510,600—pass.

Resolution 16.6 RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$256,535,000 for Education and Training, Support to Post-Secondary Institutions for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

We will now move on to 16.7, which is Capital Appropriations, 7. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) School Divisions \$24,501,600.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, get some Contac-C for the member. I would like to get on with the Estimates here, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, once the committee settles down and we get the new staff in here.

One of the questions that I would like to ask the minister is whether he could table the capital plan, if there is one, and if he does not mind me using that term. I know he has an aversion to anything called a plan; he likes the idea of a blueprint. So maybe he has a capital blueprint he would like to table for us insofar as the plans—oops!—insofar as the capital projects that may be under construction in this potential election year.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it has not been the tradition of this department to table a plan because no plan exists.

Mr. Plohman: I would think that the minister is very traditional in many of the things he does now,

except he has indicated on various occasions throughout these Estimates that he would like to be a bit innovative. He is going to go so far as to have a reform blueprint, and whether there has actually been a tabled capital plan over the last couple of years or not, I think that is one of the things that the Legislature needs. We have traditionally a road construction list, not necessarily a plan. Now, we do not have that yet. The Minister of Highways—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The Department of Highways is coming up in the House in the next few days, and I would appreciate if you want to discuss bridges and highways, we do it at that time. The honourable member for Dauphin has the floor at this time, and I am having trouble hearing him.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, speaking of bridges and highways, I was just going to say that the Minister of Highways is now tabling or is now—

An Honourable Member: Well, now, make up your mind, John.

Mr. Plohman:—giving news releases, issuing news releases, on various parts of the capital program, but no capital program has been tabled with the Legislature. This is a departure.

So I would like to see the minister provide an overall list, if he does not want to call it a plan, an overall list of all of the capital projects that his government intends to carry out to spend the \$24,501,000 in the 1994-95 year on capital. The Legislature has a right to know that; we expect that. We want to see what the government is doing with the taxpayers' money insofar as \$24 million. It is a lot of money, and we want to know where it is going.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, all the member has to do is refer to page 135. It shows in five breakouts exactly where all the money is going. I will read for the member, in case the member is having difficulty reading.

I would point out that \$14.7 million goes to interest. Now, interest represents the cost of borrowing money on schools that have been built in the past, and so this is the principal portion of

providing expenditures in the past. As a matter of fact, a significant portion of this is probably on schools built by the NDP in their time. So \$14.7 million is the capital portion of the amortization schedule associated with paying that money.

Buses: \$3.27 million goes in support of buses. Now certainly, Mr. Deputy Chairperson—

An Honourable Member: How many?

* (2130)

Mr. Manness: Well, we can try to find out how many buses there were in the 1994-95 year, \$4.7 million goes into minor capital projects and environmental—Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in 1994-95, we anticipate 95 to 100 school buses will be replaced.

Now, the member asks about minor capital projects. We will try to give him some further information with respect to that.

As he can see, the final two areas are Environmental Assistance and Vocational Equipment.

So the information is all for the member, right in front of him, and all he has to do is refer to page 135.

Mr. Plohman: If the minister thinks that is all of the information the members at the Legislature require, then he is, to put it nicely, sadly mistaken.

I would think that we could expect more from this minister and that he would realize that couched within those categories of \$4 million for Minor Capital Projects and \$3 million for Buses, that there would be some more detail that would be helpful for members of the Legislature in determining whether the government's priorities are such that we could find any support for them.

I think insofar as the Buses are concerned, we are not asking a lot of information of the minister here in terms of projects that he might be undertaking. We are asking a few questions insofar as the breakdown of this \$24 million. The Debt Servicing—I mean, we could ask for all of the schools that fall under this and that are covered under the Debt Servicing. I am not asking for that right now. What I am asking for is information on new projects that they are being undertaken. Are

we to assume from this that there are no new schools being built, or is that under Debt Servicing, and if so, which are they.

Insofar as the Buses, 95 to 100, well, let us look at how many have been replaced over each of the last five years, and let us take a look whether the minister is doing as much in replacement as he has or has been traditional. We know that the minister has pushed back the replacement dates for buses. It used to be 12 years and was pushed back to 13 years, and then 14 years, and so on. The member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach), when he was Minister of Education, was well aware of that because he started the process of delaying replacement of buses.

Then we have insofar as Minor Capital Projects the section \$4,729,000, a lot of minor projects there. So what I want from the minister is some detail on this. I wish he would not attempt to insult the members by saying, well, it is all there, look at page 135, the member will find everything he wants. Well, I am sorry, the minister should know better than that.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think the member has got me. He has got me, there is no doubt. I was remiss and I apologize to the committee. School buildings support, category (d), Minor Capital Projects, formula driven, for what purpose is it? Well, generally, to address structural problems in schools. The work undertaken under this program involves correction to failing structural components of school buildings. Typical projects include the following: foundation upgrading, including underpinning; upgrading roof structural members; correcting glue-laminated beam deficiencies. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) could relate to a lot of those items.

Secondly, paying out projects with a value of less than \$20,000—now, the member wants the detail, and as I say, this is formula driven. Winnipeg School Division No. 1, of the \$4.4 million has by formula—it is an allocation. Winnipeg School Division, their share by way of allocation is \$767,542. St. James Assiniboia is \$235,614, and on and on and on.

I know the member for Dauphin would love to know that Dauphin-Ochre 33 will have allocated \$61,575. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if you add up the 56 divisions and districts, and one comes to a total of \$4.4 million, the amount printed.

Mr. Plohman: First of all, the minister is now catching on a bit, and we can go a little further on that. Now, in so far as the major capital, can the minister tell us what is being allocated under major capital for this coming year, and the amount of money for debt servicing by project and by division.

If he could, he could just table that list. We do not need him to go into a long dissertation of reading to prove that he can read at a Grade 8 level or a Grade 12 level, or whatever it might be. That is not the point here.

What we want is to have the list tabled so that we can look at it at our leisure to determine the priorities of the government. We also would like to see the projects, the minor capital projects that have been allocated. Is it just in dollars by formula? Is it by need? Has this formula changed? Is it the same as has been traditional over the last 10 years, or has there been a change in the formula for allocating minor capital?

Those are the questions I would like to pose to the minister right now. The major capital right now I think is very important, and the minister should attempt to table the major capital projects that are being undertaken.

Mr. Manness: Well, the member knows fully well that any information I impart as to what letters have gone out to school divisions indicating that their major project had been considered as capital plan has no impact on the '94-95 budget. This is all borrowed money with no impact again on the '94-95 budget. I have sent out some letters to divisions indicating there is an expectation that we will enter into final discussions with respect to some facility within their school division.

Those are part of the public record in the sense that I have sent those letters out to those school divisions. I will give examples of them because I am in no position to lay out the full plan. I mean, this is an allocation of global funding that has no

impact whatsoever on the '94-95 budget. It is notional only.

The Treasury Board of the day goes through every one of these projects one by one, and the Minister of Finance is put on a global budget over which the Treasury Board and department cannot exceed.

The member should know that a letter has gone out to St. Vital with respect to a new K to 6 school, Ashworth, which, when it proceeds, will have an estimated cost of \$2.5 million. Now, that is not a new issue. I think Ashworth was discussed in some context a year ago. So this letter has gone out.

Mr. Plohman: It is nice that the minister has chosen one example from St. Vital to illustrate or to answer the questions that he feels may be forthcoming. What I would like to see then if the minister could provide a list of government intent and decisions made by this minister. It is not a Treasury Board decision. The minister says they could overrule him.

If he sends a letter saying that he intends to proceed further to construction for a school to seek Treasury Board approval, I assume that this is what the letters are saying or what precisely are the letters saying that he is sending out? What kind of information is he providing to the school divisions?

I am sure he would not say that he intends to seek Treasury Board approval because then, in fact, it puts the onus on Treasury Board to be blamed if, in fact, it is not proceeded with, and that is an unfair kind of connotation to put on Treasury Board.

* (2140)

Mr. Manness: I will read out the letter that goes when an award or a final decision is made.

Here is a letter dated—[interjection] Well, I will talk about, when I say final, and when I say final, it is a selected point. Whether or not ultimately the final go is put into place to begin to pour concrete, that is still another decision.

I wrote, as of May 13, to Mrs. Marilyn Seguire [phonetic], chair of the board of the St. Vital School Division No. 6, 900 St. Mary's Road.

"Dear Mrs. Seguire [phonetic]: Re: The New Ecole Ashworth School. On August 21, '92, your school division was granted authority to design a new Ecole Ashworth School. That authority was contingent upon formal approval being granted at such time that the necessary capital funding had been provided. Upon the recommendation of the Public Schools Finance Board, I am pleased to inform you that the project is thereby formally approved. This approval is subject to the terms and conditions of the award as outlined in the document and guidelines provided with the granting of the design authority. I wish your division well in the successful completion of the project."

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is an awards letter, still conditional, semiconditional on some things happening, but saying that there is money that has now been allocated, that Treasury Board has now, in the sense that the final conditions are all met, we will have money in place to proceed with the building of this school.

I will not provide the total list of those. I will not because, of course, there may be some other conditions. All of these projects are along various stages, and to provide a whole list and to have them made public is, in essence, saying to the community, well, for sure you have got your school. Well, that is not the case; that is not the case, and I will not put myself in the position or put the government in that position.

That is why these are taken throughout the year. Some of them will fall—some of them you expect the building to occur in this year, it does not happen because of some planning irregularity, some other difficulty that arises and it finds itself moving into a year hence.

That is the process that has been in place for many years, long before this government came into place, and that is the process that we continue to follow.

Mr. Plohman: Well, I want to assure the minister that by tabling the list of the letters that he sent out and the essence of what has been approved in those letters will not be saying, you got your school, any more definitively than those letters themselves.

They are all subject to the same conditions. We understand that.

We can assure the minister that he is not going to be making any further decisions than he already has made by providing this information to this committee, simply providing a list of those that have had the letters and the substance of those letters, subject, of course, to all of the conditions contained in those letters. Nothing has changed. So why can the minister not do that?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member is right, nothing has changed. I am following the same policy that has been in place, inherited from the NDP government.

Mr. Plohman: So I can assure the minister that he would not be saying by providing that list to this committee that there would be anything more definite as to these projects going ahead, that we would be saying, in his words, you got your school, just simply because he tabled this list before the Legislative committee.

That is not what we are attempting to do here in forcing the minister's hand. We are not forcing him to make a commitment that is irrevocable any more than the commitment he has already made. We just want to have the list of projects that the minister intends to bring forward to Treasury Board.

Now, if he cannot do that, I think he can at least provide a list of all of the approvals that did go forward to Treasury Board and, therefore, are final for '93-94. That money is being spent in this \$14,714,000; we have a right to know what that is.

Mr. Manness: The member is dead wrong on that. The presentation that may be made to Treasury Board has absolutely nothing to do with the \$14.7 million. There will not be a dollar impact on the '94-95 budget with respect to the major capital decisions that are made by this government.

Mr. Plohman: I wish the minister's mind would not wander. I was talking about '93-94 approvals. Now he referenced '94-95 again. I had asked for a list of those intended for '94-95, the minister says, well, I cannot give those. So I am saying, okay, if you do not want to give us this year's, give us last

year's approvals, final approvals through Treasury Board.

Mr. Manness: We will attempt to provide what not only we committed to but actually did in '93-94, because that does have some bearing on the \$14 million. We will try and provide that information, because that is done throughout the province.

Mr. Plohman: I want to leave on the record that we believe the minister has an obligation to provide to this committee the government's intentions for the coming year as well. Just like the Highways program, when the Minister of Highways tables that program in the Legislature, if he ever will this year, it is still subject to Treasury Board approval. When those projects are announced, it is not final in that there is no further decisions.

Clearly, the Treasury Board has to make the final decisions, but that intent is there and it does not hurt the government to do it. It announces the intent, the plan. That is what I am asking the minister to do here in Education with the capital program.

Mr. Manness: As the member is fully aware, he tries to draw the parallel, but all of the expenditures within the area of Highways are all current account expenditures. They are treated completely differently, in an accounting sense, than major capital in the public schools.

Mr. Plohman: Well, the minister should be aware that that is not quite true. There are a lot more approvals made than there is money to spend in any given year. The projects are announced even though they will not all be done in that particular year. It is the government's intent on the Highways program.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I am really having an awful hard time listening here. Could I ask the honourable members to just tone it down two or three octaves.

Mr. Manness: The member is talking about process. He is not talking about accounting procedures. They are two different things, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I know there are more Highways projects listed than there is money to do.

That is not the difference here. The difference here is purely to do with current accounting versus putting into place amortization schedules, as is the case with major capital under the Public Schools Finance Board.

Mr. Plohman: The minister does not have to remind me that these projects are not paid for in the current year, they are amortized, I realize that. That should not make any difference insofar as the reporting. It is the responsibility of the minister to reveal what his plans are as minister and what the government's plans are, especially since he has already done the PR job of getting the letter out saying your project has been approved.

A compilation of those letters and projects should quite easily and properly be laid before this committee. If it has not been asked before, that is not my fault. It is something we are asking for and it is a legitimate request.

Mr. Manness: Well, maybe it is the only one that has been decided at this point in time. So the member will have to be—I mean, we are at this point in time when we are making these decisions. I do not have an awful lot to provide in additional information.

* (2150)

Mr. Plohman: Well, then, the minister has given a commitment to provide last year's. Let us move on to the buses. I had a question there I raised with the minister earlier; 95 to 100 school buses, is this a typical number? Has there been lesser amounts spent in this area for replacement of buses this year? Has it been steadily declining over the last four, five years? If so, can the minister provide some information on the amount spent on school bus replacement and also a listing of where these buses have been allocated, to which school divisions?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the total spent, from two sources, the amount that we are addressing here by way of budget plus the amount that comes from education support levy, the part that is off the record or off the balance sheet, the sum total of those two areas is exactly the same as last year.

Mr. Plohman: The minister is not very forthcoming. Could he go back? If he does not have it right in front of him, provide us with a listing of the replacement policy for school buses and the amounts allocated over the last six years.

Mr. Manness: Yes, we will endeavour to try and provide that historic information.

Mr. Plohman: Does the minister have a listing of where these buses were allocated for this year?

Mr. Manness: That would have been within the support to public schools. I do not have that with me, but I will try to find that out too.

Mr. Plohman: Can the minister provide any detail on the minor capital projects, other than the amount per division? Can he give a detail as to which projects got what or anything like that?

Mr. Manness: No, this is by formula, and it is what the division can spend up to if it warrants, if they have projects that warrant that expenditure.

Mr. Plohman: Does the minister have a request to replace or rebuild, refurbish Greenway School in Winnipeg No. 1?

Mr. Manness: The Public Schools Finance Board has now finalized its assessment and the process there about Greenway School, and it will be finalizing its recommendation and presenting it to me in the next two weeks.

Mr. Plohman: So the minister has no policy or preference as to how to proceed with Greenway School, whether it be by replacement or upgrading or refurbishing of the existing facility?

Mr. Manness: Well, no hard preference. We left that with the school division for the best part of the year and asked them to make a decision. I think they finally have and now Public Schools Finance Board is taking that into account in forwarding a recommendation to me.

Mr. Plohman: Is it the minister's intent to give favourable consideration to this project in this particular school year, keeping in mind that this has been a long-running request, and one that is long overdue.

Mr. Manness: We have set aside, since '92-93, several million dollars in support of this project.

Mr. Plohman: Well, I will pass the questioning over to another member. I just want to confirm with the minister then that we will get a listing from the minister of the projects approved for the '93-94 calendar year for the capital program, major capital projects, and as well the destination and allocation of the school buses approved for the present year?

Mr. Manness: Correct.

Mr. Plohman: The minister has confirmed those two requests. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would ask the minister in terms of the process, the school division that wants to be able to get a new school built or major capital expenditures done on their particular facilities, what the actual process is. I understand, for example, that there is a request—and I do not know if it is applicable to all of the school divisions—but to submit five-year capital plans.

Mr. Manness: The process is as follows. Firstly, the project is requested by a school division, and the Public Schools Finance Board project leader conducts the initial assessment of request and recommends, or does not recommend, the project for inclusion in the budget. Two, if recommended following an assessment, the project then is included in the budget for the Treasury Board approval.

Following Treasury Board budget approval, the project leader conducts final assessment of the project and recommends to Public Schools Finance Board that ministerial award be prepared. Ministerial award authorizes school division to hire an architect to prepare plans for approval by the Public Schools Finance Board.

Sketch plans are received by a project leader, and a report is submitted to the Public Schools Finance Board approving the plans and authorizing the school division to proceed to working drawing stage. The school division then submits working drawings, and the project leader prepares a report to the Public Schools Finance Board for approval of plans and authorizing the division to tender project.

The school division sends tender results to the Public Schools Finance Board for approval. Public Schools Finance Board authorizes support of low bid or formula support, and then ultimately we come to the ninth step, the building of a new school or addition begins.

Mr. Lamoureux: Is there any requirement to submit five-year capital plans from school divisions?

Mr. Manness: Every year.

Mr. Lamoureux: Those five-year capital plans, is that public information? For example, if we were wanting to get a copy of Winnipeg 1, in particular, five-year capital plan, can we in fact receive it?

Mr. Manness: Not from us. It is proprietary information that is the ownership of the school division. So if the member wants to obtain it from the school division, by all means.

Mr. Lamoureux: So if I was to request from the minister if Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has requested an additional high school or junior high to be built somewhere in the northwest corner of the city, he would not be able to respond to that?

Mr. Manness: No, I would think that that would be information that should be gleaned from Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

Mr. Lamoureux: I know I have made reference in the past of the Minister of Education being somewhat selective in terms of what he classified as privileged information, and I do not necessarily want to pursue the whole question of privileged information, but I do believe that it is, in fact, somewhat appropriate to ask the Minister of Education, and so I will ask now. Has there been a request from Winnipeg School Division No. 1 to build a post-secondary or junior high school in the area?

Mr. Manness: I cannot answer that question and I will not answer that question. I do not know why the member would not ask Winnipeg School Division No. 1 that question. That is public information, but it should be released by Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and not the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: I do not plan to spend too much time on here, but I would like to indicate to the Minister of Education that I have formally asked this question in the past of Ministers of Education, and I have found that I have received the answers.

I find it unfortunate that the current minister uses what he believes is privileged information, which is actually public information, and the public does have a right to know. As the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) just pointed out, we do have a right to ask that particular question. Unfortunately, the current minister does not feel that he has the ability to be able to give out that sort of information.

I do feel a bit of the frustration that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) has expressed with respect to not being able to receive some of the information with reference to capital expenditures.

So having said that, I am not going to continue to ask the minister questions on this particular line, so we could go on to the next.

* (2200)

Mr. Manness: I will try to review the policy for another year.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I happen to represent a community that has been the fastest-growing town for the last three years running, and that is the town of Stonewall.

Even though we did have an expansion in the elementary school in 1992, with the number of homes being built in the area in the last two years, I think some 70 new houses last year, and a lot of young families moving into that area, I know that the Interlake School Division has applied to the Public Schools Finance Board for an expansion to their school or for a new school and the Public Schools Finance Board has done an assessment on the area.

Have you any indication as to when and what might be forthcoming in the capital budget for Stonewall?

Mr. Manness: Stonewall?

Mr. Helwer: Yes.

Mr. Manness: Well, we cannot promise anything at all, but we are very keenly aware of the tremendous increase in student population in the

Stonewall area. We know we are doing and are going to be doing an assessment of the Bobby Bend Collegiate. So there are certain allocations, and I cannot share with the member the amount that has been set aside for '94-95 in the event that some solution can be found to the overcrowding problem that obviously exists.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 7. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) School Divisions.

Mr. Lamoureux: I wonder if the Minister of Education can tell me if they are doing an assessment of overpopulation in other areas of the province?

Mr. Manness: Most definitely, yes. We are assessing all areas of the province.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the Minister of Education give us some sort of indication of whether or not there is a need for an additional junior high or high school out in the northwestern corner of the city where over the last few years we have seen a number of elementary schools built? Does he foresee that there is going to be a need for a high school or junior high?

