



Fifth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Sellkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Cliff	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Liberal
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCORMICK, Norma	Osborne	Liberal
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	NDP
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 16, 1994

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, je tiens à vous signaler la présence dans la galerie publique de vingt-cinq étudiants de la 6^e année de l'École St-Germain, sous la direction de M^{me} Pauline Belisle. Cette institution est située dans la circonscription de la députée de Seine River.

Translation

I wish to draw your attention to the public gallery, where we have seated twenty-five Grade 6 students from St. Germain School under the direction of Pauline Belisle. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay).

English

Also, from the Robert Smith School we have thirty Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Kulpak. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

From the Robertson School, we have forty-five Grades 1 to 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Shore and Mrs. Proulx. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Burns Report Tabling Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, on May 2, 1994, in asking questions to the Premier about the Jets deal and the first deadline dealing with the decision, the Premier indicated that there would not be a major period of time for the extension of the Jets agreement and decision-making date.

I asked the question: If we are talking an extension, we are taking a couple of weeks, but are we talking about a long period of time to drift on this very important decision? The Premier said, no, we are not, and I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition put this question on the table.

Today the mayor is quoted as saying that (a) there is no written confirmation to extend the date, and (b) she anticipates that the final decision or the so-called final decision will not be made until the spring of '95.

I would like to ask the Premier: Is there a written confirmation from the parties to extend the date? What date do we expect the Burns report to be in, and what date do we expect a decision to be made on the options available to the shareholders, including the Province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Not to my knowledge, soon and, hopefully, not too long thereafter.

Public Accounts Committee Winnipeg Jets

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier, in questions that we raised before, did not answer whether he in fact would look at moving this issue to the Public Accounts committee. The Public Accounts committee has produced, for the first time, the numbers from November of 1991 indicating that the province had future loss projections in 1991 that went up to \$43.5 million. Those numbers were obtained by the Provincial Auditor working through the departments of government.

I would like to ask the Premier today, so that we can all have an opportunity to look at those numbers, to look at the options, to have an independent source like the Provincial Auditor review the various options available to the Province of Manitoba, would the Premier agree to have the Jets issue go to the Public Accounts committee so that we can all be involved prior to the Premier making a decision with cabinet?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the Leader of the Opposition. The Public Accounts committee did not produce those numbers. Those numbers were produced by senior staff in the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism at the time that the agreement was being put together, and they were obviously willingly given to the Auditor.

Ultimately, the debate and the decision is going to be one in which everyone will have to make a value judgment. The information will be available to the Leader of the Opposition from the Burns report, and he can make his value judgments and take his position, as he sees fit.

* (1335)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Premier on May 2 a number of times what the projections were, and he would not give them to us. It was only after we went to the Public Accounts committee that the Provincial Auditor was able to show us and show the public that the former Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism who negotiated the agreement and the Premier had numbers of projected losses of \$43.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, we do not want to wait another two and a half years, and three or four more Public Accounts committees later to get the numbers that the government has in its possession. I would ask the Premier, why is he afraid to take this matter to the Public Accounts committee?

The Public Accounts committee could have public submissions; it could have presentations of independent facts from the Provincial Auditor; it could have a review of the various options; it could have a review of the various assets involved, including tax revenue. Why is the Premier afraid to

have this matter before the Public Accounts committee before the final decision is made?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, no one is afraid of having that kind of deliberation, but the fact of the matter is, that is ultimately a government decision, and we know the kind of position that the Leader of the Opposition takes, as he did in 1991, when he stayed silent and did not criticize the deal, and then two years later, comes out of the woodwork after he has the benefit of hindsight and tries to make a big political trick out of it.

He will have the same opportunity to do it, and I know that regardless of what position this government takes, the Leader of the Opposition will criticize it and will hide in the woods and do whatever he can to take whatever politics he can of it. He is entitled to do it. I welcome him to do that. That is irresponsibility. We in government will be responsible for our decisions.

Post-Secondary Education Federal Transfer Payments

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations.

The Globe and Mail today reported that Mr. Axworthy's proposals for new social security directions for Canada are likely to include the elimination of post-secondary transfer funding to the provinces.

I want to ask the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Manness) or the Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations whether his government has been informed of this prospect, and has he undertaken an analysis of the impact of this on Manitoba's institutions?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): We have not been informed of this prospect, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, will the government make a commitment that when they are informed of these prospects by Mr. Axworthy, Manitobans will have an opportunity for public input into the discussions of a very dramatic proposal which may lead to student increases in the range of 30 to 40 percent? There does not seem to be an opportunity from the federal perspective for public input into

this. Will this government make a commitment for public discussion?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, such a proposal would obviously have dramatic and traumatic effects on our ability to provide post-secondary education to all Manitobans, and I think it would be unconscionable and unthinkable for the federal government to make such dramatic cuts. I cannot believe that that story can possibly be true.