Mr. Manness: We are well aware that there have been a large number of elementary schools built in the northwest quadrant of the city, and obviously where there are many elementary schools built there is going to have to be a place for these students to attend. So we are well aware of the numbers that are building at a secondary stage within that district of the city.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 7. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) School Divisions \$24,501,600—pass; 7.(b) Universities \$10,566,500—pass; 7.(c) Community Colleges, \$2,120,600—pass.

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$37,188,700 for Education and Training for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995—pass.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Education is item 1.(a)(1), the Minister's Salary. At this point we request that

the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this item.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Education is item 16.1 1.(a) the Minister's Salary. At this point we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this item.

16.1 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$20,600. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to get a couple of things on the record before we pass this particular line.

First of all, I would like to pursue the blueprint that the minister has talked about, get some sort of indication when we will, in fact, be receiving that. He has indicated in the past that it should be sometime very soon. He has implied in the past that it will be in the month of June.

I would like to get some sort of a confirmation in terms of when this minister, how things are going, even over the last week and a half since we have been in Education, when we started to talk about Education Reform. The minister has been very, very strong in implying that we will be receiving it in the month of June. I am wondering if he can give the committee an assurance that nothing is out there that is going to be preventing that report from being tabled this month.

Mr. Manness: The target is mine. Again, I want to review the process; the target is mine. I am trying to make public a document by the end of June. If it is available the end of June, I would be overjoyed.

Though that is my target, there is no way I would indicate that it will be blessed by all of the partners within Education. Therefore, accordingly, there is a fair amount of work yet to do.

I will be meeting with the partners again tomorrow morning going over another two issues that are very important to that whole process. I say it will require yet another four or five meetings with those whom I have been meeting with on a constant basis over the course of the last several months. Then it will take a little bit of writing, so we have an awful lot of work to do to meet that target.

Mr. Lamoureux: I believe that there is a significant level of expectation that that report would be coming down sometime in the month of June. The Minister of Education himself is the one that has been going out and has made numerous comments to that effect.

I think that there will be a considerable amount of disappointment if, in fact, the minister chooses to wait until after June, and that is what I believe. That is what I sincerely believe will be the case, that if it is unable to come down, that the minister has chosen to wait.

The other report that the minister has made reference to is the one dealing with ACCESS, and again I would ask the same question of the Minister of Education. Will he be tabling that report in June?

Mr. Manness: I fully expect to be tabling that report in June, but the member uses his words incorrectly when he says I may choose not to have the other one ready. I am doing everything I can. Indeed, other partners would tell the member this, to try and have it ready. So the member may speculate that I am trying to withhold the reform blueprint, but nothing could be further from the truth. I want it out more so than any member of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am not entirely convinced that that is, in fact, the case. I had the opportunity to get a copy of Hansard. The one afternoon or evening, whenever it was when we had moved a motion that Education be deferred until after ACCESS, and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) remembers. We all remember that one.

I guess I was somewhat disappointed in terms of how it turned out. I still believe that had Education been able to be postponed until after the ACCESS report was tabled that, in fact, we could have asked a number of additional questions and had a better level of debate on that particular issue.

I would also argue that there would likely have been a better opportunity to talk about Education Reform. I believe even in the minister's opening remarks that he made reference to to that.

I did want to stress that this being the first time that I have gone through the Education Estimates

that I myself have learned something from it and do very much appreciate the opportunity to be able to sit and listen in on Education and ask questions. Hopefully, next year, whatever end of the table it might be at, one will be able to continue the discussions on Education, and that is not necessarily to say that we would even be in the room, anyone would necessarily be in the room.

* (2210)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have enjoyed the Education Estimates and would thank you for patience.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass?

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, just briefly, we have said most of the things that we want to say to the minister and asked him the questions that we wanted to ask within the time that we had.

My colleagues and I have raised concerns about inequitable funding for the public school system. We feel the minister has been unfair in his treatment of divisions like Transcona-Springfield, Lord Selkirk School Division, Mystery Lake School Division in Thompson, certainly Evergreen School Division, that have been hard hit as a result of the minister's and the government's unilaterally imposed decisions to cap school divisions, and at the same cutting the funding to those school divisions in a very significant way over the last two years.

Some of them caught in this web as a result of two consecutive cuts are operating at pre-1990 funding levels insofar as the public school is concerned, while other schools have received continuous increases from the minister, even during this period at higher than inflation. It is an inequitable funding mechanism, as it has manifested itself over the last couple of years as a result of the minister's artificially imposed caps and funding cuts.

Therefore, it has been unfair for many, and we have raised this with the minister, not in terms of the dollars necessarily, but certainly, and we do question the minister's and the government's priorities with regard to public schools in this province in terms of priorities with regard to all

other expenditures in government, but we do question even more seriously its commitment to fairness amongst divisions across this province.

We do not want the minister either to impose a privatized version of the public school system. We are waiting for the reports, the blueprint that the minister talks about on the public school system. He has created a great deal of expectation about what is in it. I am sure he will not disappoint people when he finally brings it forward. He has a great deal of pressure on him to bring forward a balanced document, and I hope that he will not forget his responsibilities to all who are impacted by the public education system, least of all the children.

We do not want him to put in place in the public school system a privatized version, as I said, that would see corporations taking charge, as the Fraser Institute would have, or a voucher system. We would see schools competing against each other for students in a way that would be harmful and destructive. We hope that the minister will have thrown out those kinds of Conservative versions of reform to the public school system, and the business influence in that way ensures that the public school system is there for all of the students in the province, for everyone throughout the province.

We are deeply concerned about the minister's directions in the kinds of things that he is liable to adopt. We hope that his talks with various partners in education and some of the advice he received at this table will assist him in ensuring that he tries to reflect the views of all Manitobans in a balanced way when he brings that forward. That is what we are calling on the minister to do. We hope that we will see that document so that there is some direction, that the people of Manitoba will have an idea where this government intends to go, so that they can judge that document when they have an opportunity to do so in the next election.

I guess it is too much to expect that the minister will, in any way, try to redress the inequities that have taken place that we have seen in the public school system as a result of his decisions as Minister of Finance and then again as Minister of

Education. If he does have an opportunity to bring down or to announce one additional year of funding levels for the public school system in this province, we hope that it will reflect some degree of equity that was not present over the last two years.

Surely the minister does not want to go further in the direction he has gone over the last couple of years in terms of the harm that it has thrust upon the public school system in this province, especially in some school divisions where they have seen his cuts two years in a row.

We ask the minister to provide equitable and positive support to the public school system in the years ahead, if he has that opportunity. We hope he does not have that opportunity. Of course, as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) said, he will be perhaps not talking to this minister next time that he has the opportunity to sit in Estimates, and we hope that, of course, the New Democrats will have an opportunity to once again influence education in a positive way after the next election and to undo some of the mess created by these Conservatives.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are not going to move to reduce the Minister's Salary to 50 cents or a dollar or perhaps some other modest figure. We think the minister should have voluntarily taken that cut to make a contribution from his ministerial salary to show that he, in fact, is willing to make a sacrifice to assist the school system in this province as a result of his cuts. Since he has not done that, we will leave that with his conscience.

Ms. Friesen: I would just like to take a few minutes to sum up some of the issues we have dealt with in post-secondary education and to remind the minister of some of the principles that have indeed divided us and continue to divide us. The first of these, I think, is what seems to be a general drift in the post-secondary area. The government, for the first three years of its incumbency, talked of having a university review. Eventually, two years after they had announced it, they appointed a particular type of university review committee which gave them a market-driven type of analysis of post-secondary education and one which, in

particular, dealt with the language of competition, the language of the market and seems, in my view, to have lost track of the language of learning and of scholarship.

I found nothing in the minister's answers, although I gave him a number of opportunities to do so, which would give me some comfort that there is a sense of the international and research role of universities.

The general drift, I think, continues in other areas. The absence after six years now of a labour force development strategy I think is very significant. It is one I have raised with every Minister of Education, and we have seen a number in the course of this government's incumbency. The labour force development strategy was something which even the Tory federal government had made some movements towards, although Manitoba had been one of the least enthusiastic about such a move, in spite of the fact its own STAC report, as it calls it, the Mauro report, I think, as it could also be called, had recommended a labour force development strategy for Manitoba. After six years, we do not have one, and we now have a minister who claims that this is all part of the grand design, and now it is inappropriate to bring forward a labour force development strategy because, of course, the federal government might have some ideas of its own.

Stemming from that labour force development strategy in the STAC report were the plans for community planning committees, which were a sensible step, at least in theory, but it is not something which this government is able to take any advantage of, because it has not got the basic strategies in place that would enable that to have some use.

* (2220)

In the area of adult basic education, I gave the minister a number of opportunities on two different lines to talk about any plans that the government might have for the future direction of adult basic education. I meant this in the context of where adults learn best, what the role of the community should be in this, what the role of our

public institutions should be, and again, in spite of having promised over a number of years to have a policy in place on adult basic education, the minister seems singularly unable or unwilling to put anything on the record at this stage of his ministry on a policy of adult basic education. Again, referring to possible plans that the new federal government might possibly have for adult basic education and, hence, not the appropriate time to come forward with those kinds of promised plans.

In the area of ACCESS, we had anticipated a report, indeed asked for it formally by a process of access to freedom of information. The absence of that report on ACCESS I think has dogged our path throughout these Estimates. It would have been useful for the minister to have shared that information with us and, I think, probably to his benefit and to the benefit of the process of Estimates generally. So, again, another area where there might have been some idea of the general approach of the government, but no evidence forthcoming in this area.

I think finally the research policies that I asked the minister to discuss to give some idea of where the government believes that research should be going and how it intends those links to be made across the industrial strategies of the government and the research policies of universities and community colleges, indeed, and of private industry, and yet the minister seemed extremely reluctant to put any general policies or plans for those linkages to be made on the record at this time, in spite of the fact that the Roblin commission had commissioned a particular report on that and one might have anticipated that the government had been thinking of some research policies and connections and articulations resulting from that.

So that general drift, I think, was quite evident and the reluctance to indicate any kind of planning, indeed, a mockery of the term on the part of this minister, which certainly surprised me.

Two or three other areas I think divided us throughout the Estimates. One, of course, was ACCESS education, and we have fundamentally

opposed the cuts that the minister has made. We have opposed them because the minister has not supplied us with the information that he had at his disposal, first of all, and secondly, because I think the way in which the cuts have been imposed have and will, if the minister remains committed to that policy, brought inequities into the program and will create hardships and, indeed, the elimination of some students from that program.

It is something I tried to explain to the minister over and over again, sometimes in the words of the students, sometimes in my own words, trying to indicate to him that what he had done, and a previous minister had done, had in fact made the federal government the gatekeepers of a distinctive provincial program, that the legislation or the requirements now for coming into ACCESS, if you are not band funded, are those of the federal program.

That does not lead to the kind of ACCESS program that we had in Manitoba. It was a program that was both nationally and internationally known. It was one that filled a very important need in the educational future of Manitoba and one I think which most Manitobans were very proud of.

We believe that that need still exists and we believe that there is a need for a Manitoba program to continue in that area. We reject I think the argument of the minister that all Manitobans are equal in this. They are clearly not. The ACCESS programs I think have shown, however, that it is possible to redistribute some of that equality and some of that access to the post-secondary education, which increasingly is vital to both the aboriginal community and to individuals in the kind of global economy that has been created in the recent past.

A third area that we differed over, of course, was Workforce 2000, and in spite of the minister's attempts to suggest that our party is opposed to work-based education, that is not the case. Our opposition has been based upon two areas, and that is the accountability of this particular program. I have emphasized over and over again through questioning on individual cases, through receiving answers from the minister, such as he is only

prepared to give me 10 answers per week at the rate of which over five years we might have an indication of what this Workforce 2000 program has indeed done over the past three years.

We have asked for the annual report that the Auditor has also asked for, and if that annual report had been available we might have in fact accepted some level of accountability on the part of the government for Workforce 2000.

So the issue of accountability, particularly in curriculum, in teaching levels and in access to those public education dollars, which in fact have been transferred to the employer and to the workplace, are things that we still hold very important and very dear and, I think, would still continue to ask the minister for that kind of accountability.

In the colleges, as the minister has admitted, they were by design, I think he said: By design the colleges were shrunk, the colleges were reduced, the programs were reduced by design of this government. That is not something that other Ministers of Education have admitted. They tended to surround their decision and their reductions with all sorts of flowery language of commitment and function and governance and independence, but this minister is very clear that by design those colleges were reduced some years ago, and of course they were.

The 3.3 percent increase that has been applied to colleges in this year of course must be seen in that context. What we have, in fact, and what Roblin responded to very clearly, was a somewhat smaller college sector than in fact we had three to four years ago. He indicated that we move to a doubling of college places, that is, from the 900 college graduates in the two-year diploma programs, that is from 950 this year to 1,800, and I think he put on it a goal of five years. I did not get the sense from this minister that that was his particular agenda.

What we are into I think in community colleges, as we are in Workforce 2000, is short-term planning. Again, that is an area that gives me some concern. Yes, there are short-term courses which are needed; yes, there are work-based courses which are needed; yes, there is a greater flexibility

in some areas of education which is needed, but government itself must be responsible for the longer-term planning in education and for education dollars.

It must be aware that education has to respond to the needs, not just of the employed, but of the unemployed. As the unemployed numbers grow in Manitoba, as youth unemployment especially grows, the government must respond to those long-term plans for those particular sections. Neither Workforce 2000 nor the market-driven programs of the colleges respond to that very precise need and, indeed, I would say tragic situation in parts of our community.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, with that I will finish. I think the areas that divide us are clear. I would like to thank the minister for a relatively civil process of Estimates, and particularly to thank the minister—[interjection] Relatively civil, yes, it was relatively civil. I would like to thank the minister's staff for their attention and the long hours that they have also put in. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,522,400 for Education and Training, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

This completes the Department of Education and Training. As previously agreed by the House, upon completion of the Department of Education and Training, this section of the Committee of Supply would continue with the Estimates of Agriculture, which the committee started last week.

Is the committee ready to start the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, or shall we briefly recess to allow the changeover of staff and critics? Did you want a recess, or do you want to go right into it? Right into it, okay. When the committee last was considering the Department of Agriculture, it was on item 2.(a), page 15.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

AGRICULTURE

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Will the committee please come to order.

When the Committee of Supply last was considering the Department of Agriculture, it was on item 2.(a).

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, when we were last in the Estimates we were talking about the Manitoba Crop Insurance, and the minister had indicated that of the recommendations that were made to the Crop Insurance Review, a large percentage, I believe he said about 65 percent of the recommendations that were made in the Crop Insurance Review were implemented.

I wonder if the minister could table for us which of the recommendations have been implemented. I do not expect him to read all of them into the record, but if he could provide that for us, not necessarily today, we would appreciate it.

* (2230)

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Firstly, we are joined by another senior official from the Crop Insurance Corporation. Mr. Henry Dribnenky, Director of Finance and Administration, joins us today.

I am advised by the manager of the Crop Insurance, Mr. Brian Manning, that we would be more than prepared to submit a full list of those specific recommendations that have been implemented. I think there are some that fall in the category of being in the process of implementation, as well as those that are still being considered for further review and have not been acted upon.

But when next this committee meets, we would undertake to provide that list for the honourable member.

Ms. Wowchuk: One of the areas under the Crop Insurance that was causing some concern, and I wonder whether that has been addressed, is the policy of families splitting crops. I think in particular of a case in southern Manitoba where one spouse was not allowed to get crop insurance,

and I have lost her name for the moment, but I wonder what has been done in that area, if there has been any changes made or what regulations are in place to allow couples who consider themselves independent operations to take out crop insurance.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am advised that following some intensive research involving quite a full and complete questionnaire that provides areas very germane to the question such as ownership of land, machinery, storage, management, finance and marketing—these questions have been developed, in consultation, I might add, with the Human Rights Commission. We are the only province, Manitoba, who has done that. The committee reviews the applications using a rating system that weighs the scores based on established criteria and since '91 we have, in fact, on a number of occasions provided separated crop insurance coverages.

We are advised that Saskatchewan and Alberta are looking at our model in this context as to the eligibility question for the kind of circumstances the member refers to.

Ms. Wowchuk: In that same review, was that same criteria used when you were looking at claims or policies for a father-son operation or for a father-daughter operation? Do they have to follow the same criteria, and in that criteria, has it resulted in many claims that have been cancelled, where people have had to take joint policies?

Mr. Enns: I am advised that there have been a number of amalgamations taking place, 720, for instance in '91; 60 in '92; 67 in '93; 15 in '94. There have been a total of 862 amalgamated over the past four years. The '94 applications, that is the coming crop year, have not been reviewed at this point in time yet.

Ms. Wowchuk: On that I wonder, does this make it by combining the insurances—and I think more about when a young farmer is getting started and trying to establish his own operation and he has to take his crop insurance together with his father, for example, because they are using the same equipment and same operations. Does this make it more difficult for him or her to establish themselves as an independent farmer, or does this

have any implications on their loans by being forced to take a joint insurance policy?

Mr. Enns: I think the honourable member would be generally aware that in essence the data and the basis on which premiums are based are essentially land based, of course, in terms of crop types and the experience that the corporation has and the operators of that farmland, the father in this case, have had over the past number of years. The division of that, the son of that would be the recipient of that good experience or, indeed, that bad experience.

In other words, I think the corporation is essentially in the insurance business. It attempts, on the basis of the regulations and accumulated data collected on those types of crop districts, to essentially provide a supportable actuarially correct premium.

What we in Manitoba have done, I believe, and I indicate again, in advance quite frankly of other jurisdictions, notably Saskatchewan and Alberta to whom we are most often and frequently compared, we have taken a lead in acknowledging the generational changes and/or indeed the different separations, arrangements that a farmer may have with a spouse or the different responsibilities that the combined farm family shares and how they wish to manage or order their affairs with respect to their relationship to the Crop Insurance Corporation.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that there were a high number of policies that were amalgamated, and he mentioned the Human Rights Commission. I know of one case, in particular, that has gone to the Human Rights Commission to challenge this.

Have there been others who have challenged? I guess I refer to the one whose name, as I indicated earlier, slips me, but that went to the Human Rights Commission and whether that has been settled or whether that is still in court?

Mr. Enns: Staff of the corporation advise me that there is indeed one case still pending; in other words, has not been resolved. It is currently before the courts, but all other claims have been resolved.

* (2240)

Ms. Wowchuk: On the occasion when policies are being amalgamated and the people involved do not agree with the process, what is the appeal process for them?

Mr. Enns: Any individual has the right to appeal. In all cases, the producers may request a review of the committee's decision by the MCIC board of directors.

Even from my brief experience, since coming back to the ministry, I am aware that the board deals fairly regularly with a significant range of appeals, not just on this matter, but there can be appeals simply on the adjudication of a particular claim, and every producer has the opportunity and my experience is avails themselves of that opportunity on a fairly regular basis to appeal directly to the board of directors, who then formally have an opportunity of reviewing the corporation's decisions with respect to the individual producers.

I suspect that in the majority of instances, the actions of the corporation's personnel in dealing with the claim are upheld, but I am also aware that there have been occasions where the board of directors in their wisdom, upon further review of the specifics of an individual case, have, in fact, amended or changed the original decisions made by the corporation.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I want to go on to the Gross Revenue Insurance program and talk about a few issues that have been brought to my attention by farmers.

One of the issues that seems to be a concern for farmers is when the premiums are due but farmers know that they have a payment coming—and I am sure they have raised this with the corporation many times—some of them feel they should not have to pay their premium, even though there is a premium owing, if there is money coming to them, say, from the previous year—a payment is in progress of coming to them.

Is there any way that this can be worked out to simplify things for farmers to help them with their cash flow, because there are times when that has happened, when there is a payment coming to the farmers and also premiums due?

Mr. Enns: Just to make sure I understand your question fully, you are suggesting that the premium due would be deducted at source, if you like, from the benefits accruing to that particular account.

Ms. Wowchuk: That is the suggestion that has been made by farmers, yes.

Mr. Enns: I am advised that we are bound by regulations that bind us to this federal-provincial program to charge an interest charge when the due date is not met. I am further advised that we can and do deduct that payment, but the interest is charged. I think that is probably the point of aggravation on the part of some of the farmers that the honourable member for Swan River is in contact with.

I am further advised that we have more flexibility under our regular crop insurance program, where we have a greater control of the mechanics of how we can adjust our payments or collect our premiums and in fact do not follow that same policy with the regular crop insurance program.

I would ask members of the staff to take the member's question. These are possible refinements that could be taken up with the federal authorities. The way the agreement now stands, we are required by law or by the contractual arrangement that we have entered into with the federal government to demand payment on the premium deadline date, which is October 31.

We are in the process, as the member will appreciate, in ongoing discussions with GRIP officials. There is the national GRIP committee meeting in Ottawa to perhaps extend that premium deadline date to December 31, which would be a help in the sense that this would obviate the problem in the sense that by that time we have our interim or our first payment in the hands of the producer, and that situation would not arise. That is the position that is being strongly supported by Manitoba in this meeting that I refer to that is taking place next week in Ottawa. So I accept the member's comments as being an improvement on the current system, and we are striving to bring that about.

I think simply the change of the deadline date would be helpful in the particular matter that she raises, from October 31, particularly as our experience has been in the last few harvests. The honourable member would appreciate that Crop Insurance cannot really begin to work on its adjustments and payment procedures until the final data on the crop is in. An October 31 deadline leaves the administrators of the GRIP program and indeed our own crop insurance program not all that much time. Extending the deadline date to December 31, the end of the year, would be helpful to the administrators of the programs, and I think would probably obviate—would address the particular issue that the member raises.

* (2250)

Ms. Wowchuk: Indeed, that probably would be very helpful because, as the minister indicated, October 31 is early for the corporation with their bookwork. It is also early for farmers at many times, particularly in difficult years. Lots of times they are too busy harvesting, and they have not had a chance to move any of that crop. So I think an extension to December 31 would be very helpful.

Another suggestion might be, since you are going to these meetings and taking different suggestions forward, has any consideration been given to having the premiums deducted at the point of sale, rather than having the farmers—so that when the crop is sold a deduction is made right at the elevator? Has any consideration been given to that? What are the minister's thoughts on that, having the payment come in through that angle?

Mr. Enns: The answer is no. I will wait for some further advice from staff, but I think the member should appreciate that it is not appropriate to assume that all the grain is delivered to a central agency like the elevator system; if it were the case, that possibly could be considered. Significant amounts of grain, of course, are moved farmer to farmer and other private arrangements, particularly in the kind of years like we have just had, where we have had all too much of a lower quality feed grains harvested as a result of the cropping conditions that really put the test of ingenuity to many of our producers to find markets

wherever they could find them. This kind of multiplicity of places where grain was moved would make it difficult to, by regulation, in effect put a checkoff mechanism into place, if you like, that would accommodate the member's request.

Ms. Wowchuk: That is a fair comment, I think. If it could work, if there was a way to handle it, it would probably be easier for the producers when they sold their grain if a certain percentage was taken off, deducted in a checkoff way. I can appreciate, as the minister has indicated, the last couple of years a lot of grain has been channelled through different avenues.

Continuing on with the Gross Revenue Insurance Plan, when the program was implemented, it was a new program and probably lots of difficulty—and I understand that there was a lot of auditing done. I believe that has been refined. Can we have some information as to the number of audits that were done? I guess I am looking at whether there were a lot of discrepancies in the figures that had to be followed up on and just a general overview of how the corporation feels the audits went. Were there a lot of errors in the first round, and as we progressed through the other years, have we seen an improvement and less need for the number of audits? Also, how were the people chosen to be audited? One of the questions that comes up is—and I think of a particular farmer who had been audited several times. So just a general overview of how the audits are conducted and what the results have been.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the audit samples are chosen randomly. I am aware that system in itself is being reviewed, because it is possible under random choice of the same names coming up year after year. In fact, that has happened on some occasions. Understandably, that has caused some concern by the producer who is in every way complying with the regulations and the audit does not really raise any alarm bells within the corporation that that particular farm should be audited two or three or four times in a row, but that is possible when you have a random selection. The corporation has reviewed that process.

To answer the member's question, it is random. It is also of note that the 1991 audit report shows that the average yield for all clients in the random sample was only 0.84 percent lower on the audit as compared to the declared yields. So even the audits show a discrepancy of less than 1 percent.

I appreciate the member for Swan River's extensive agricultural background, and I say that sincerely. She will, as I find it, quite frankly, somewhat amazing that when farmers and producers are stating their yields as they have to in the number of forms that they fill out and then when the auditors come back and check at random—and we do quite a few. For instance, in the '91 crop year, we had a total number of 2,015 audits. In the year '92, it was down somewhat, 1,305. In the '93 year, we had a total of 568 audits. So there is a fairly tight audit control on the producer, that the information should be as tightly reported—if I can put it in that term—as our audits are proving it to be. That tells me that, by the far and large majority, producers fill in those forms with integrity, and our audits are pointing out that is the case.

The honourable member is aware that does not absolve the few rotten apples that exist in every barrel, and we pursue those instances. There have been instances where the corporation has had to proceed with litigation to address serious cases of deliberately falsifying records. That, of course, ends up with the situation of criminal fraud being entered into by those producers, and they are dealt with.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to say that I am quite amazed at how accurate those numbers are. I guess that, when you think about it, lots of times people do not give farmers the credit they are due in their ability to manage their affairs. I am pleased to see that it is such an accurate reporting on their part.

When there are cases of fraud, does the corporation have the ability to cancel a claim, and has that happened? Have you had to cancel any policies?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, just to provide the committee with summary information with regard to this activity, for instance, for the

years '90-94 we have had some 85 investigations. Of those 85, eight were forwarded to the RCMP for criminal investigation. Of those eight, four criminal court fraud charges were laid. There are outstanding at this time some 16 investigations still currently being investigated.

* (2300)

That information again indicates that, although we treat every instance seriously, but over the 12,000 to 13,000 contract holders, we have had reason to investigate 85—and that is in a four-year period—and have turned up only eight in that same four-year period that we have reason to forward to the RCMP for criminal investigation. Out of those eight, four were charged.

Again, not to make light of any fraudulent claims, but I take this opportunity, and I think members of the committee will join with me, by and large, in acknowledging and commending the Manitoba producers and farmers for dealing forthrightly and honestly with the corporation. While they, of course, pay a significant premium for this coverage, they are also accepting, when claimants are paid out, considerable support from both federal and provincial governments, a share of the public support for this insurance program.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the minister for those numbers. I, too, am pleased to hear that the cheaters, so to speak, are so low and that farmers—[interjection] I have no doubt that farmers are good people and there would not be very many of them that would try to defraud the system.

Again, getting back to local issues, in the last year we had a lot of flood damage, water damage where farmers were not able to take off the crop. It is my understanding that because of this flood damage their average was reduced, and they now have a reduction in their coverage for this year. Because of that, through no fault of their own because they were not able to take off the crop or the crop was ruined by the heavy rains, they are being punished and their premiums are going up, but their coverage has been reduced and the program is becoming less attractive to them. Is this a general feeling in many parts of the province where the average coverage is going down because

of situations such as we experienced with the heavy rains last year?

Mr. Enns: Basically, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that is why the entire agricultural region of the province is divided into the different cropping districts, each reflecting the experience of the past 15-20 years, which are all tallied up to put actuarial integrity into the premium charged.

I am advised that there are special circumstances that the corporation does take into consideration. For instance, as we had in the last crop year, particularly in certain areas where we had a lot of contaminated or tainted wheat with fusarium or tombstone, the fact that the farmer took off a lot of contaminated grain but maybe still took off a yield of 40 bushels of wheat, for instance, would not reduce his long-term average. There are other factors that we try to cushion the drop in the coverage when specific problem areas arise. In the main, I know the area that the honourable member refers to. It is a condition of the cropping district that has to be reflected in the premiums charged or in the coverage provided.

Ms. Wowchuk: As we look at GRIP, we know that the premiums are going up and the coverage is going down because of the sliding average, but input costs for farmers continue to go up. I think the minister said the other day that there was some decrease in farm input costs, but they still remain quite high. I can see that within a year the farmers are going to be saying, well, I am paying into this, but the coverage is going down because of the sliding average.

Where does the minister see this going? Do you think farmers are going to become very frustrated and find that the program is not valuable because the coverages are going down and the premiums are going up? How does the minister look at addressing this?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I gave that appealing glance to my staff, but they are not coming forward with any help—oh, I spoke too soon.

The honourable member is correct. The member has to go back to the initial start of the GRIP program, which was an income insurance program

brought in right at the height of the kind of crisis facing the cereal industry with the very serious collapse of grain prices. The projected incomes to be generated by the program were established through a great deal of consultation with various agricultural organizations. This work, of course, was done by my predecessor, Mr. Findlay.

We targeted prices—I think wheat at \$4.15 or something in that area—and charged the premium rates. Our best guesstimate—we had no experience; we had no last year's crop to have to impose onto the premium structure in trying to recover a very substantial payout.

The member is right. The premium rates are going up somewhat between 12 percent and 15 percent perhaps this year on most crop varieties, and the payout is coming down. It is a concern to us that producer reaction to this situation is perhaps predictable. It should be pointed out that it was well known and certainly stressed by staff at the time their program was introduced that the level of support would decline over time. The program was designed to provide support while not unduly masking long-term market signals. It was a response by both Canada and the provinces to try to overcome that particular difficult period that cereal grain producers faced, I suppose, starting in '88 when there was an ad hoc program put in place, and that allowed governments together, both federal and provincial, to develop the GRIP program that we are currently in.

I think that is going to be the challenge, quite frankly, for all of us in Agriculture, and certainly the national committee on safety net programs, this is occupying a great deal of their time, and we will be seeing some of the first hard fruits of their labour, I expect, at the agricultural ministers' conference that will commence in the first week of July.

The challenge will be to provide an acceptable level of support that hopefully will induce reasonable and acceptable levels of participation to be exactly what we tend to call them, safety net programs. They are not meant to be guaranteed commodity prices, particularly if they are not in sync with what in fact the market forces dictate.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister talked about the time when GRIP was designed. Along with GRIP, there was another program called the Third Line of Defence. I wonder, as we see declining incomes, when does that program kick in? When can we call on the government to implement the Third Line of Defence?

***** (2310)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we will consider ourselves fortunate if we can, together with Minister Goodale, federal government, design, to use his terminology, a whole farm program that will provide our producers of all agricultural crops, including red meats and horticultural, an expansion from the traditional cereal grain crops, a program of support, a basic program of support that is acceptable. That program the province is committed to, with the help of the producer, with a premium structure of some kind, along with the help of the current levels of support from Agriculture Canada, to provide that program.

Provinces generally and, I think, totally have taken the position, and Manitoba is certainly no exception, that when the member speaks of third line or additional companion programs, that those are, in our judgment, totally the federal government's responsibility.

We have, over the last several years, five or six years, from our perspective, taken on increasing amounts of what used to be Agriculture Canada's responsibility, whether it is in the costs of running our main crop insurance program. Programs like GRIP have a significant provincial input. I am aware, for instance, that a lot of the pressure that Saskatchewan is putting on the federal government is to hunker back a little bit and try to restore what originally was Ag Canada's primary role in this business of providing a national support program for agriculture.

So our position on third line or additional companion programs to the programs now in existence, we view it as primarily the federal government's responsibility.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I do not disagree with the minister. I think that the

federal government has passed off an awful lot of responsibilities onto the provincial government that originally belonged to Ag Canada, and it would certainly be a benefit to the Department of Agriculture and probably leave more flexibility to the department if the federal government would take those responsibilities back.

On the Third Line of Defence, I have often wondered when this Third Line of Defence could kick in. I am just asking for clarification now on how it would happen. The minister says they would be federal funds if they were to come. We have the program there, and certainly the people in the farming community since GRIP has been put in place have faced times where they have had certain difficulties, but we have never called on the Third Line of Defence to be implemented.

I guess my question is: What would the minister see as a time or a situation which would result in calling on the federal government to implement the Third Line of Defence?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, just for the member's information, recognizing the kind of deficit situation that we are getting ourselves into in the '93 crop year with the GRIP program alone, we back in January requested the federal government to assist us in the coverage of that deficit, particularly being cognizant of what was happening in the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan where they have a very significant shortfall and difficulty in their overall crop insurance program, a deficit ranging in the order of some \$600 million. So we felt that we had some legitimacy in asking for some support in that instance, but were refused.

On a more general scale, I suppose I have a bit of a problem. Some of the calls for Third Line of Defence, particularly in a year where there are serious problems, come from those producers who choose not to participate in the first- and second-line defences. We have participation rates of 50, 60, 65, 70 percent in different crop districts and the same, although generally somewhat higher, in the GRIP programs, upwards of 70 and 75 and 76 percent. Nonetheless, very often the calls for urgent ad hoc programs come from that group of

producers who have chosen to gamble and not take advantage of the programs in place.

I tend to take a bit of a hard line on that situation. I would like to do more, and I constantly challenge the staff of the corporation to revisit their programs, redouble their efforts to maintain the highest possible level of participation in the programs. It seems to me that really is the best advice that we can give producers to provide them with some base insurance for their operations. I would like to think, and I am certainly one minister that will provide all the support I can to Minister Goodale in the development of—I think, collectively if we can use the federal treasury and the provincial treasuries, buffeted by budget restrictions as we are, to come up with a sound program and then do our best to get the highest possible enrollment in it.

One of the problems, if we are always talking about a third line of defence, maybe we should put a bit more effort into making the first line of defence an acceptable program and get, hopefully, next to 90 percent, 95 percent participation rate in it. Then we as legislators, whether it is at the federal or provincial level, have some satisfaction of knowing that we have provided a stability, an insurance factor into the vagaries of agriculture. We should encourage our producers to take advantage of it.

You see, it is that, if you hold out the option always there, when you really have a tough year, the federal government, provincial government will come in with an ad hoc program that detracts from the producers seriously looking at what should be their first line of defence.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister referred again to the committee that is looking at designing a new program. When I listened to that, it appears very much that the direction of the new program is going along the lines of the NISA program, where there is, similar to the NISA program, the direction that we are looking at. Is that accurate? Is that the direction that the province and the group that is designing the program are looking at?

Mr. Enns: Yes, I think the member correctly makes that assumption. There are variations of it,

and that, I think, is what is providing some of the challenges to the committee. One of the variations is in the name in itself, which is VASA, value added to the means of what particular income you are basing your premiums on and returns on. I tend, personally, to support an enhanced NISA program as being the main component of a whole farm program. I view that as, in essence, an opportunity for the farming producers to engage in an RSP program, if you like, to some extent, with some sweetened, enhanced, as we say, considerably both federal and provincial contributions.

* (2320)

One of the problems in that program, particularly for start-up farmers or producers who are coming into it for the first year, like our hog producers or our cattle producers, is that the program becomes more attractive if you have several years of premium buildup, both the individual producer's premiums and the contributions by both the federal and provincial governments. The current premium contribution of the NISA program is 1-1-2. The producer puts in 2 percent, and both governments, federal and provincial, put in 1 percent, match it. That account, understandably, can grow pretty quickly. I am not expert in these matters, but it seems to me that what it builds into the program is a considerable amount of self-discipline.

One of the problems about all of our programs, and we all have heard stories about that, when governments try to respond to a farm failure, a bad situation in a given region, everybody gets to be treated the same, but every producer is never the same. Even within a region, producers who have suffered little or no loss tend to get the same in the previous kind of ad hoc programs as the producer who suffered a total loss. That really is not the best targeting of support dollars to the industry.

The NISA program builds up these individual accounts. A producer looks at his situation in any given year, makes that personal decision as to the drawdown on the account, but it is a pretty powerful incentive as that account keeps growing and is being added to every year by the federal and

provincial government, as well. Within a relatively few short years, some very attractive savings accounts are built up, accounts that can help that producer over a difficult year, over a difficult set of circumstances.

Ms. Wowchuk: It is true that accounts can be built up, but from what I understand, and I think I mentioned this the other day, and I think the minister said I was probably wrong on it, I find that there are many farmers who just cannot afford to leave that money in that account and tend to draw it out.

There are some who are building up larger accounts, and in most cases that tends to be the farmers who are well established, who can afford to leave it there. Those farmers who are smaller operations or perhaps beginning farmers just cannot afford to leave the money in. We tend to see where the money, provincial money and federal money, is put into the account and then taken out as well, and really there is nothing being built up for their rainy-day fund, so to speak. As the minister has indicated—and you could say that is bad management on the part of the farmer, but in many situations, they just have no choice. They need that money.

That is one of the concerns I have about the—I like the idea of being able to set aside money, but I do not know that it particularly addresses the concern of those beginning farmers. It is good for those farmers who are well established and gives them the ability to access a lot of money, but the ones who are starting just do not have the opportunity to save it because they need to keep their operation going. I do not know how that can be addressed.

Mr. Enns: Our senior policy adviser advises me that, surprisingly, there has been a steady rise in the number of accounts that are building up, farmers who are leaving their accounts building up in the NISA enrollment program. I acknowledge that that does not answer the issue that she raises about the young farmer, the starter farmer, who finds that difficult to do in the first few years.

There is no easy answer to that. I suppose all of us would like to start with a higher level or

something like that. I should point out some of the questions in the transformation of former programs, like the tripartite support programs, representation has been made that we in effect use some of those dollars that we would have normally put into the tripartite program as a one-year earlier start-up on the NISA contributions, that is, the provincial portion.

I have no further answer than that. All I can indicate to the honourable member is that the experience seems to indicate that after a somewhat slow start to the program, it is finding more and more favour with an increasing number of producers, and, of course, one of the big question marks here again is what the federal government will bring to the table in the further development of the NISA program. There are serious discussions at some considerable enhancement of the program, which would make it even more attractive for producers to get into. That is, if the federal contribution were to be raised to two, were to be doubled, that very quickly amounts to a considerable contribution to that program. It remains to be seen just what direction the federal government is going in this regard.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just on the new program that is being designed and looked at, we talk about: along the lines of the NISA program, the account program. There are still going to have to be, short-term, some programs brought in by the provincial government, to address local disasters or situations that may arise. Does the minister still see the province having the ability to bring in that kind of assistance to address those situations that would arise on local issues?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that, of course, is one of the fundamental reasons why we wanted to ensure the continuation of the GRIP program. We continually look at, what I have said now several times, our base crop insurance program that we provide and try to refine it, constantly reviewing the programs. Then, in addition to that, we have, of course, and the member is aware of it, although not in a general agricultural way, but we do have producers that have received support under the Disaster

Assistance Board, particularly in cases of flash flooding, which the member is well aware of.

We have other programs, the combination that we work with the Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture in big game and waterfowl depredation of crops. In essence, I certainly will try and direct the providers of insurance program to concentrate on trying to provide, through our basic insurance agency, the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation, which has a fairly lengthy track record in the province, has a network of agents throughout agri-Manitoba, continually is refining its data in terms of crop production in Manitoba so that our premiums and our coverage can more accurately reflect the best possible situation.

* (2330)

I also recognize that the competition for public dollars is not likely to decrease, both at the federal level and at the provincial level, and it really behooves us that we try to fashion out of a piece of machinery that has worked well for the producers over the last 25, 26—[interjection] 34 years. I think it is the obligation of this committee, and I welcome that. It is this opportunity that the officials of the corporation, through the kind of questioning that the member poses, is under review and under examination as it ought to be. I encourage our farm organizations to do that, and they take us up on it on a regular basis.

The goal should be that we provide and we use with our dollars, a sound support program. I believe it could be shown without too much research that, in the long run, the public Canadian taxpayer is better served. It is these ad hoc programs that politicians have reacted to—and I say that without malice whether they were of this administration or previous administrations—but under pressures of the day, multimillion or billion-dollar ad hoc programs have been put together. They have come and gone and we have no lasting benefit.

We should direct our talents and our energies to producing a program that adequately provides that stability that our primary producers require. I believe it can be done if we do it right, if you

looked at it over a 10-year or a 15-year period, at no more or possibly less dollars from the public purse.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have a few more questions under the crop insurance section and perhaps if I finish them off tonight then the staff will not have to come back again tomorrow. I will just move on to a few of those.