Ms. Friesen: I want to ask the minister, when they do receive notification of this, what is certainly a speculative question at the moment, will they analyze on behalf of Manitobans what the impact of that will be on programs such as ACCESS, programs of equity and fairness which have served Manitobans so well, because what is happening here is that they are going to transfer the burden of post-secondary education from the community to individuals.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we are fighting and trying to cope with cutbacks in transfers from Ottawa of some, I believe it is \$4.5 million annually for the ACCESS programs. We are faced with offloads of responsibility for aboriginals living off reserves, social services to the extent of \$20 million a year or more, offloads on student loans, offloads on all sorts of programs that impact on our ability to deliver these vital services of education, our social safety net and health care to Manitobans.

If such information on policy becomes available, we will indeed make this an issue that this Legislature can, all together, make their comments known on, because I am sure that the Liberal Party will want to join and support their federal colleagues on these issues as they have on all other issues in the past so we can have a legitimate debate on it. I thank the member for raising this issue.

Remand Centre Hearing Officers

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Back in 1990, this minister's predecessor put into place a system of hearing officers at the Remand Centre. That system was designed—and I am quoting from the press release back in July of 1990—to reduce overcrowding at the Remand Centre and to lessen the workload of police.

Mr. Speaker, part of that new system was that it was going to be tested over time. It is our understanding that there has been an internal study done that Mr. Yost completed, a senior staff member in the Department of Justice, and that the minister has had the benefit of seeing that report and it does suggest that there are improvements that could be made.

Is the Minister of Justice prepared to table a copy of that report so we can all see how we can better improve the hearing officer process at the Remand Centres?

* (1340)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we were pleased, I am very pleased my predecessor and this government were able to put into place a program which was to improve the system. We are in the process of looking at how that has actually worked. During the course of Estimates perhaps the member will have some specific questions which I will answer for him.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously has the report, and I am raising it in Question Period, rather than Estimates. I would like the minister to substantively answer the question in Question Period.

Based on that report's finding, which apparently is that 98 percent of the police requests for detention of the accused are accepted by the hearing officer after 11 p.m., and there are specific suggestions of how hearing officers can be made more use of by putting them into the day shifts as opposed to over the night, relieving the population burden on the Remand Centres, Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is: Is that in fact a conclusion of that report?—because that is a discussion that I think honourable members should have. Is the minister prepared to table the report?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, again, I said to the member that we have the process of Justice Estimates. We are in the process of Justice Estimates now. The details of questions such as information available to me, I will be more than happy to answer, especially when I have the opportunity of staff available to give an answer in full.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, my final question for the minister is: We have been advised by members of the police department, for whom this process was designed to assist, that they believe it can work much better, much more efficiently by listening to and reviewing the report that has been done by the minister, and that their time is being wasted in many cases by hanging around and sitting in the police stations, dealing with these cases when they could be out solving crimes.

My final question to the minister: Will she immediately speak to the City of Winnipeg police department and review this report? If she will not speak to us, will she speak to them to ensure that we are maximizing the use of those hearing officers and maximizing the ability of police activities to work efficiently in this city, Mr. Speaker?

Mrs. Vodrey: Let me say, first of all, that it has never been a matter of "will not speak." I have said to the honourable member that the process of Justice Estimates is ongoing. There is ample opportunity for us to talk. It best not ever be on the record that I will not speak to you, because that has never been the answer. The answer has always been, during the process of Estimates when I can give a very complete answer.

I will also say, Mr. Speaker, that my department is in constant contact, regular contact with the City of Winnipeg Police, and that contact will be ongoing.

The member speaks about, who are we listening to? I ask that member and that party, who do they listen to? I have not seen that they have listened to the people of Manitoba. Manitobans have put forward their position, particularly in the area of young offenders. They have not responded, Mr. Speaker.

Social Services Policy Reform Action Plan Announcement

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the federal Minister of Human Resources has announced a social policy review. Before issuing a white paper or consulting with provincial governments or the public, major changes are already underway with \$2 billion eliminated from the unemployment insurance portfolio. The result is an offloading of costs to the provincial governments, in particular \$2 million to the Province of Manitoba in social assistance costs.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell us when she expects the federal Minister of Human Resources to give details of the social policy review to the Province of Manitoba, and how much time will she and her government have to respond?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question. I have just had the opportunity to spend two days in Halifax with my counterparts, the ministers responsible for social security, and that issue was an issue that was discussed in great detail.

We as yet have not heard from the federal government exactly what their action plan might be, and I have indicated in this House before that the federal government, the Minister of Human Resources federally, had indicated in mid-February that he would have an action plan and a federal vision available for provinces within a month or so.