I want to ask about the Livestock Feed Security Program. There were concerns with the program. I want to know whether we are having a dropoff in participation in that program, and there was a concern raised about the test areas, that they were not being accurate to the accurate samples.

So if the minister could just give an overview of what is happening with the Livestock Feed Security Program.

Mr. Enns: Well, the member does put her finger on a program that is in some difficulty. The participation rates are steadily declining. I recall a number of years ago, we were upwards to 5,000 or 6,000 producers taking advantage of the program. Figures that I have for the year '93 are 993 contracts. For this year '94, we have 776 contracts. That is 25 percent less, which obviously indicates that the program is in trouble. It seems to be that the major problem is that the area-based concept of the Livestock Feed Security Program has resulted in producers' lack of confidence in it. Rain does not fall in that way. We have tried to apply too large of areas, I suppose, before the program clicks in. That is just not necessarily the way that rain patterns, which are probably more important to forage production than in cereal crop production, have resulted in too many producers simply not having confidence in the program.

What the corporation has done in July of '93, we have established a forage review committee. The committee is comprised of the following members: one from Keystone Agricultural Producers organization; two from the Manitoba Cattle Producers' Association; two from the Manitoba Forage Council; two from the Crop Insurance Review committee; farmer representatives; one from Manitoba Agriculture Crown Lands, a lot of

the forage is on Crown lands; four from Manitoba Agriculture forage specialists; and six from the Manitoba Crop Insurance agencies and head offices. These are the field people who are spread out throughout Manitoba.

The projected completion for their review is right about now. This committee was established last July, and it is a program that is obviously under very serious reconsideration. I would suggest, at this point in time, all options are open. It is no longer a very attractive program to the corporation to continue to administer the administration costs in terms of the way that a lessening number of contracts serviced is becoming unacceptable. It is obvious to us that some very serious recommendations will have to be considered.

I am just advised by my manager that this Friday will be the date that some of the recommendations coming from this committee I just mentioned will be placed before the board of directors for the first time. They are pretty well on schedule. The projected completion date was for May '94. We are at the end of May, so for the board of directors to have some recommendations to consider by this week, that is pretty well on schedule.

I am trying to anticipate the honourable member's next question. Well, I should never do that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I will simply say, I have no idea what recommendations are coming forward. I have not been privy to them, but I will accept some recommendations and suggestions from her as to what we should do. It is obvious that the program is in trouble, and we will be looking for likely a fairly different or entirely new program. It is simply not sustainable in its present form.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do not think there is much point in pursuing what the recommendations are if they are going to be given to the board next week. I think we will wait.

The only question I have: after those recommendations go to the board, when do you anticipate that we would know what the recommendations are, and when steps would be taken to design a new program or abandon this program? The program is in place for this year, so

would you be looking over the next year to design something? Particularly, I am looking at when we might see the recommendations that this committee is bringing forward.

* (2340)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think it is appropriate for the board to have an opportunity of considering these recommendations in the first instance. I am advised, as I indicated just a little while ago, that the corporation is looking to be in a position to offer a new program or considerably modified program for the coming crop year '95. We have some 700-odd contracts to honour in the current crop year of '94, but the goal, the objective, is to have a new forage program in place for the crop year '95.

I will certainly undertake to share with the critics of the opposition parties the direction that the recommendations are advising us. It is a program that will, hopefully, attract a greater number of participants. On the other hand, I am doing what I said I would not do. I am trying to presume what the recommendation will be. I have no idea.

The recommendation will be simply maybe that this is a difficult area to insure in the mind of traditional way we have been insuring crops and make some recommendations that governments should look at other ways of addressing periodic shortages of forage, which usually tend to come about because of particular drought years in a given year and/or some extremely heavy moisture conditions.

Ms. Wowchuk: We will look for the information from the minister when he can provide it for us. I just want to ask about the Livestock Feed Securities Program: Was coverage allowed on natural hay or is the coverage only on—

Mr. Enns: No, native grasses were covered as well. I suspect again this was where you had some of the difficulty. In my area, the Interlake area, you can have pretty wide discrepancies, particularly on native pastures. An area of 10, 15 miles—my farm never received the rain. Mr. Gaudry's brothers always got it at St. Laurent, and they have got good hay crops there, so these disparities would happen within the region. That tended to lose producer

confidence in the program, but to answer the question, it did cover native grasses.

Ms. Wowchuk: And our area flooded. Can we just have some information? Did the corporation lose money on this program, or were you able to recover your costs from the premiums, or is it the administration costs that are high? Where are the high costs in it?

Mr. Enns: Most corporations operate the same way. When they start losing too much money, they want to get out of the program or change the program. There has been accumulated deficit here of some \$2.7 million over the year since the introduction of the program in '84. Total premiums—but I had better not get into it.

To answer the member's question, the corporation has lost, and that is part of the reason for bringing the review process forward. Obviously, the corporation is not in a position to continue losing money on this form of coverage, and we hope to rectify that situation at the end of this current year.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the question I was asking was, were the premium costs covering the payouts and was it the administration?

Mr. Enns: The premiums in '93, for instance, were \$1.8 million, and the payout was \$1.3 million. There is no administration involved in that. You have to add about \$300,000 administration costs to that. In '93, we still had 900. Now we are down to 700 if the premium costs stay much the same. We are rapidly getting into a deficit situation on the premiums collected versus payout, as well.

Ms. Wowchuk: So the program was viable as far—you were recovering or even ahead a bit prior to the time when we started to lose the participation.

Mr. Enns: I should have paid, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, a little bit more attention to some of the earlier information that staff provided. There was a deficit built out of some years when we had a heavy payout. As in all these programs, the corporation's difficulty is now we are attempting to recover that deficit from our ever-decreasing

number of clients. That is making it very difficult to accomplish, yet the basis on which we go to our Treasury Board to offer these programs is cost-recovery, revenue-neutral insurance coverage, and that is the reason for the corporation's concern.

The design of the program has not worked out in terms of acceptability on the part of the producers.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I look forward to hearing those details on where the department or the corporation will be going with designing a new program or a replacement program.

Just two other areas that I want to touch on, I want to touch briefly on the Big Game Damage Compensation. I want to—one of the areas that has been a concern, and I remember raising this in the last Estimates is the damage caused by big game and the bearing that has on a person's crop insurance claim and their GRIP claim, in that the damage to the crop ends up destroying crop and then bringing the yield down, and that has a bearing on their average. Producers were looking for a way that the damage from game or from waterfowl would not have implications on their yield that is used in calculating their formula on GRIP. Has that been addressed?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again I am advised that the problem or the issue of wildlife damage on the individual production charts is currently before the board for review. Again, in a general way, if you live in an area that has a history, a tradition of a lot of waterfowl traffic, that is part of the risk of that district. If you live in a district where you have access to, adjacent to or are near park areas, you are very well familiar, where you have a lot of big game, a lot of elk or a lot of deer moving through that, that has always been a problem.

As a former Minister of Natural Resources, I was certainly challenged to make sure that it always will be a problem, because we want to maintain our wildlife populations in elk and deer, and I have to, so that I cannot offer an easy resolution to that problem. We want to see the elk; we want to see the deer. The farmer still wants to

harvest his crops. These flinty-eyed insurance brokers here, they have got to assess actuarially what the risk is. If that means that on average they have more crop damage, that is reflected on their overall yield on the data.

* (2350)

Ms. Wowchuk: So the producers who are feeding this wildlife that the minister was so concerned about when he was Minister of Natural Resources, these producers are still being punished by having their average reduced because of this wildlife that happens to feed in their crops. Is that right? The producer is paying the price for it.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, just for the record, I just had a closer look at the eyes of my senior staff here, and they are not flinty-eyed at all. They are caring, they are compassionate, they have every understanding for the problems of the farmer. He assures me that the simple fact remains that, as a cattle producer, if you are in that portion of the province where we still have wolves and coyotes that will take occasional livestock, young animals, you build that into your costs of operation. The traditional damage by big game in certain areas of the province reflect the crop yields.

We are running an insurance corporation that has to reflect, and we pay what the average yields are expected to be in that area. We charge a premium accordingly, and that is hard to suggest to do otherwise. We have, though, because of the kind of intermittent problem that this is, and it is intermittent. It can be, depending on the harvest year. We have had, for instance, in the drier years, the mid-'80s, many years where most of the harvest was harvested before the waterfowl migration started. When the ducks and geese came, all they had to do was to glean the fields as in days of old, and not really do serious crop damage.

On the other hand, in years where you have a delayed harvest because of weather, where 40, 50, 60 percent of the crop is still out there, the damage is considerably higher, both by big game and by waterfowl. So that I think these are some of the factors that the corporation is prepared to take into consideration in the review. Hopefully, there will

be some amendments to the practices of the corporation within this respect.

Ms. Wowchuk: Was that something in the recommendations that has come under the Crop Insurance Review that has to be addressed? Is that still one of the things? Was there a recommendation? I do not have my recommendations here, and I am just asking, was there a recommendation in that Crop Insurance Review to address the Big Game Damage Compensation? Is that why it is being reviewed now?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I was being advised that there was a particular request to review this wildlife question, and that is why it is in front of the board as a separate issue, if I understand my staff correctly.

Again, it also demonstrates what I have been suggesting to honourable members of the committee that the corporation is constantly reviewing its operations. If requests are made for the corporation to look at its types of coverages, its practices, they take them seriously and expend the necessary resources to review the issue.

The member is well aware that the corporation is directed by a board of directors that is widely representative of the province and that board of directors then has to consider any modifications or changes to current practices. Then very often they are passed on to the corporation for consideration. If they require legislative or regulatory change, they are passed on to the minister's office for consideration by the minister and/or by cabinet, depending on the nature of the regulation.

Ms. Wowchuk: Last year, it was estimated that there was set aside \$200,000 and again we have that same amount in the Estimates for money for Big Game Damage Compensation.

What amount of money was spent last year? Did you have to pay that amount out?

Mr. Enns: I am advised that the princely sum of \$450,000 of your hard-earned tax money, Becky, was spent to compensate what the deer and the elk and the fuzzy little bears and the antelopes took off our crops.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, you can appreciate that this is a concern to me because I think a good portion of that money is spent in my area of the province.

I want to ask, not included under big game or waterfowl, an animal that is becoming a problem is flooding by beaver and lots of land being flooded. If that should occur, is there the ability to get compensation under the Big Game Damage Compensation for losses because of beaver flooding?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because of the way the regulation is drafted, compensation can be paid for damages or loss of eligible produce caused by deer, elk, moose, wood bison or black bear. The beaver is not covered under that regulation, so the damage done to crops as a result of beaver activity is not covered.

* (0000)

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister suggest to the board that is presently reviewing the big game compensation package that they give consideration to that aspect as well and consider whether that is a possibility of an area?

I realize there is a fairly large amount of money that is being spent at the present time. I do not know what has to happen, whether it has to be a change in regulation, but I would appreciate if the minister would give that direction to the board to consider that as well.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would be more than pleased to ask the board to consider the addition of the beaver damage to be given some consideration.

I have a better suggestion. If you and Becky and all the rest of us started wearing beaver coats, we would not have the problem. We have allowed the animal rights people to so cow us into not using that extremely worthwhile, durable, sustainable, renewable resource of fur that we have created a problem.

My former experts in the Department of Natural Resources tell me that on a 15-20 year average the Manitoba beaver population used to hover around the 350,000 to 400,000. We now have in excess of

1 million beavers in the province. That is a beaver for every man, woman and child. We could resolve that issue if we allowed common sense to dominate and we allowed the natural harvest of the beaver animals—tell this to Marianne when you next see her in your caucus—and then we could bring our beaver control back to a reasonable level, and they would not be causing problems.

My colleague the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) is spending upwards to \$3 million to \$4 million as a result of beaver damage. That money could go to run some daycare centres in the province. We are losing a lot of money, as the member quite rightly points out, that is not being compensated to farmers. It is a serious problem where we have allowed ill-thought, wimpy, washy concern for the animals to override common sense.

Ms. Wowchuk: I appreciate those comments by the minister, but I have to wonder why he did not address all of that when he was Minister of Natural Resources.

Point of Order

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on a point of order, the member knows full well I was so preoccupied with trying to build a humble little hacienda with an attached veranda at a place called Oak Hammock, you know, for the ducks and the geese that they would not give me any time to address the serious problems of the beaver and the elk and the moose. My time was totally preoccupied with that little issue.

By the way they are all enjoying that little place right now.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: I just wanted to say, the minister had the opportunity to build a great industry here in the province, but he is past that opportunity and now you have to address it under the Big Game Damage Compensation.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(a) Administration \$4,729,800—pass; (b) Premiums \$12,800,000—pass; (c) Gross Revenue Insurance Plan \$42,200,000—pass; (d) Big Game Damage Compensation \$200,000—pass; (e)

Canada-Manitoba Waterfowl Damage Compensation Agreement \$150,000—pass.

Resolution 3.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$60,079,800 for Agriculture, Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

The hour being 12:04, committee rise

JUSTICE

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

This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Justice. We are on item 2.(a) on page 110 of the Estimates manual.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

2.(a) Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): On the line Administrative Support there is a reduction of one staff here, and I note the footnote at the bottom of page 33. I understand that there have been two support positions in Prosecutions in Winnipeg moved, the deletion of two positions, and I believe those individuals went to the Maintenance Enforcement office, Pelzer and Boyle, and my understanding is that there has been a position deletion at The Pas.

Do those three positions represent the three clerical positions referred to in the footnote?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Chair, I will just correct the member. The first two that he spoke about, yes, that is correct, and those individuals have been redeployed to Maintenance Enforcement. The third individual was a court unit support staff and that individual retired.

Mr. Mackintosh: What was the general description of the duties of the court unit support staff?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that the work that this individual had done was to provide assistance to the Crown

attorneys in the intake dockets, and that was updating the filing and continuing filing.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would ask the minister who will be filling that function now?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that for the one individual, the court unit support staff individual who retired, that the work has been redistributed internally to accomplish the work of the individual. For the two SYs who have been redeployed to Maintenance Enforcement, their staff years have not been lost and Crown attorneys will now work in those positions.

Mr. Mackintosh: The two SYs that are referred to in footnote 1 on page 33, is it correct in my understanding that two new positions have been created for two lawyers?

Mrs. Vodrey: That is correct. Two new lawyers will be hired into those positions.

Mr. Mackintosh: Have those positions been advertised yet?

Mrs. Vodrey: The paperwork to fill those positions is in progress, is currently being drafted, and we, I am told, have a good group of articling students who would be available to compete for those positions. Those articling students will be called to the bar by the end of June.

Mr. Mackintosh: It appears from the minister's comments then that the Crown attorneys will be fulfilling the work that was done by Pelzer and Boyle and apparently by the unit support staff position as well. Is my understanding correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: Two of the positions that the member had spoken about were Crown assistants, and those positions will be replaced by Crown attorneys. The third position, who is a court unit support worker, that work has been redeployed among existing staff.

* (2010)

Mr. Mackintosh: I just wonder what the minister's reaction—but my sense is that I think we can all agree that there have to be additional Crown attorneys in light of the backlogs.

My concern is that we are getting rid of, in the case of Pelzer and Boyle, for example, two positions that were highly relied on by the Crown

to prepare cases, not in the legal sense, but prepare cases for trial and co-ordinate witnesses. What we are doing is, we are not really hiring two legal positions to fulfill the real potential of those positions if what they are doing is filling in for Pelzer and Boyle. How would the minister react to that comment?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, it was our judgment as we looked at the work to be done and who could provide us with all of the range of work that we required, it was our judgment that we needed attorneys to carry out the work and to be able to carry the cases into court, so a judgment was made within the department as to what kind of training would be required to fill those spots.

Mr. Mackintosh: My experience, and this is entirely a private sector experience, but I think the provision of legal services in both the private and public sector are comparable in this respect, that there is a move towards a greater use of paralegals, a low-cost alternative, particularly for matters that do not involve litigation skills or legal research skills.

My thinking here is that what we have done is, we have got two more lawyers, but they are doing nonlegal work, and what we need are those lawyers entirely focused on increasing and enhancing the court time. That is what we need in this province, more court time. While at the same time, I think it appears that the quasi-paralegal position of Pelzer and Boyle is going to be lost. I think that will be sadly missed, and I think we will see ramifications. I do not think that we are getting a full bang for our buck then from the legal staff if that is what has indeed happened.

I wonder if the minister would just comment on that observation.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, well, I would like to say also that certainly the individuals who have now moved into another kind of work in the Department of Justice will be missed in the position that they were in, but Public Prosecutions is different than any other legal grouping, and the member refers to experience in the private sector where there was a lot of work which did not require a court appearance. In the area of Public

Prosecutions almost entirely the work requires a court appearance, and therefore it was our judgment that we needed to have Crown attorneys who were available to fill these positions who could see the case through.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have heard it said of Crown attorneys that they do not have the time that they feel they need to prepare for cases, and I know that Pelzer and Boyle fulfilled that function to a certain extent. I am wondering where the two additional lawyers will be allocated to.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the result will be that there will be one additional lawyer in the family violence court and one additional Crown attorney in the youth court. It will not necessarily be these two Crown attorneys, but the workload will be distributed to allow for one additional Crown in both of those areas of prosecution.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, to that extent, I welcome that. Although I will add that I think it is a two step forward, one step back at least and we need much more. But finally I just want to go back to that position at The Pas that was raised in Question Period today, if the minister would advise what position that was.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I can say to the member that that position was not in the area of Prosecutions, and that is the staff that I have here at the moment. During questioning today, there was a statement that this was in the area of Corrections, and so when we get to the Corrections area, perhaps we could look at any staff reorganization at that point.

Mr. Mackintosh: I now want to leave the staff issues and again return to some policy issues that we were talking about before the supper break. First of all, I wanted to go to the issue that Mr. Miller and I are aware of, and that was a subject of an article in the Free Press on the weekend which is a subject of a letter to the minister's office of May 11.

I guess I can say that I think if there is an appropriate use of the word travesty, it is in this kind of a case. I trust this is not a widespread problem, but what we had happen with this abused woman was she apparently was not served with the

subpoena. I presume and it only makes sense that she was the main witness. In fact, it may have been the only witness, and, nonetheless, the trial or the preliminary hearing went ahead without the service having occurred. As a result, the case was dismissed.

I see a response of Mr. Miller in the Free Press. I would like some assurances from the minister that there has been a change in policy within the Crown attorney's department dealing with, first of all, searching out witnesses and victims; and second, ensuring that they are served before the trial proceeds; and third—well, I think those two are the main issues, and we will stick to those.

* (2020)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, certainly this particular issue in this particular case is of great concern and is a concern to me as Minister of Justice. It is also of great concern to the staff in the Department of Justice. I want to assure the member that the individual involved, the complainant involved, has met with officials from the department to make her concerns very clear and to make sure that the department has, in fact, instituted some changes.

Yes, we have instituted some changes. Crowns understand that they have to be very vigilant in the seeking of the individual to testify, and we have now made a change. First of all, the Crowns have to check with Women's Advocacy. Women's Advocacy is often the part of the Department of Justice who has had the most recent contact with the complainant. In addition, Women's Advocacy will report to the Crown, if the complainant agrees that there has been a change of address, but in that particular case there has to be a consent for that change of address to be reported.

Where the Crown is not able to locate the individual, they then will be vigilant in terms of any other method available to them. They will work with the Winnipeg police, they will search—I continue to use the word vigilantly, and that is exactly what I mean. They will continue to search with every method that is available to them to locate the individual.

This particular incident is one which has caused us to examine exactly how we manage these cases and how we manage the location. So I would like to offer that assurance, and I have wanted to make sure that the individual in this case also has that assurance that, yes, things have changed. We have attempted to have a much tighter system.

Mr. Mackintosh: I appreciate that. I would like the minister, if she would, to table or provide to me any written directives that reflect what the minister has just said, just for the added assurance so that we know that there is a long-time change in policy, that the policy change has been communicated to the Crown attorneys.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that at the moment there is not a document that exists, that the matter was managed through discussion by the Director of Public Prosecutions in Winnipeg and also the head of the Domestic Violence unit. However, I think it is a good idea and will undertake to see that it is written down and that it is communicated in a formal way.

Mr. Mackintosh: I thank the minister. I guess we all learn from events like this, and I am glad to see that the department will go through the necessary process of writing out new procedure and communicating it, so that it will be on the books, it will always be there when Crown attorneys change and as people come and go.

I thought long and hard about this case, and it is very difficult to reconcile what happened here with the needs of victims such as this woman is, and with the objectives of the criminal justice system. I see her options as being relatively limited at this point. I think what it does, it outlines the critical role of the Crown and the minister's department, of course, in pursuing vigorously the prosecution of all cases. I think right now we are looking and we need a new emphasis on domestic violence cases, and I think it was really unfortunate this occurred.

Having said that, I look forward now to a new era in victims' issues at least insofar as what we have learned from this difficult case.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I was reading here that one of the activities is to ensure adequate services. Of course, ideally there would be no

backlog whatsoever, and we have had many discussions in this House about what is a reasonable backlog. The only way to get rid of the backlog is one of three things: Either we have less cases, put more resources into the cases that are coming through, or we divert some of the cases out of the judicial process into the nonjudicial.

First, dealing with the latter, is there any examination, whether it is through Mediation Services or something similar to the Alternative Measures program as used for young offenders, using it with some of the less serious adult offences and divert some of the cases from the court system to help lessen the backlog? Is there any examination of that in Public Prosecutions?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we do refer approximately 1,000 cases a year to Mediation Services and also provide a grant as well, but in the area of domestic violence issues, they have said that they do not believe that they have the expertise to deal with those cases specifically. However, other cases are diverted to Mediation Services. Not always all are successfully mediated, but it is that opportunity that the member has spoken about to have that process.

Some aboriginal communities also have diversion projects within their communities. Some community justice committees have also now wanted to take on adult diversion, not just youth, and the example that we were just discussing is Beausejour, where there is now that process going on.

We are receptive to the idea of community-based groups looking at diversion, provided they are able to adequately perform the role and have everything in place to do that. So it is certainly something that we would be willing to look at, we do have available to us, but again it requires a commitment on behalf of a community group to make the diversion work.

***** (2030)

Mr. Kowalski: First of all, in domestic violence, if Mediation Services do not feel they have the training and this is where there is a backlog, and there have been several reports on some of the negative effects of waiting for these cases, is

Public Prosecutions looking at a program for some type of domestic mediation so we could divert some of these cases from the court system?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, in the area of family violence, we have taken a very strong position that violence within the family is a crime, and we do see it as a very high priority, so at this point we are looking to make sure that we do everything through the process that ensures individuals recognition that, yes, this is a crime.

I understand where the member is coming from in terms of, are there other kinds of alternatives that might be examined? I believe I answered in an earlier question today that there are a series of issues which may be examined which are being examined, but the message that we want to send to Manitobans is that violence within a family is a crime.

Mr. Kowalski: I do not think there is anyone who would disagree with that sentiment, but we do treat this crime differently in the actions taken by the police as to how they will investigate and in the laying of charges so, you know, to divert it after it gets into the court system away from the courts into something similar to mediation is not to put a—when something is diverted from mediation right now that is nondomestic, that does not mean the court case is dropped. The charges still can be laid, or if it is stayed, it can be reinstated. I do not think by saying that we go through an alternative process for this special crime, this very serious crime, that we are denigrating the importance of the crime by diverting it from the court system.

Mrs. Vodrey: But as the member knows, mediation requires the agreement of both parties, and it also requires some skill in dealing with both parties together in a conflict.

In the area of domestic violence, I do not believe that there has yet been expertise, or there is certainly very minimal expertise available in dealing with both sides of a domestic violence dispute together through mediation.

I understand the kinds of issues that the member is speaking about, but it does require an agreement on both sides, and it really, sincerely, requires expert skill when both of those people are together,

so I do not know that we are quite yet at the point. I do not know that there is agreement even within the community for a single view that this is the way to go, so at this point, we maintain the stance that we have had that abuse is a crime, but we will rely on the implementation committee and the family violence court and their working group to provide us with additional information and background and research and perhaps opportunities.

Mr. Kowalski: I think once there is an arrest, and if there was an expectation that if both parties participated in both treatment and mediation, there is a strong motivation there for both parties to be involved that otherwise would not be there. I do not think someone has to necessarily be charged, because the ideal situation is to resolve these issues, because even in cases where the one spouse is convicted quite often, what happens is, afterwards, after they have served their sentence, they get into another relationship, and if we have not treated that abusing spouse, we will just have another court case down the line.

So I think the goal is to treat, to prevent, and the court process is not necessarily the only way to motivate those people in need of treatment and families that can be kept together. The court system is not necessarily the way to do it, and I think that maybe Public Prosecutions can look further into alternatives to criminal prosecution of some of these cases.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I understand the member's point around the benefits of mediation, but I can say that diversion in the area of family violence cases is a very contentious issue. It is not a simple solution in which there is agreement.

As I have spoken about in earlier questions, there is an implementation committee for the family violence court, and that implementation committee is fairly broadly represented, and from that there is a working group which I spoke about in an earlier answer. It is that working group that is struggling with issues that might be alternatives at several points—not just a single mechanism, it is several points—to the traditional court process.

As yet, there has not been agreement on what that would be. So, as yet, I have not received any recommendations as minister that come from that broad-base committee which is charged with the implementation of issues from the family violence court.

Mr. Kowalski: I think she already answered this question, but I just would like to be reminded, that working group or that committee, when can we expect to see a report from them?

Mrs. Vodrey: The working group is not my committee. I think that is an important starting point. The implementation committee for the family violence court, just to provide the total structure, is chaired by the chief judge. There are representatives of the Department of Justice on that committee, but not all members are from the Department of Justice.

* (2040)

The working group is a subgroup which has been charged with looking at a number of these issues, this among others, diversion among others. That particular group does not report to the Minister of Justice. What it does is it looks at the issues, and it would provide recommendations at several points or to any number of areas, some of which may come to the Minister of Justice, but it is not within my power to mandate that they arrive at a decision at a certain time.

When they arrive at the decision, then I will receive what recommendations apply to the Department of Justice. The only influence I have on that committee is through my representatives on that committee. I have through my representatives certainly indicated my interest in their work, that I would like to be kept up to date with their work and certainly would like to receive what information this may apply to the Department of Justice.

Mr. Kowalski: I would like to move away from diversion as it concerns family court and go into other diversion programs, community justice committees, that the minister talked about. I am not familiar with this Beausejour group, but is this a trial project, or is the door open right now for community groups, whether they be the present

Youth Justice Committees, to expand their mandate now if they come forward, or other community groups that come forward to do similar for adults in their own community charged with minor offences, to take charge of those cases? There is a mandate there for them to do that now.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we have always been receptive to this kind of an initiative, but the concern is always, are the committees able to carry out what is required, not just wishing they could, but that they in fact have shown that they are able.

As some of the Youth Justice Committees become more confident in their work with young offenders, they may express an interest in working with adult offenders in diversion programs.

What happened to the Beausejour situation is that Beausejour approached the Department of Justice and asked to have its mandate expanded. They worked with the police in their area and also the Department of Justice to prepare the committee and to make sure that things were in place so that they could then take on this additional mandate.

It works the same way with the aboriginal communities also, that they have approached the Department of Justice and they have had assistance from the Department of Justice in policing services and so on to make sure that they are capable, have the resources and the full understanding of the commitment that they are taking on. So those are two of the examples, and the receptivity is there but always with the proviso or the condition that the committee is able to do the work.

Mr. Kowalski: This is very interesting. I am really enjoying this process. It is a good way to learn about the department.

This Beausejour Justice Committee, how does it work? Are the charges stayed or are they just not laid or are they held in abeyance? What happens while these adults are going—the Young Offenders Act has alternative measures within the act, but I am not familiar if anything in the Criminal Code provides for this. What is the process that is used in Beausejour?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that we rely very heavily on the police. That there is a protocol in which the police select obvious cases.

The cases cannot be crimes of violence, and they cannot be cases where they are repeat offenders. Then with this in mind the case is referred to the committee, to the community justice committee. The community justice committee then determines if they feel able and competent to manage this particular diversion.

These cases are, by and large, not charged. However, it does not preclude a case which has been stayed being referred.

Mr. Kowalski: Going to the second way of lessening the court backlog—more resources—I remember at one time, I do not know if it is still used in British Columbia where Crown attorneys are people from private practice who are hired either on a case-by-case basis or on a contract for a set period of time—of course, as has been mentioned in this House, it is easy for opposition to say put more resources, put more money, and I am sure the minister in cabinet caucus always tries to get as much as she can for her department, but with large social costs from delaying prosecution, cannot on a short term basis, either some lawyers from private practice, from out of province, be brought in for a short period of time to reduce the backlog to a level that would be better for all?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, in cases where it would be more costly to send a Crown attorney, to a northern point for instance, than it would be to engage a lawyer practising at a northern point, we do in fact engage lawyers from the private bar.

However, as a whole, across the Department of Justice and across the system, simply hiring individuals from the private bar to assist us does not really solve the problem, because the issue is a systemic one. It involves not only Crown prosecutors, it involves court time, it involves supports as well as judges and the availability of a number of resources across the whole system. So it is not just increasing the number of Crowns available.

* (2050)

The other issue that I think is important to consider is that we have been discussing for a while sensitivity required by the Crown's vigilance, required by the Crown's rigorous

prosecution policy, required by the Crowns, and to engage someone from the private bar, from outside the system does not necessarily cause them to come in with all of that background knowledge. We do have a concern for the quality of the prosecution in wanting to make sure particularly in areas like domestic violence and so on that there is an understanding and a training in those areas by our Crown attorneys.

I also just want to add, when I am speaking about across the system, also it involves two defence lawyers, a legal aide, and it becomes a whole systemic issue.

Mr. Kowalski: I agree with the minister wholeheartedly that it is a systemic issue, and I guess it depends how much resources we want to put into that system. The minister's staff, in a bureaucracy, has to deal with the budget they are given into that system and has to achieve the best results with that budget.

Now, is there a goal that is acceptable as far as in these categories, child abuse cases, family violence cases and youth crime cases? Is there a standard that the Crown accepts that if it goes above, the backlog takes longer than that, that more resources throughout the system have to be put in, that it is no longer acceptable?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that the guidelines across the country are that the aim is for three months for in-custody cases and six months for out-of-custody cases, so that is what provinces across the country are striving for.

In the area of family violence, we are certainly working to do better than that, better than the six months out of custody, and we certainly have to look case by case. We will prioritize, particularly in the area of child abuse, to see that those cases are given priority.

The same in the youth court. We consider that, particularly crimes of serious violence, violent acts need to be prioritized. We have again specialists now, a specialist prosecutor, who is able to deal with those particularly serious issues.

So we have done a number of things within our system to try to make sure that we have the ability to prioritize, that we have the ability in those

case-by-case prioritizations to bring them forward. As I have said in the House many times, we are always looking to improve, throughout the whole system. At which points in the system can we begin to make changes, to make a difference?

I have spoken this evening about the availability of more Crown attorneys, and as we progress through the Estimates of the Department of Justice, we will be able to look at what we are doing in the area of courts and what we are doing in the area of corrections.

So, though those are the guidelines, we are always trying to do better. But as I have said before, too, a certain amount of delay is inevitable. It has to occur. There is a due process of law. In some cases—well, there has to be a preliminary hearing. The person may elect to have a trial by a judge and jury. There has to be the exchange of full particulars. So there is a process also which, to allow the due process of law to occur, does take time, and it does not allow for, to make sure constitutional rights are respected, that case to go to trial the very next day, because certain things have to occur. But I would leave on the record, as I have before, we are always looking for ways to make it the most efficient system as possible at all points of the system.

Mr. Kowalski: I am well aware of due process. I have made a lot of overtime on due process in the police force, so I know about that.

One of the other resources, and it may not be popular with staff, and that is that we have these buildings, we have these personnel, and we have evening courts. Has the public prosecutions ever looked at on a short term to bring it down to within their goal of three months for custody and six months for out of custody using the courtrooms, the staff, in the evenings to reduce that backlog?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, as the member knows, we do have evening courts running on quite a full basis. They by and large do cover things such as Highway Traffic Act and regulatory issues. To put criminal prosecutions into night court would require some negotiation with a number of partners. It would certainly require negotiation with the chief judge to make sure that

the judiciary was willing. It would also require negotiation with Legal Aid, with the defence bar and so on, not just our staff within the Department of Justice. It is a recommendation that certainly could be pursued in terms of how we use the court time, and as I said, it would involve the agreement of a number of participants within the system, but it is something that is worthy of consideration.

* (2000)

Mr. Kowalski: I am going to talk about the three different things. The first one mentioned was fewer cases, and I think that gets into the area of prevention, and I think I will save that for when we talk about community corrections.

I had one more question that I forgot to ask about the Beausejour Justice Committee. Is it cost effective? Does it save the Justice department money by diverting these cases to this justice committee, as opposed to putting them through the court system?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that, certainly, diversion is a way to save money because it would save money on prosecutions and court time and so on. We also believe that it has the ability to be very effective, which was why we remain open to it, again on the condition that the community group is able to carry out the work of the diversion. We do not have the comparison for the Beausejour committee here, but on a broad basis, I could say that, yes, I believe that it would have a cost saving.

* (2100)

Mr. Kowalski: I will really be brave here. I wonder if I could get an undertaking from the minister that if this type of diversion is expanded upon and there are more savings to the justice system, that any savings that would be made, those monies would be committed to prevention programs.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, well, of course, those decisions would be decisions of government.

Mr. Mackintosh: I think we are into the area of backlogs quite clearly, so I would like to explore it more fully and go back a few steps, first of all, just

to clarify the facts and the extent of the backlogs right now.

I have this fear, particularly in the family violence court right now and particularly for child abuse cases, that we are going to be facing Askoff applications, perhaps as early as the fall. I say that because I know the extent of the backlogs from anecdotal evidence. I do not have any statistical survey from the department.

I know the minister in Question Period has talked about different time frames than I have. I suspect she is looking at averages for one thing, and another thing, I believe she is looking at measuring the time from committal to trial, rather than from the date of the alleged offence to trial and, as well, she is mixing in-custody and out-of-custody figures.

What I would like, before we get into a discussion about backlogs and what I think is a crisis and look for solutions, we determine exactly what facts the minister has at her hand.

First of all, with regard to the family violence court—this is from her own department—it is my understanding that in the next two weeks, dates in October and November, nearly December will be entirely used up, and we are looking at dates for trial in late December and into the new year. Indeed, I am aware of particular instances where there are cases regarding offences allegedly committed back as much as New Year's, that will be going to trial in the third week in December. I am aware of cases that cannot be set down for trial until the new year, so we are looking at a backlog of one year for many cases. I think the range appears to be somewhere between eight and 12 months.

We know that the former Acting Chief Justice in the fall talked about backlogs of up to 10 months. At that time, he said that that backlog was threatening the very existence of the court. We know now that the backlog has worsened. That is the evidence I have. As I say, it is based on anecdotal evidence. It is based on what officials in the minister's department have advised me. It is based on at least one statement by a member of the bench.

Does the minister have the statistical evidence available as to the current backlog? I am not interested in backlog from any previous years. You know, the backlog currently, and that is regarding family violence.

Mrs. Vodrey: The information that I have has been compiled by the Courts Division, and so we are skipping ahead to another line. But I am happy to provide the information here.

What I have is the youth in custody. No. Let me start by saying that currently all provincial courts are setting trials within 12 weeks with the exception of federal trials and commercial frauds, which are at five months. Youth and domestic violence trials which are being set as early as six weeks for in-custody matters and to between five and seven months for youth and domestic court respectively. This represents an improvement of two months since January '94, largely due to the provision of special sittings.

I have an outline of youth in custody, and I see that courts have dates earlier than the ones I am going to provide the member with, and with the new Crowns becoming available we expect to be able to utilize them, but youth in custody, approximately 12 weeks with court dates available earlier than that which we expect to be able to utilize.

Out of custody, approximately five months, again, with court dates, with additional Crown attorneys we may be able to have the cases seen sooner than that. Adult in custody 12 weeks. Adult out of custody three months. I will say that excludes the domestic violence court. So our range of time frame—I am referring to a memo prepared by Courts of May 26. This is the actual statistical information that is available. I am not able to deal with the anecdotal information the member has because I have not heard it, and I do not know whether there are special circumstances around the setting of those particular court dates.

I am looking at cases across Canada, across Canada comparisons, and I see that Manitoba compares really quite reasonably well. In the area of youth in custody, as I said, we are approximately 12 weeks with court time available

earlier than 12 weeks, which we expect to be able to utilize with the new Crowns. In Calgary, we have approximately eight to 10 weeks, the same in Ottawa. Youth out of custody, we have five months in Winnipeg, four to five months in Edmonton, five to six months in Calgary, seven months in Ottawa.

Adult in custody, as I said, we have approximately 12 weeks, one to three months in Edmonton, eight to 10 weeks in Calgary, eight to 10 weeks in Ottawa. Adult out of custody, we are at three months, Edmonton three months, Calgary four months and Ottawa seven months. In Vancouver, I have a comparison of six months.

So our time in which we can bring a case forward certainly is within the time frame and certainly stacks up very well according to cross-Canada comparisons.

Mr. Mackintosh: When the minister gives the figure for adult court, has she separated out the statistics from the family violence court, as opposed to the general division?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, yes, I did say when I reported the statistics that that excluded the domestic violence court because the others do not have that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the member have the statistical evidence from the domestic violence court?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I believe in my earlier remarks, I spoke about domestic violence trials which are being set for as early as six weeks for in-custody matters, and five to seven months for out of custody.

* (2110)

Mr. Mackintosh: It appears that the parameters, the five to seven months, it is not representative. While there may be trials available in five or six months, there are so few dates available that it is not really significant in terms of the number of trials that are affected. In fact, even seven months is too short a time frame. I know there are trials being set further than seven months from now.

I just want to clarify though, would the minister advise whether the measurement is from the date

that the trial date is obtained to the date of the trial; in other words, from the screening court to the trial?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I understand that some of the statistics are from screening court time, but I have additional information, updated information, which tells me that the likelihood would perhaps be the addition of one other month from the time of the arrest; and just to speak about that time frame as being part of the due process time in which there are certain events which have to occur before the screening court time, the exchange of particulars being one.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know the minister has used the term due process, and I am sure she would want to include the laying of the charges being part of due process. I want the minister to clarify for the committee that it can take several months before a matter even goes to a screening court.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that the time frame of several months is just not accurate. It is just not accurate, and this is with the most recent information. Now, the member may have, to his knowledge, certain specific cases which for some reason have taken that time and for which there may be an explanation, but certainly that is not the norm. If I was to give numbers of a norm, it could be between three and six weeks, though cases may be seen before three weeks.

Mr. Mackintosh: Perhaps the minister and I will have to engage in some exchange of evidence over the next little while, and I am confident that the evidence will clearly show that we have backlogs in the domestic violence court for child abuse cases that range in excess of 18 months. Domestic violence cases from the time of the offence to the date of trial is a year, and in youth court can be as much as 11 months; that is, considering that it sometimes takes two to three months, perhaps sometimes more for a matter even to get set down for a trial date or to get to the point where a trial date is assigned.

If anecdotal evidence is what we have to rely on, so be it, but I guess I would like the minister to clarify that her statistics do not indicate the time it takes from the alleged offence to the date of trial.

* (2120)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, this is a complex answer, and it is a serious issue, so I will attempt to give the member again the information around this issue.

Unless the accused pleads guilty with the first judicial officer, there will be a certain amount of lag time. That lag time is necessary for the due process that I continue to speak about.

One of the important activities that takes place at that time is discussion between counsel to see if the issue can be resolved. That discussion is important. It does not necessarily mean only one meeting or one discussion—it can be several—and that is an important matter to avoid difficulties at the other end.

I can also say to the member that we are not complacent about any of the issues around court time. We have put more resources into trying to improve the length of time that it takes to bring a case forward, but there will always be a certain amount of time required from the time of the offence when the person is arrested and sees the hearing officer, which occurs within the first 24 hours. Then there are issues of disclosure that the member well knows of, which are very complex; of discussion between counsel, which also are very complex. So there are a series of activities which must occur in that time frame which cannot be discounted.

I will also remind the member that delay is also subject to judicial supervision, and that judges do play a role in looking at the time that cases are being set down. So the process is an important one right from the time of the arrest, the appearance before the hearing officer, all of the due process which takes place, an appearance in screening court, the preparation for trial and then the appearance in the Provincial Court. That is always going to take a certain amount of time.

When this government set up the domestic violence court, we set as our optimum three months, and that was our goal, though goals across the country for other kinds of prosecutions have been in the range of six months. We try to set and say very clearly that the whole issue of family

violence was a particularly important one, and we still continue to look at prioritizations, to make sure that the cases of severity and particularly those involving children are set down.

Where the member has information that would be helpful to me as minister in looking at dealing with the issue of backlog, then I think we should have the opportunity to talk about that because it is important to the people of Manitoba that this court work, and we are doing everything we can as a government to ensure that it does, and we will continue to do that. I have spoken about the systemic requirements, and we have touched on a number of them today in Estimates so far, not just in the area of prosecutions and Crown attorneys, also what happens in court, when that court time might be, are there other possibilities, and so there are a number of areas that we are looking at to try and make sure that this is the most efficient process possible.

Mr. Mackintosh: Our concern about the backlogs is that we never get that first case, that first Manitoba Askoff or Moran case, because of course what happened in Ontario, the reaction was the dismissal of over 50,000 charges, and it is particularly the family violence court that I think of when I say this, that it would be the gravest tragedy in Manitoba history if that were to occur.

We already have, as the minister notes, a backlog of up to seven months from the date the trial date is given. We have some process that took place before that, so we are looking at seven, eight, nine, and I know much longer than that in domestic violence court. In the face of that, we have the Filmon Fridays, and those will really kick in this summer. Then we have the kick-in of the lost judge time. We have three vacancies currently. I understand, and we will talk about this further in Estimates, we will have a further loss of eight full-time judges. My understanding is that some of those or perhaps all of them will be coming back and working up to 80 or 90 days a year. You can see we have a significant loss of judge time.

I know the minister has said on occasion to the media and in this Chamber that those positions will be filled, but we know that there has been a delay

of 15 months already in the appointment of the replacement for Brandon. So we have a double whammy meeting head on with this growing backlog, particularly in domestic violence court, and particularly in child abuse cases.

I will do everything I can to spur the government and spur the minister into an emergency plan to deal with this.

The legal community is very concerned about the growing backlog. It is the subject of daily discussion. It is of vital concern to those dealing with youth cases, and it is unfortunate that in all the areas it is the area of youth crime, child abuse and domestic violence where the backlogs are growing and are threatening because it is those areas that require immediate, quick, timely redress.

I ask the minister, would she, as part of the solution now consider doing away with Filmon Fridays in the courts?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the member speaks of growing backlogs. I would like to correct him. The information that I gave him shows an improvement of two months since January, that what has been described as a backlog is in fact reducing, and it is very important that Manitobans have the accurate information, that Manitobans not be frightened and fearful by inaccurate information. So I would like to stress, again, that the time frame is reduced by two months. That is a change and that is a development.

Secondly, this evening, I have spoken about increased resources in the area of Prosecutions. We are not yet at the Courts line, but in the area of Prosecutions, I have spoken about the availability of two additional Crown attorneys, one for the youth court and one for the domestic violence court. That also is a mechanism to deal with the time frame. In the numbers that I gave him, I was very specific in my answer to remind him that courts have earlier dates and that, with the addition of the Crowns, those court dates can be utilized.

So that is two pieces of information that are significantly different than the information that the member continues to speak about in terms of the time it takes to bring the case forward.

* (2130)

The member continues to reference judges. When we get to the line that speaks about judges, we can speak in more detail, but as the member knows, yes, there are three vacancies. He also knows, I am sure, that the judicial nominating committees are now in place to fill those judges' positions.

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

It did require, and I will remind him again, the Chief Judge to determine where those judges would be placed, so the order in which appointments were done was that there was an appointment of the Chief Judge first, and following that, the Chief Judge then reviewed where judges were placed.

So there is certainly both explanation and action to the issues of judges, and I would remind him not to confuse and to mix together a whole series of issues, each of which has an explanation, and, in fact, a positive explanation, in all three of those areas.

The member speaks of the workweek reduction as a fourth part. In the area of the workweek reduction, I can tell him that 300 cases were absorbed into the system, and that only 26 cases need to be rescheduled. The good news is that all 26 were rescheduled to dates before the summer.

So in every case where the member has tried to indicate what he calls a growing crisis, a growing backlog, the explanation is exactly the opposite. The explanation is a positive one: reduced backlog, increased resources, committees operating to replace the judges, and cases rescheduled before the summer.

Mr. Mackintosh: My recollection is that the minister indicated there was an improvement of two months in the backlog in respect of the youth court. Can you just confirm whether my understanding is correct or not?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I can say to the member that the information I have as of May 26 from courts is an improvement of two months since January 1994. My understanding is that youth court is at approximately five months, youth out of custody. It was about seven months,

and it has reduced to five months, so there is an improvement in that area.

Mr. Mackintosh: I wonder if the minister would agree to provide to me or table the memo from the courts dated May 26.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I certainly would arrange to have courts prepare some information for the member which provides the most up-to-date information on youth in custody, out of custody, adults in custody and out of custody, and updated information on the family violence court and also the youth court.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to firm this up, from what the minister said, there is no indication that the backlog is lessening in the family violence court? She only spoke about the youth court?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, at this point, I have the Prosecutions staff with me. If the member would like to look at this in greater detail, we certainly can do that when the Courts staff are here, but the information that I have from Courts is that, yes, this does represent an improvement in the range of two months.

As I spoke to him about last week, the backlog at that time was approximately four and a half months, that there were court dates available in September and into early October. Tonight, since I have spoken about the additional resources in youth court and family violence court, we will be able to look at working with courts to have dates as early as possible. If dates are available, we will attempt to certainly take that time provided the defense or the person acting for the other side is able to do that too.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, we will canvass again the backlog in the domestic violence courts when we get to the Courts line.

Earlier, the minister said that the backlog objectives in Canada included a six-month backlog for out-of-custody cases. I was just wondering who established that objective.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am advised that this information comes from a survey done by the Ontario Court of Appeal at the time of the Askoff decision, and they looked across

Canada and they asked across Canada what the optimum time frame, what is the best that could be hoped for, and that is where the three-month, six-month time frame came from.

* (2140)

Mr. Mackintosh: What is the intention of the minister in filling the expected eight full-time judicial positions?

Mrs. Vodrey: That question belongs in the Courts Division in the area of Judicial Services. For the member's reference, it is 5.(d).

Mr. Mackintosh: Dealing with the issue of diversion, would the minister agree that mediation in domestic violence cases is an inappropriate diversion?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said earlier, and the member knows, the whole issue of mediation does require the agreement of both parties. There is really not a mediation service which has experience in dealing with both parties who are in this particular type of conflict. It is not an idea that is currently—does not have wide support and has not been recommended to me. We maintain that the issue of family violence is a crime and treat it extremely seriously, but, as I explained to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), there is a committee, a working group which flows from the implementation committee, which is examining a number of issues, but that committee has not provided any recommendations to move forward in this way.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would certainly urge the minister to continue the path that it appears that she is going down and that mediation is entirely inappropriate as a diversion for domestic violence cases. There are two parties going into that mediation who are unequal in bargaining power, and there is usually one party that would be oppressed and that will continue into the mediation room.

I hope the minister will come out strongly against mediation as any way of dealing with backlog, and that it is inappropriate for domestic violence cases to be dealt with in that way.

Following up on what the minister said about Beausejour and the justice committee there, I feel

that one of the long-term solutions to court backlogs is to get away from this notion that all of our problems, all of our legal problems, all of the criminal problems in society can be dealt with by court system, which continues to lumber along. Of course, it has lumbered along since the early days in western Europe or in England, in particular. We have often said, well, just leave that to the courts and somehow that will deal with it, and then we will all be safe. I think recent experience has indicated more than ever that we have to rethink the criminal system, the justice system. Not only rethink the role of the courts but rethink the role of the victim, rethink the role of the community, rethink the role of the offender's family. I think there is a great potential in, No. 1, Youth Justice Committees; and second of all, what I would call adult justice committees. It sounds like that is what Beausejour is doing.

As the minister may know, and I am sure she does, our caucus distributed a paper entitled Safer Manitoba, Empowering Community Action on Youth Crime, and we sent out thousands of those documents—in fact, I think half of them on demand—across Manitoba. As a result of the distribution of that document, I was able to travel across the province, north and south, and across the borders in other ways to talk with individuals and organizations, hundreds of them, about solutions to youth crime, both the systemic preventative solutions, and as well about the role of justice committees and community-based policing.

I believe now more than ever that Youth Justice Committees and adult justice committees are something that we have to foster and encourage. I know the minister said that she was receptive to the idea of such methods of diversion. I do not like to refer to them so much as diversion but community empowerment, handing back to the community a problem and enlisting the community in the solution of whether it be youth crime or adult crime.

I know that Beausejour is not the only place that is doing something like this. In fact, the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and I were up in St. Theresa Point, and I know there are several

aboriginal communities that, as a matter of course and as a matter of culture, deal with offenders, the nonviolent offenders through the community programs, often bringing the victim in to deal with the offender and the offender looking eye to eye with the victim. There is a making up; there is a facing up. I think there is a healing there. I think there is an accountability that is lacking in the official court system.

I would ask the minister if she would consider not just being receptive to the use and the role of Youth Justice Committees, but, in fact, would take an active role in spurring the development of Youth Justice Committees in Manitoba, spurring them through whether it be staffpersons to go out and try and find people in the community to head up these organizations and take part in them or whether it be by some financial incentives. I will ask the minister if she could respond to that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chair, I do not mean to be difficult in going through these Estimates, but I want to answer the questions as fully as I can. This is an issue which is dealt with through the division of Corrections, and it is the Corrections officials, when they are here, who will be able to assist in giving the greatest amount of information about the activities that are undertaken through Corrections to encourage Youth Justice Committees.

I certainly in the nine-point plan made a statement that I am very interested in Youth Justice Committees in encouraging them and in expanding their mandate. I have written that down as a stated goal and have—I believe that when Corrections comes, I will be able to give the member the exact number, but I believe that I have signed into existence approximately five additional Youth Justice Committees since January. So we are looking to work with communities to make Youth Justice Committees a reality and to make sure that they have the support that they require in order to do their work. We have also spoken tonight about expanding the mandate of those Youth Justice Committees, so I think we can discuss them perhaps in greater detail in the Corrections area.

Mr. Mackintosh: In light of the apparent delays occurring with child abuse cases, has the minister or department considered establishing a child abuse court, given that there are unique dynamics to child abuse and given the backlog that is being experienced?

* (2150)

Mrs. Vodrey: I want to say a couple of things on this. First of all, the whole issue of child abuse cases is that it is a serious one and an important one. Certainly those are cases which we can and do prioritize. The member is, I think, raising concerns which arose from a newspaper article which cited a comment by the reviewer of the family violence court, and we have asked that person who developed that review, which really was a positive one, to give us the information on the case which was referred to, which took an exceptionally long time, because I would like to know why a case would take that long and what the circumstances would be that would cause a case to take that long in the area of child abuse. So I would like to reassure the member and Manitobans that we certainly attempt to prioritize child abuse cases.

The member then asked, does this mean that we might develop a special court for child abuse? The answer at this point is no. We have, at the moment, a domestic violence court which includes cases of child abuse, which has experienced Crown attorneys who have the ability and the expertise to deal with these cases. So, at the moment, we will be operating with the court that we have established now, the first of its kind in Canada, with the experienced Crown attorneys that we have, but we will continue to look at cases of child abuse and attempt to prioritize them.

I will also remind the member that as a support we have a child victim worker program, which also seeks to assist the child who has been abused. So we are looking to provide the supports already within our domestic violence court.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just for the record, the minister should know that I have read the Ursel report cover to cover and I got nothing from the newspaper that led to my question in Question Period or tonight. I also add that Professor Ursel spoke about child

abuse cases which—I am trying to remember the exact words—can frequently take up to 18 months to process. So we were not talking about one single incident here, and I know from first-hand experience that there are child abuse cases that are taking longer than 18 months now.

Just another issue I would like to canvass with the minister, on diversion, with the Beausejour Justice Committee. What is the scope of the adult offences that the Beausejour Justice Committee deals with?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the kinds of offences, I am informed, are minor, nonviolent offences, nonrepeater offences, as a rule. Now, there may be exceptions to that, but that is the general policy.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise whether she entered into any agreement with the federal government in order to facilitate the diversion of adult cases at Beausejour?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the answer is no.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is it advice that the minister has that there is no constitutional difficulty facilitating the growth of adult justice committees or adult diversion in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: I would remind the member that the administration of criminal justice is a provincial responsibility. So it is within our constitutional responsibility to proceed in this way, and also, there is no impediment to police not laying the charge or to Crowns not proceeding. So this is a possibility. I am certainly given information that it is possible for us to proceed in these areas.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister may want to talk about this later on, but I think this is appropriate. Has she considered taking steps to foster the growth of adult justice committees in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, this is probably an issue which is best discussed when Corrections officials are here to discuss it in a broader way.

Mr. Kowalski: Just some things that came up from some of the questions from the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). When I mentioned earlier about more resources and more Crown

attorneys, I was told that was only part of the system. Yet some of the answers to some of the questions of the member for St. Johns refer to these two new Crown attorneys, and it will affect the backlog. So, if two more Crown attorneys will affect the backlog, will two more after that affect the backlog, and at what point, how many more Crown attorneys could be added to positively affect the backlog?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as I said to the member, there is a systemic influence all through and there are several points at which we can have an influence, but I understand that these two Crown attorneys—at the moment, there are quite a few Crowns who are senior prosecutors who earn a certain amount of holidays, who have a certain amount of time in which they can be away from the work that they do. So the influence of the two new Crown attorneys will really be quite significant in terms of the work that we have. I think I can only explain it that way.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Kowalski: So would one more help more?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, well, what the member is getting at is that, if we could continue to grow and grow in all areas of the Department of Justice, more and more Crown attorneys, build more courtrooms, have more and more judges available to us, if we had endless numbers of people trained and available to us, yes, of course, we would continue to be able to make a difference. But I think that the important point is that we are looking for ways that will make a significant difference, ways that will make a difference to the system, ways that can be seen to make a difference in a short time. We look through all parts of the system. We are not able to massively revamp the whole system or to have and name large numbers of new Crowns and judges and sheriffs and magistrates and so on through the system, but we are continuing to work towards making it the best and the most efficient system possible.

* (2200)

Mr. Kowalski: I was not talking about building an empire. What I was talking about was this court backlog and to take remedial measures, and we

talked about part-time Crown attorneys. I am told that adding additional Crown attorneys would, because of systemic problems of resources in the system, that just Crown attorneys alone would not help, but two Crown attorneys will. I was being a little bit facetious by saying one more Crown attorney, but is two the optimum number that will positively affect? Will one more after that, two, three more, four more—has the minister's department said, this is the maximum number of Crown attorneys with the other resources in there that will positively affect this backlog and bring it within her department's goals, three months for custody cases and six months for out of custody cases?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I can say this again. I am not sure how I can make myself more clear on this. First of all, in the dates that I gave to the member earlier in terms of youth in custody, out of custody, adult in custody, out of custody, we are within that three to six month range. Those numbers were within the three to six month range.

The member has expressed particular concern in the area of youth court and domestic violence court or family violence court, and within those courts, as I have said, for youth court, I am informed that the time frame is approximately five months, and for domestic violence court it is approximately seven months. So we fall close to that range, and I just want to say, although I have used those months in terms of domestic violence court and youth court, the information I had last week was that in domestic violence court it was approximately four and a half months to be able to set a date. So the times fluctuate slightly, but we are attempting to come as close as we can within those national guidelines, and we would like to approach even more closely the three-month goal that we have set for ourselves for the domestic violence court. So we are not complacent with what we have achieved now, recognizing that we need due process, recognizing there is always a certain amount of time to bring a case through the court process.

I can only continue to stress, I cannot give a definitive answer if there is a threshold number specifically of Crown attorneys that will make the

difference. I can only continue to say that through the system we have to look for the points, and we see that making changes—sometimes they are very small changes—throughout several parts of the system does create a change and does create a benefit. That is the way we have had to approach it, not just look for what is a threshold number in one area.

We know that the addition of two Crown attorneys is going to make a difference because of the number of senior Crowns that we have at the moment, and that will make a difference.

We have to look at what we can do in Courts areas, and we have to look through the whole system. We have to look at what the member has spoken about in terms of Youth Justice Committees and diversion in some of the cases that are suitable for that kind of a process. We will look at all of them, and we certainly have not stopped. We continue to remain open to ideas, but we have to assess the workability of those ideas within the system.

Mr. Kowalski: What I have heard tonight is that although three months for custody case, six months for custody is a survey nationally, this department is trying to achieve even better than that. That is the goal and we will be watching.

One thing I am interested in, that survey that came up with those figures, was that from date of arrest?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I do not have the information tonight about what the time frame referred to in that particular study is, so I will have to look and see what it is.

I just want to take a moment to say that we have also tried a pilot project within the Courts and Prosecutions, Prosecutions particularly, to see if we are able to also work on any backlog time which asks the Crowns to bring cases forward within a three-month period to examine the case and to see if that case looks as if it has everything that it needs to go forward. That allows a decision to be made earlier and avoids that case to be then long term, booking court time which in fact may not be used. So we have tried to institute not only through resources but also through process in

terms of the conduct of cases how we can alleviate any backlog.

Mr. Kowalski: I would appreciate if that information could be obtained, because although it is not a goal for government in that they say they want to exceed that benchmark, but to understand that benchmark, what it means. It makes a big difference if it is from the time of arrest or from the time of a screening court appearance. So, if we are going to use that as a benchmark, we should know what it means.

The question of lag time to due process, are some of the lag times attributed to resources within the department in that getting out the particulars because of the amount of clerical staff, disclosures, Crown attorneys being able to meet with defence attorneys? Can that lag time be reduced with a re-evaluation of the resources required in that if we are looking at lessening the backlog?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that we are not getting any complaints at all from the defence community around the time for the exchange of particulars.

Mr. Kowalski: Whether or not there are concerns, it is part of the backlog. It is part of the time from the time of arrest to the disposition of the case. That is what we are trying to achieve because we know of the detrimental effects of the delay in youth cases and family violence cases and child abuse cases. So whether or not there are complaints, you know, if there are ways of achieving a reduction in that lag time for the due process with some minor resources, as the minister has stated, they are always looking for even small things that could reduce that lag time. I hope they will continue, and I am wondering if with more resources.

* (2210)

The question I have about this lag time is, we have heard three to six weeks before going to screening court, and I am wondering if it is possible to receive more definitive statistics. I know from the court assistance form that there is a date of arrest on each court assistance form, and I know there is a date for when the person appears in screening court. Can we get that information as to

how long it is taking, a definitive statistic that shows us what is happening right now?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that in the exchange of particulars that by and large occurs at the first appearance. That would occur at the intake docket and before the screening court.

I think the member's other question was, is there any way to refine that time frame that Courts has given? I am not sure, other than a specific case, because that is a range of time which I have had explained as being within the range. I am not sure what further refinements I can provide for the member.

Mr. Kowalski: We have heard that since January there has been a reduction by two months in the backlog. Between January and now, I do not know how many Filmon Fridays there were. If most of them are in the summer, I am wondering if the fact that the reduction came when there were no Filmon Fridays shows a trend that when there will be more Filmon Fridays, we will see the backlog go up.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, as I explained in an earlier answer we have managed to reschedule 26 cases. There are only 26 cases which require a rescheduling as a result of the workweek reduction. As I said in an earlier answer, those have been rescheduled to a time before the summer.

Mr. Kowalski: I am wondering if I could receive some information as to when the backlog peaked. What was the trend from the time of the inception of the family court, as one backlog we are concerned about. When did it peak? What was it at its inception? When did it peak? Now we know where it is now, but when did it peak?

Mrs. Vodrey: As the member knows, there is always a fluctuation, and I understand that it would be very difficult to actually pinpoint the time of the peak. However, I am informed that there seemed to be a longer period of time in the fall time, '93-94, with from January '94 the time reducing.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the department conducted any study estimating the likely backlog month by month as we proceed toward the winter in each of

the courts, the family violence court and the youth court?

Mrs. Vodrey: As the member would know, it is very difficult to forecast, because there is no control over the number of cases that might come in at the front end in a forecast. The member asks us to forecast ahead how many cases might come in in June, July, August, September.

What we do, however, is through the management committee, this is now an agenda item to be considered. Each month the management committee looks at the court dates that are being set in that month, and therefore they have a month-over-month comparison. They have an opportunity through that close monitoring to be aware of any change in the range of time and if in fact there is an increase in the dates or in the time available for court time.

As I have said during our discussion on this this evening, we make every attempt then to make changes to find out, first of all, what it is that has caused the change, and then to make the kinds of adjustments that would be necessary. I spoke about one when I was answering the member for The Maples about how now Crowns are bringing cases forward earlier to have a look at whether the case will proceed.

I am informed that actually is working very well and helps us look then, not set court dates way down the road, which then in fact may not be used.

Mr. Mackintosh: We are just wondering if you might want to take a break now, and then we can get into the area of youth crime.

* (2220)

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute recess? [agreed] This committee will recess until 10:26.

The committee recessed at 10:20 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 10:31 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please resume.

We are on 2.(a) Public Prosecutions (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,771,900.

Mr. Mackintosh: The intention now, Madam Chairperson, is to deal with the government's response to rising youth crime and, in particular, the nine-point plan proposed by the minister.

I want to start off by repeating what I said in private members' hour not long ago that whenever something takes place like the summit on youth crime, a government should be commended for reaching out and looking for solutions from the community at large. I was very impressed with the organization that went into that summit, and I was very impressed with the quality of people who came out.

I would say on the downside, I would have liked to have seen a more representative grouping. I thought it represented perhaps more middle Manitoba. I think there was an underrepresentation of aboriginal people, in particular, and there was an underrepresentation of youth and youth at risk and families at risk. Having said that, I think it was something good.

I would like to ask the minister then what she did once the recommendations from the summit were compiled and put into the volume entitled Community Voices, Community Action. What did she do with those recommendations? In fact, did she bring them to the cabinet table? What process did she go through to vet those recommendations?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, if the member is asking what did we do with the book Community Voices, Community Action, and did that go to government for approval, the answer is no. Those 700 recommendations or approximately 500—because some were repeated within the 700 that were received—they were reported absolutely faithfully as received.

That is why the member will know as he reads through Community Voices, Community Action, some groups had opposing views as to how certain areas should be managed, but we included them all. It was a completely pure reporting of the work that came from those discussion groups, and we compiled them into Community Voices, Community Action, released them as promised from the summit.

They were released to participants from the summit. We sent them to interested Manitobans and have tried to make them as available as possible all across this province. Whenever I am out speaking, I will ask a group, do you have Community Voices, Community Action; can I send you some copies? I was on radio in Brandon. I said to the radio host: Have you seen this? I will send you some copies and make sure that they are made available to yourself and your listeners.

I have advised people that those recommendations are meant to be xeroxed, to be used however communities want to use them. They can partialise them. They can use the whole book. They can take what appears to be useful to themselves in their own community group. They are meant to be used by Manitobans, and we have made an effort to make sure that as many Manitobans as possible can access them and have told Manitobans just to go ahead, divide them up.

The book, as the member has seen, is not a glossy print book. It is a book held together by a staple. That was done quite on purpose so that people could take the book apart and xerox the pages and have the greatest availability as possible.

Mr. Mackintosh: First, I think there has been some editing certainly of the book. I mean, that is not surprising. I recall the words of the facilitator, Professor Stuesser, when he presented the reports from the working groups. He talked about the great emphasis on prevention and families, and there was a consensus, I think, of 27 of the 28 groups that that was the focus and that was where the government should look.

Having said that, I would like to know then, did the minister provide her cabinet colleagues with a copy of Community Voices, Community Action? If so, how was it that they came to arrive at the nine-point plan after 700 recommendations went to the minister?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, it was based on the information that was found in Community Voices, Community Action. What we attempted to do was to take meaning from those recommendations.

As the member knows, the recommendations were very wide reaching. They were recommendations to community groups, to families, to several levels of government, including the Department of Justice. All of those recommendations did not point to the Department of Justice specifically.

What we did was to look at the kinds of things that people had said and then make a start, start with a nine-point plan to address some of the issues which were raised. The nine-point plan is not the end, is not the be-all and the end-all, and is not the final product of what we would like to do with youth crime and violence. It is a start.

Manitobans asked for a start. They asked for a position. They wanted to see action. I believe that is important, so the government developed the nine-point plan, approved the nine-point plan. We have been making moves even since the announcement of the nine-point plan to move further, to take on other initiatives. We encourage communities to do that also.

Mr. Mackintosh: Were there some basic criteria that were used to decide on those particular nine points from the 700 recommendations?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said, we attempted to give meaning for those recommendations which were directed at the Department of Justice and to come up with some course of action. That is exactly what we did. As the member reviews the nine-point plan, he will see that there is activity in the area of prevention, that there is activity in the area of intervention, and that there is activity in the area of consequences. So through the nine-point plan we made a start.

We made a start based on the same plan that the summit operated within, the same three categories that the summit operated within, and from that will continue to work. We continue to work with the community; we continue to work on government initiatives to make a start in terms of dealing with youth crime and violence.

Mr. Mackintosh: I guess the point I am getting at is: How is it that the summit concluded almost unanimously that there must be a new era of family and youth supports in Manitoba, that we had to

look at prevention, and then the nine-point plan really does not deal with that aspect?

* (2240)

Mrs. Vodrey: A number of the new ways of looking at things, new ways of doing things, apply to families themselves, apply to things that families can do or that people can do as a group of families and as members of a community. So the nine-point plan speaks not only to government, but it speaks to direction for families that came from families. It speaks to schools; it speaks to young people themselves. It speaks to community groups.

There were recommendations that many could take from many points. For government, from the Department of Justice, what we took was meaning in terms of initiatives that we were able to put in place, and put in place quickly.

One of the things that I did not want to have happen, I did not want to have a big, long time before we were able to come up with some kind of plan that would eventually be in action some time down the road. I felt that the issues of youth crime and justice were so important that we had to act quickly, and we acted quickly in actually an unprecedented fashion to put forward the summit. It was approximately six weeks from the time that the summit was announced till the time that the summit actually took place. That was a huge and monumental effort, but it was done with determination by those people who participated to see that something would happen immediately and then the release of the recommendations. It took time to put together everything that people said, to faithfully check out with facilitators that what had been recorded and what was being read was actually what had been intended by that group. So there was a great deal of work to be faithful to the work of the people who participated in the summit.

I wanted to make sure that we just did not then release Community Voices, Community Action and say that we were reviewing what we might do towards reducing youth crime and violence. So we looked at a start, a nine-point plan that addressed something in the area of each of those three important categories, and others—communities and families—may address other points. But it was

a start, and as I said to the member, we continue to add to that start on a regular and ongoing basis.

Mr. Mackintosh: I do not know what role the minister had on that Saturday in the working groups and that, but I assume that she had a good ear to the ground.

I know that she would agree that, I think, the essential statement of the major theme coming from Manitobans at that conference was set out on page 9 of the report where it said, the widely held view of Manitobans at the summit was that higher priority ought to be placed upon programs, policies and initiatives affecting children and the family: governments to place priority on families and children and to analyze every decision on how it impacts on families; re-examine and evaluate the impact and role of daycare, including universal daycare; invest in children between the ages of two and five years of age; safety net for children at risk between infancy and five years of age; priority of these programs to be higher.

How can she reconcile that with the nine-point plan?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the member knows that there were recommendations which came from the summit which government was to address broadly, not just the Department of Justice, but recommendations which may be addressed by government broadly.

So the nine-point plan was a plan of action that the Department of Justice could put forward, but the results of the summit were circulated across government so that they could be considered, so that we could look at what we already had in place. One of the things that came out was the importance of making sure Manitobans understood what was already available to them, that in many cases people did not know what kind of supports were available, both in government and in the community.

One of the goals that communities may have as they implement some of the recommendations of Community Voices, Community Action is to make sure that people are aware of what is available.

Mr. Mackintosh: Given that the minister has said that the report was circulated within government,

has the minister initiated or any other minister initiated a process, for example, a committee or a council to review in an ongoing way the report from the summit?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, as the member knows, ministers, particularly human services ministers, have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis and as ministers develop initiatives or want to explore initiatives. That committee is certainly an already available vehicle to look at what may be considered. Certainly from the Department of Justice, initiatives are taken forward to that committee, and we have an opportunity to look at initiatives by all of those particular departments and to be able to discuss them.

One of the things that was recommended was to make sure that there was full discussion and a knowledge of impact on other kinds of services that governments might provide. That particular committee is available to human services ministers.

Mr. Mackintosh: We understand, for example, that with the Pedlar report, there was an implementation committee established, and I am just wondering if there is not an implementation committee that can be established following the summit. Surely, the minister would agree it is important that the government review the recommendations in a systematic way and not just every once in awhile get together and chat about youth crime or some responses to it, but that there be a comprehensive and systematic approach so that the summit recommendations can be implemented in a meaningful way.

Would the minister agree that kind of process should unfold?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I would like to say that the nine-point plan focuses and is an initial thrust, a response by government to Community Voices, Community Action and to what happened on the day of the summit.

I think it is important that we are able to provide some focus and that Manitobans do know what is happening. So we have an initial start, and there have been other initiatives which have been

developed since the nine-point plan was announced in the throne speech and also put forward by the Department of Justice.

I can assure the member that we continue to look at what has been recommended, and the whole issue of youth crime and violence and government's part of the responsibility is continually considered, but I would remind the member that what is contained in Community Voices, Community Action speaks also to communities and speaks also to groups of people and interest groups. I think of groups like Y Neighbours, and groups of parents who come together who also have the opportunity to look at Community Voices, Community Action, and to look at what steps they might take within their neighbourhood.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister talked about social service provider ministers, is that right? That was an ongoing group within government that met on an ongoing basis? Could she describe what that grouping is, whom it is comprised of?

Mrs. Vodrey: I spoke about human services ministers coming together. So, of course, we would look at co-operation among ministers such as the Ministers of Education and Family Services and Justice and Health, and there are other ministers who may also be a part of discussions.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the Minister responsible for Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) part of such a body, if in fact this is a formal body?

Mrs. Vodrey: The Minister of Northern and Native Affairs may also participate. I just want to tell the member who has never been a part of a government that there are opportunities for ministers and particularly ministers with shared interest to have an opportunity to look at specific issues and initiatives. There is not only one opportunity or one process, but there are several.

* (2250)

Mr. Mackintosh: Unless the minister corrects me, my understanding from the answers to the questions is that there is, in fact, no implementation committee, if you will. There is no special organization or co-ordinated effort to continually review and look at the implementation

of the recommendations set out in the summit report. Could the minister confirm that?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member I think I have a sense of what he is asking now. I can tell him that there is a designated official within the Department of Justice who is charged with the responsibility of looking at the recommendations that flow from Community Voices, Community Action. That departmental official is certainly to liaise with other departments so that we are able to look at what may be jointly accomplished or what may be considered. That person reports through the ADM of Prosecutions.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise the name of the official and the official's title description?

Mrs. Vodrey: The individual's name is Glen Lewis, and his title is senior policy analyst.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is my understanding correct, that this would be part of several other duties that are assigned to the senior policy analyst?

Mrs. Vodrey: This is that individual's principal work. He may do other duties as necessary, but this is his primary function.

Mr. Mackintosh: The individual reports to Mr. Whitley. Is that correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the member does report through Mr. Whitley, through the ADM of Prosecutions then on to the minister.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise what directives have been given to the senior policy analyst with regard to further reviewing and seeing through to implementation of the summit recommendations?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, at the moment that individual is focusing primarily on the implementation of the nine-point plan. I will remind the member that we made a commitment to action. The action has in most cases certainly been operative, but we want to make sure that these initiatives get off the ground, are operating well and certainly are successful.

With the prioritization of the nine-point plan as the individual's main duties, we will look at others as we accomplish what we have set forward so far.

Mr. Mackintosh: Perhaps on that note we should look at the nine-point plan and if we can just canvass with the minister the status of that plan. The first part of that plan was boot camps, military and/or wilderness camps. I know from reading the call for proposals that the government has apparently changed its language and its approach on that issue. I am wondering if the minister could advise what her position is as to contracting with private-for-profit organizations for the administration of those camps.

Mrs. Vodrey: We can discuss this in detail when we reach Corrections 4.(c). I think there are a couple of errors just in the member's question.

Let me just take him to the point that we received a number of inquiries as soon as the announcement was made and that we were receiving a number of unsolicited proposals. I think there has been a great error that we have, in fact, solicited proposals. The letter the member refers to simply was our attempt to say to those people who had approached us and wanted to provide us with information, if you do want to submit unsolicited proposals, here are the areas of our consideration, so there could be a standardization of the kinds of information that groups wanted to give us about themselves and about the kind of work they do. I think that is a very important distinction.

I can tell the member that, yes, proposals have been received, and I can also tell him no decisions have been made whatsoever in that area.

The member also suggests that there has been some change in terms of youth camps, wilderness camps from the beginning of the nine-point plan or from the announcement of the nine-point plan.

I answered this afternoon, and I think it is important to answer again, that what was put forward with that announcement were principles that those particular camps would operate within. The term boot camp was the term which was used at the summit. On the day of the announcement I was very careful to say that would be within our existing institutions, that that was the term that was given to the urban setting camps, and it distinguished the camps from the wilderness

camps which were also discussed in the nine-point plan. The description of those was that they would be highly structured. They would be militaristic in that they would be highly structured, that there would be well-known rules, that with those well-known rules would be well-known consequences, a high level of activity and an austere environment.

Those four principles do very strongly resemble certain militaristic styles and are a change from some of the expectations within institutions or perhaps that some people might expect. It was a descriptive way to describe to Manitobans the rigorous confinement that was going to take place. Anything beyond that, characterizations which occurred beyond that, were never anything which I announced. They were never part of the nine-point plan that I announced. They were characterizations which were formed by others. I was very pleased to have the opportunity to correct in people's minds information that had been brought forward by others, not by myself. Many of those characterizations, I should say that I was in fact never asked my opinion. I was never asked to confirm or deny that that was the way. It was simply presented that this is what would happen. I always said, and stand by my very early remarks, that these would be made-in-Manitoba camps, that they would deal with the needs of Manitobans, and they would be founded upon the four principles that I have described.

* (2300)

Mr. Mackintosh: I do not know the value of looking at this much further, although this will be—the public will have to pass judgment. Those points that the minister now raises, of course, were not set out in the press release of February 17, and indeed “harsh new measures aimed at punishing violent young Manitobans” were the words that were used. Then they went on to talk about military camps, and military boot camps are a certain defined genre of correctional facilities in North America, and it was quite clear what the minister was talking about at that time, I think.

In any event, the minister stated that the government has not solicited proposals for youth camps and that what I understood was a call for

proposals was simply a response to unsolicited proposals. Is the minister therefore saying that that document has not been forwarded to aboriginal communities or First Nations or tribal councils in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I have to go back again to correct the member again in the characterization, because going along with the announcement, the press release which the member references regarding the nine-point plan, there was quite a full news conference as well in which I did speak about, at great length in opening remarks, an enhanced or an embellished statement of what the nine-point plan is, covered in the news release.

I did speak at that time about exactly what the meaning of the made-in-Manitoba solution is. The press release was but one way. However, there was on that day a news conference. Following that day, I have not always been asked to clarify a characterization by others about what these camps will be. However, I believe now there has been some additional coverage which now has clarified for Manitobans that this will be a made-in-Manitoba solution and that they can remove some of the visions that they had in their minds strictly of American-style boot camps. I made it clear from the very beginning what this would be. Now, obviously, some people did not understand that at the start.

The member asks then about the unsolicited proposals and then, was this letter which responded to unsolicited proposals circulated to aboriginal groups? I can tell the member that we had certain groups, I believe—and I will have to get the details from Corrections—some aboriginal groups who approached us and who wanted to talk about the work that they do, and so there was some contact directly with those individuals and those groups. I have also made sure that the division of Corrections has had meetings, informal and formal, with aboriginal community members from across the province.

So I am not sure of the member's question. Perhaps he will ask it in a subsequent question if his question is, did we or did we not consult with

aboriginal communities? Again, in making it clear that this is a made-in-Manitoba solution, we are talking to Manitobans.

Mr. Mackintosh: I suggest to the minister that by announcing military boot camps and indeed in writing, what she has done subsequently on discovering that military boot camps in the United States do not work, she has had to find a way around that. But, let us get on with the future here.

My question specifically is—

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: A point of order, Madam Chairperson. The member makes some pronouncements about camps in the United States, and I am sure he has information which tells him that some do work. However, I would like to reinforce to him again—and I see I have to do this very often—that we were always speaking about a made-in-Manitoba solution. That was what was spoken about from the very beginning.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I would encourage the minister not to look to the United States to see what does not work there and bring it to Manitoba. So as I say, let us get on with the future now and look for other custody options that are made in Manitoba and will effectively change behaviour and make Manitobans safer.

Dealing with the youth camp concept, has the document that we have been discussing been sent to First Nations, to the Tribal Councils of Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: I believe the member is now asking, were we soliciting then proposals? Was this sent in order to solicit proposals? As I have said, the letter was written in response to unsolicited inquiries and information which came forward.

However, in terms of the details of contact with the aboriginal communities, we will have to cover that when Corrections is here in the Chamber, and that is 4.(c) for the member's reference.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is it more convenient for the minister that we deal with the youth camp model or concept under Corrections?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, yes it is, though I would say to the member even now that I have not announced, I have not given any details or announced exactly what that will be, but certainly I think our discussion in terms of what has led us to this point would best be discussed under Corrections.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would remind the minister that the clock is ticking here. She announced on February 17 that the model would be introduced within six months.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we are making very good progress in the area of the development of the boot camp and wilderness camp.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just moving to the second point of the nine-point plan, that was the school antiviolence program. The minister and I have had some banter in the Chamber in Question Period on this issue. It is announced as part of a nine-point plan, and my understanding is that that conference was planned well in advance of the nine-point plan, and, in fact, I think the Province of Ontario had some role to play in that. I think the minister alluded to that earlier that it was a cross-Canada program. I understand School Division No. 1 and the Women's Directorate locally were involved in that.

I just want the minister to confirm that, in fact, that one day workshop is not part or was just piggybacked onto the nine-point plan, that that was an independent process entirely.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I can speak about the fact that as a result of initiatives for the Status of Women, which is my other responsibility—I cannot be split too—that, yes, there was an initiative which was available to Manitoba based on some very excellent work by the Women's Directorate from the Status of Women side.

What was announced in the nine-point plan was one of the things that Manitobans have asked for, and that was an integration. Manitobans asked for the walls to come down between departments. They wanted to see co-operation. They wanted to

see that where one area was doing something that would benefit initiatives that they should know about it. This was a way to look at an initiative in the other area of my responsibility, and very much in sync with the concerns of the Justice department, to give it highlight and to give it priority and to give the work of such a seminar a priority and a highlight and a spotlight for Manitobans, and so, though it actually came from, not the Department of Justice but the Status of Women, the Women's Directorate side, it very closely integrated itself and dealt with one of the issues that was raised at the summit, and that was intervention. That was training trainers. That was saying that community workers needed training and that with that training they could go on into their community and train others.

So the London Family Court came to Manitoba. It came to Winnipeg, and we were very specifically chosen. We partnered. We partnered with the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and, again, that was another partnership. It was another opportunity to show Manitobans that one of the things that they had asked for was actually occurring, that there was co-operation between levels of government, that there was co-operation between elected officials and bureaucracies to work towards a solution.

So I was very pleased to include the school-based antiviolence program as part of the nine-point plan because it illustrated for Manitobans co-operation; it illustrated an intervention strategy; and it gave highlight to the work of community workers and people in schools.

* (2310)

Mr. Mackintosh: Did the minister not hear from that workshop that more than one day was needed to address the complex issues and challenges of school-based violence?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, if the member is getting at the fact that other kinds of training programs might be useful, I am sure that they would be. This was the protocol, this was the offering of this particular program. London Family Court offered a one-day seminar. We were not in a

position to say to them we would like you to expand it to two or three days or more.

As a person who worked in that environment, I am sure that the kind of sharing that went on between professionals, the opportunity to practice some of the intervention strategies would be helpful. But the London Family Court offered this for one day. That was the length of the seminar, and we were very happy to have it in Manitoba. Again, the goal was to train the trainers so that those people who were trained on that day could go back into their own communities and continue to train other people in that area of work.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the minister any plans to have another workshop like this, whether for one day or for longer?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, not in the immediate future, we do not have any plans that I am able to announce today that we are able to partner as we did with that particular program. Though, I can tell the member that we are always looking for partnership opportunities, and that is exactly what this was, between service providers and school divisions and professionals. So I can say that both from the Department of Justice and, as I said, this one arose through the Women's Directorate, the Status of Women, that we certainly would look to see if there were any other opportunities such as this.

Mr. Kowalski: Just to understand the process, public prosecutions, most of the things in the nine-point plan have nothing to do with prosecutions. Is this the correct area to be talking about this?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we certainly could be looking at this in other areas as well, but as the co-ordinator, as the staffperson who is the identified person co-ordinating reports through the ADM of Prosecutions, this is an area. We have the ADM of Prosecutions and the director of special prosecutions here, so we have two of the senior staff quite knowledgeable of the status of the program, so this is probably one of the best places, though as we saw in discussion of the boot camps, for instance, that is best discussed in Corrections.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just moving to the third point of the nine-point plan, it announces a Winnipeg Youth Crime Intervention Team will be established. Has that intervention team been established, I ask the minister?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am happy to say and have reported previously that, yes, this intervention team has been formed; yes, this intervention team is currently meeting and has been meeting for at least a couple of months to this point.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have the terms of reference of the intervention team, and does she have a list of the membership?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we can provide that information to the member, both of the terms of reference and the names of the members who sit on that intervention team, but just as a preliminary answer, I would advise him that it is people from Prosecutions, from Education, from Family Services, from police; that it tends to be a multidisciplinary membership. That was always the intention, the multidisciplinary sharing.

Mr. Mackintosh: The terms of reference, as I can understand from the press release, is that the intervention team is to step up surveillance of youth gangs, and I would like to know what has occurred in that regard. Are there now surveillance strategies in place as a result of the intervention team's work?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I can tell the member that certainly the strategy is, I would not be wrong to say, developed at this point, and I am looking to be in a position fairly shortly to make an announcement about that strategy. That announcement, I believe, will demonstrate the co-operation among all the various members and also levels of government, including the federal government.

Mr. Mackintosh: Have representatives of the Winnipeg police department been members of the intervention team, and, if so, how many members of the department?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, there is one member of the Winnipeg Police Services who has been designated to sit as part of this group, but I can also

tell the member that this whole process has been actively followed by the Chief of Police and also by the senior executive of the Winnipeg Police Services.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering what the minister means in the press release of stepping up surveillance of high-risk young offenders. In the United States, there is a program called SHOCAP, for example, and I think Edmonton has it as well. I do not know if the minister is familiar with that program, but what is being done in that regard? How does the team define high-risk young offender?

* (2320)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, we are aware of the SHOCAP model, and we are looking at developing our strategy with the SHOCAP model in mind and also using some of the criteria which they have used to identify high-risk youth. As I said to the member, I look to be in a position to provide an announcement in greater breadth and depth about the activities of this team shortly, but I am just not able at the moment to give him all the details he may like.

Mr. Kowalski: When it talks about police surveillance, surveillance of gang members, I am assuming that the surveillance means more than just actual visual contact, that there will be a surveillance within the schools, within the correction facilities, within different organizations, that the surveillance is a broader surveillance than just keeping intelligence on a number of gang members.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I think it would be best described as a comprehensive intelligence gathering.

Mr. Kowalski: From what my understanding is, within the police department, the people being assigned to this are being assigned from the child abuse unit and they will carry on with other duties. When the height of gang activity is during the summer months, that is when the staffing is the shortest within the police department, when the greatest number of officers are on holidays because of their collective agreement. I am at best cynical about the amount of resources that the

police department can put into any surveillance program during the busy summer months when there is the highest demand for police services unless additional resources are put in.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I can only say again to the member because I am not ready to make the announcement yet that this will be a comprehensive approach to the gathering of information and intelligence. It will not depend on one single person. It is an important project. It will look at how information is gathered, how that information is centralized, how the data is broken down and shared. I will have an announcement shortly that will provide greater information. But the questions originated from, has this surveillance team met and been active? Yes, it has; it has met; it has been active. It has looked at what kind of work it will do, how it wants to go about doing it, and I hope that I will be able, as I said, to make a further announcement shortly that will provide more details. However, I am not able to give the member all those details tonight, but I would like to assure him that it is certainly ongoing and has been meeting.

Mr. Kowalski: For this comprehensive surveillance to work, although she cannot give me details tonight, can the Justice minister tell me what kind of police resources are going to be required and where they are going to be obtained from?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the best answer to the member is to say that when I am able to make the announcement, I will be able to give him further details, but the surveillance team, the whole initiative that I have been looking at has had the full support of the Chief of Police and also the executive. That is why it was important in my answer to say, though the Winnipeg Police Service has a representative on the surveillance team, that the work of that team and the proposed work of that team has the support of the Chief of Police.

Mr. Kowalski: Unfortunately, the chief does not always work nights and evenings when the surveillance may be required and to have the support, but there is going to be requirement of staffing, unless there is some other plan

envisioned. I would like to know from the Justice minister what safeguards there will be that the staffing that is used will not pull police service away from other important initiatives, such as the impaired driving initiative, the child abuse unit from the domestic violence unit. You know, we can only give so many priorities to the police department. We cannot play a shell game with police resources. So if there is going to be requirement for more police resources, where are they going to come from?

Mrs. Vodrey: I know the member knows this as a police officer, but all police officers are charged on a day-to-day basis with bringing forward information. It is not just special teams. The importance is what is done with that information, how that information is used. It is not just the focus that at the moment he is putting forward numbers of people out gathering information. The important part now is what is done with that information, and that is what we have to look at.

Mr. Kowalski: I can see the direction where this surveillance team will be going, where officers, in addition to all their other duties, a short-staffed, underresourced police department, officers will be asked to submit information for a central database. If there are not resources to act on that database and if the officers do not have time, which quite often they do not have time to do much other than the immediate emergency calls with the underresource in the police department, to set up another database gathering procedure, to expect the officers doing other investigations, in other words to feed this database, is unrealistic, and I think the Justice minister will be disappointed with the effectiveness of such a program.

* (2330)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, well, the member has now condemned a program he does not even know anything about. I mean, he has managed to condemn a program with sheer speculation. I have made it clear that I will be announcing the details, that the police have been an integral part of the development, and that it has had a representative of the Winnipeg Police Service on it, and that we have been looking at this very closely. But the

member has taken a very narrow view. He has spoken only about one partner in this whole surveillance team. He has forgotten that there are other members, and he has looked only at his own speculation. As I listened to the question, and we can look back on his words, it is: if, then, perhaps and maybe. That is the point that he is now condemning the program from.

I have made it clear that we have a commitment to this, that we have been working and meeting, that it will form an important part of our dealing with youth crime and violence, but that I have not made the announcement yet, and that when I do, then he will have an opportunity to decide if it is not worth anything at all.

Mr. Kowalski: The minister is very correct in that, yes, it is on speculation because that is all the information that I could comment on. I am trying to give the benefit in this process to, if that is the direction that I am speculating it is going, some of the pitfalls, and that is all I am trying—yes, I would condemn such a process if that is the direction it is going in. Until the announcement, of course, I cannot comment on the actual program, but I hope that it is not going in that direction.

I think just this weekend we saw the benefit when two police officers who had some time saw an incident of two young girls getting out of a car late at night and were able to prevent an alleged continuation of a practice that had been going on with an adult and some young people. We see, when the police do have the time, the good work that could be done. I am just concerned that it is going to be one more government policy asking an underresourced police department to fulfill. I will wait for the announcement because otherwise I am just going on speculation.

Mr. Mackintosh: I would just add to that concern that we know from discussions already today about the demand on the Prosecution staff of the Department of Justice and, as well, I think it is well known, and I certainly have discovered this firsthand about the pressure and the lack of resources available to child welfare officials in the province. I would suggest to the minister that if there is going to be a successful program

established, there has to be resources to back it up. I do not know if she is in a position to advise the committee tonight, but can she advise of the range of resources that will be available to any surveillance team?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I have said to both members this evening that I look to be able to make an announcement shortly, that the group has been meeting, the group has been working. There is a proposal, and I hope to be able to make an announcement on what those details are, but at the moment I have not made that announcement and look to make it in as short a time as possible.

Mr. Mackintosh: Going on to point No. 4 of the nine-point plan, it was announced there would be a phone line established on youth gangs. My understanding is that there have been some discussions with MTS on that and perhaps with the private sector.

I want to know if the minister would advise the House now when we can expect that phone line to be in operation? What it is going to do? Who is going to staff it? Who is going to fund it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the gang and youth line was another point of the nine-point plan in which we worked very diligently to bring to action. I can tell the member that we are looking at mid-June to late June for the operationalization of the youth gang line.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, is the minister prepared at this time to advise who is going to fund the line and who is going to staff it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we have worked very hard on this. As the member can appreciate, those details would be part of an announcement that is made at the time of operationalization.

I just wanted to add, as well, that we were looking for a way to advertise this. We were looking for a way to make sure that young people would know about this.

I just want to tell the members here that it was on Thursday of last week that we had in a number of young people, and some of them I understand were gang members. They worked on the development of a logo, but those young people also worked on a

series of issues so that they were well acquainted with what the gang line was to accomplish. They sat in small working groups and they worked through a series of problems. Then they looked at developing the graphics for the logo. The young people who were involved were very excited and impressed because they saw from start to finish what this youth gang line might accomplish.

I am told that those young people have gone out now and begun a promotion of their own in terms of speaking about what young people and families and other adults may look forward to with the establishment of the youth gang line.

Mr. Mackintosh: The next point is the items regarding the Young Offenders Act. I understand that the minister has taken these points off to a federal-provincial ministers' meeting.

Is it the minister's view that the Young Offenders Act is, by and large, the cause and the cure of rising youth crime in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the answer is no. It is not a single issue, and the member certainly can see that from the nine-point plan.

However, the Young Offenders Act is a legislative framework for looking at young offenders, and I believe it is a very important part. It is a part under which we have to advocate the federal government to make changes, and I do consider it to be an important part, as do Manitobans.

It has been clear, I have received now 8,000 or more names on petitions of Manitobans who have asked me to carry the message of strengthening the Young Offenders Act to Ottawa. Manitobans themselves have identified this as a very important initiative, and I have taken the initiative very seriously. So, though it is not the only initiative that will work in the very complex problem of youth crime and violence, it is certainly one of the very important ones.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just as a footnote, the minister in Question Period, of course, keeps saying the line that members opposite, members on this side do not have a position on the Young Offenders Act, and we are getting a bit tired of hearing that. I refer the minister to my comments, for example, in

private members' hour, in fact, when she was in the House, on my thinking on the Young Offenders Act.

I would just like to move on to item 6. Gary, did you have anything on the Young Offenders Act?

* (2340)

Mr. Kowalski: The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) comments about being pointed at during Question Period and said, what is your position on the Young Offenders Act? Maybe this is finally the forum to present it. I felt this was an opportunity to find information from the government.

The Young Offenders Act is in need of review of reform and renewal. You have to not only look at the shortcomings of the legislation but review the different resources available to make the legislation work at the same time. There is no hesitation to review the Young Offenders Act, and I applaud what the federal government is doing as far as reviewing it, and how they have consulted with a number of ministers, and all the Ministers of Justice throughout Canada.

I do not know where the minister got the idea that there is any hesitation from our part to reform the Young Offenders Act. So I will just leave those comments on the floor.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just one additional point on the Young Offenders Act changes. Canadians have gone through one heck of a process over the last year through one heck of a process over the last year putting submissions to the federal government on the act. I know even in my own local community a lot of organizations are spending a great deal of time putting together their submissions, and I suspect that the views are going to be very valuable.

I just have some concern, and I wonder if the minister shares this, that the federal minister is going to go on his own path and ignore all that public process that took place. You know, there is a really good document that the federal government published to elicit responses from Canadians, and I will tell you for one, I do not want to see the views of people in St. John's, for example, ignored as a result of a different stream now taking off and the federal minister going off

on his own. I wonder if the minister shares those concerns. Second of all, if she does, will she as well go to Ottawa, go wherever she can and strongly, strongly as she alleges she has talked about the Young Offenders Act, demand that the federal government take into consideration the views of Canadians that were put together so vigorously?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the member and I do share a concern here that the federal Liberal minister will ignore the concerns that Canadians have brought forward, that the federal Liberal minister will not take into account the issues that Canadian people have brought forward. I can say, as the minister from Manitoba, I have brought forward a number of points supported by Manitobans and a number of points and a number of petitions which Manitobans have, in no uncertain terms, said to the federal Liberal minister, here is the change we want. So I continue to press that minister to take into account the concerns of Canadians in any decisions that he makes.

As I said from the very beginning, we will be holding the federal Liberal minister accountable to the promises made during the recent federal election, and at that time the now federal Liberal government said that they would make changes, and that minister was charged with that responsibility to pay attention to the Canadian people and to make changes. So, yes, we will be watching what the federal Liberal minister does.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister relay this concern to the federal Minister of Justice?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I have said in person to the Liberal federal minister that Manitobans would be watching, that the points brought forward from Manitobans, that Manitobans in general would be waiting to see that their views would be incorporated in any changes. I certainly try to follow up with that minister when I receive more petitions from Manitobans, when I receive more points of view from Manitobans. I make every effort to continue to communicate to that federal Liberal minister what the views of Manitobans are and that we will be watching.

Mr. Mackintosh: Item No. 6 of the nine-point plan talks about a school violence prevention co-ordinator. It is my understanding that co-ordinator was appointed well in advance of the nine-point plan being introduced. Would the minister confirm whether my understanding is correct?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, again, one does not reflect on other positions that one may have held in government, but I have always felt that it was important to have some kind of assistance in the Department of Education and did work very hard to see how that might be accommodated. I was very pleased that the current Minister of Education also took the same view and took that view so seriously that the individual was appointed.

I do not know the date that appointment became official, so I am not able to respond to the member in terms of how soon or close to the announcement of the nine-point plan that person took her office. However, I can say to the member that again this is a co-operation among departments, among ministers who have shared a common concern and who have seen that the common concern actually becomes an action point where there is now in the Department of Education this particular co-ordinator.

Mr. Mackintosh: I question the minister as to how one violence prevention co-ordinator in the school system is going to make much of a difference. I mean, we look at School Division No. 1, for example, where there are three violence co-ordinators in one division alone.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, again, I will not presume to speak for another minister, but I will say that I am very pleased that the current Minister of Education saw that this was a priority and made the appointment and saw to it that through the Department of Education there was a consultant available on this very important issue. I will not make any attempt to speak for that minister about how consultants in the Department of Education do their work and accomplish their work around the province, though I know the member and certainly questions from members

opposite have indicated that they believe that consultants do a valuable work around the province, and they have certainly made a great point of asking why we do not have consultants in all areas.

So I know that they believe that this is important, that one person certainly can make a difference and can provide, through the Department of Education, certain expertise. But I will not attempt to answer for the Minister of Education how that single consultant will do the work through the province, other than to again commend the Minister of Education for proceeding and deciding that this was an important initiative.

* (2350)

Mr. Kowalski: I will go one back to the Young Offenders Act and the remarks from the member for St. Johns about his concerns about the federal minister's fortitude about listening to the consultation that has come from the public and comments from the minister about the petitions. Well, if petitions were the way to govern, I have seen many petitions presented in this House in the short time that I have been here, and although they are presented, they are read, they are not necessarily the sole consideration in the making of this government's policy. So I do not know why this government would consider that it would be the sole consideration in the federal government's duration of its policy. I do not know of anything, any indication, that would give either the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) or the Justice minister (Mrs. Vodrey) concern for the federal minister's fortitude in changing the Young Offenders Act or for listening to the consultation he has received. So I just wanted to put those comments on the record.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I would just say that these petitions relate to an already stated promise. These are petitions which are not unrelated. These petitions relate to a promise which was made by the now-federal Liberal government.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to clarify where I was coming from. There was a document produced, I think it was called Safer Communities, produced

by Justice Canada, distributed across Canada, which elicited responses dealing with the Young Offenders Act. Organizations all across the country, in fact, in my neighbourhood, whether they be parent councils or whatever, contributed to that process and there is a secretariat established in Ottawa to receive and vet those and put them in a readable form so that the views of Canadians would be understood. So I am not talking about any petition, I am talking about a written brief process, that it was quite a remarkable process in the history of Canada, and I do not want to see it overlooked in the development of changes to the act.

I was hoping we could get through the rest of the nine-point plan.

Item seven on the nine-point plan was entitled Input from Young Manitobans; it talked about Craig Morrissey, a 19-year-old from Thompson. I believe he was the individual who was on the panel at the summit, and the press release is not clear here, but it appears that he used to be involved in some kind of a council. I am just wondering if the minister can expand on what that point is about.

Mrs. Vodrey: The purpose of the youth advisory council was to say that we took very seriously the input of young people, particularly in the initiative of youth crime and violence. I support the view that members have brought to this House about the summit. I was very pleased that we had the number of youth that we had. I would really have been pleased if we had had even more. I support integrating the views of young people into the problem solving and particularly into the issues that we are attempting to deal with right now.

The youth council was a way to highlight input of youth, to provide a formal mechanism for youth to become involved and to express their opinions to government in areas of concern. The youth council was a very specific way to deal with this. I asked Craig Morrissey to chair it because Craig has a demonstrated ability to work within his community to get a project going and to work with community members to see that that project gets on the rails and stays on the rails.

He was a young man that I was impressed with at the Minister of Justice awards. He attended the summit and was a panelist on the day of the summit also. When we came to look at the nine-point plan he seemed to be a good young person to be able to get this started.

I can tell the member that consultations are now underway to identify council members from across the province. We would like to have the composition of the council to be finalized by the early summer. In addition, arrangements have been finalized with a similar group in British Columbia to actively liaise with the Manitoba council, so that our Manitoba youth council will be able to relate to young people in another part of the country, as well, and so they will feel part of a very, very large whole and a very large system. Not only will they be able to relate very specifically to government in Manitoba, but they will have contact with young people across the country.

Mr. Mackintosh: What is the proposed budget for the youth advisory council, I asked the minister.

Mrs. Vodrey: I do not have the information with me this evening. I can certainly undertake to get that information. We did develop a proposed budget in which we—and then as we put the council together we will look at how accurate that is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have the terms of reference for the council and its powers and duties available now?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member that we are using the B.C. model as a basis for what the mandate and the role will be. We are in the process of developing it at the moment, as we are looking at the kinds of young people who will fill the positions.

Mr. Kowalski: The selection process, who is in that selection process?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am not able to share all of the details with the member, however I can tell him that the Chair will have major input into looking at the kinds of representation that we would like to have.

I can tell the member, overall, we would like to have some regional representation, but we would also like to have representation from all parts and segments of the community. We had experience recently, as I said, with the participation of gang members in the most recent workshop we had to develop the logo for the gang line.

We will be exploring the participation of young people with that background or that involvement, as well in the youth council.

* (2400)

Madam Chairperson: The hour being after 10 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): The hour being after 10 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 30, 1994

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