To date, we have not received that, Mr. Speaker. We did have some communication from Mr. Axworthy at the meeting that indicated that he wanted to have some bilateral, informal discussions again before an action plan was presented, and he did indicate at that time that before that action plan or that document was made public, he would share it with provinces some 36 hours or so before it became a public document.

Public Consultations

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can the Minister of Family Services tell the House if there will be an opportunity to discuss the government's position in the Chamber or in some public forum before the response goes to the federal government, so that it is not a matter of simply provincial officials responding to federal officials.

Will there be an opportunity for the Legislature to discuss this action plan and for the public to discuss it before a response is submitted by the provincial government?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): It is very difficult to answer that question today. We have no understanding of what substance or what form that action plan will take, Mr. Speaker, whether it is a paper that will outline several different options that are to be discussed by Manitobans and by all Canadians, or whether, in fact, it is going to be a very specific action plan that outlines what direction the federal government is going to take.

So without any information at this point in time, it is very difficult to understand exactly what would be expected of us. I certainly do know that 36 hours is not going to be long enough for any of us or any province across the country to have the kind of dialogue that needs to happen in order to formulate a response.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say I agree with this minister that 36 hours is a totally inadequate time frame to respond to a major social policy review.

Can the minister tell us what public discussion there will be? Will her government be involved in encouraging the public and allowing members of the public the opportunity to be involved in the debate before her government responds to the federal minister?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have indicated very strongly as ministers of all political stripes right across the country, that this has to be a full partnership of provinces with the federal government in looking at any reform. The question of offloading of federal financial responsibility to provinces was one of the issues that was discussed

in great detail. There is no question that everyone believes there needs to be reform, there needs to be changes in the system, but those changes are not just cuts in the programs that exist today and offloading those financial costs onto the provinces.

There has to be meaningful reform, and there has to be full participation of all provinces in the dialogue with the federal government around what focus that reform will take and how we can work together. We cannot have unilateral decision by the federal government that means just purely offloading onto the provinces their responsibility for financial contribution.

Grain Transportation Proposal Government Action

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I have just come back from my constituency, and I want to tell this House that farmers in the area are absolutely devastated by the announcement by Minister Doug Young when he indicates that he is planning to scrap the Western Grain Transportation subsidy. They are concerned that the federal government is playing right into the hands of the Americans, rather than standing up and supporting western Canada. This change of subsidy is going to be devastating for the farm community, and farmers in my area would like to see this minister resign.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture here how he is proposing to deal with this situation. Has he received a response from the federal minister with regard to this matter?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, honourable members of this Chamber are well aware that in concert with my colleague the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), he and I both sent a strongly worded letter, I think is the diplomatic way of describing it, to the Minister of Transport. We have yet to receive a reply to that letter.

We are disturbed that although he seemed to have had second thoughts about it, he did repeat that speech again in Toronto to an even bigger audience. We just are concerned that this federal government is dealing on such an important issue

without consulting either with the provinces or indeed with the industry concerned.

* (1350)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer, for, indeed, it is a very serious matter, and it is going to affect the quality of life of all the farming community in Manitoba.

I want to ask this minister what he is planning to do. Will he establish a process to bring in farmers so that they can come to terms with this, and how they are going to deal with this? Even though the minister was not allowed to deal with the federal minister, will he allow farmers a process where they can have some impact into a discussion on how this would impact on the farm community?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, it was just the other evening that I and members of the government caucus and cabinet met with the premier agricultural organization, the Keystone Agricultural organization. They, on their own, have sent similar concerns to the Prime Minister, to the Honourable Jean Chretien, and certainly I will be doing all of these things.

More importantly, and the honourable member is aware of it, I will have the opportunity within a very short time—three weeks as a matter of fact—to host all of the provincial agricultural ministers here in the city of Winnipeg at our annual agricultural meetings. It is my understanding that the federal minister, Mr. Goodale, of course, will be with us as well, and we will be able to transmit that concern the honourable member expresses in a very direct way, not just by a phone call or not just by letter but in three or four days of face-to-face negotiations with the federal government representatives and indeed all the colleagues, particularly of western Canada.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, since the minister is going to be speaking to the federal minister and we hear know that the federal government is talking about first eliminating, then phasing out, will the minister take the position that the subsidy, the transportation subsidy, must be retained? It cannot be reduced further. It cannot be eliminated. It must be maintained. It is part of the western farming

community. We have to have the transportation assistance there.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, I have taken the position that I am certainly more than prepared to work as closely and as harmoniously as possible with the administration in Ottawa, whether it is with Mr. Goodale or anybody else.

I do not want to be unfair to Transport Minister Young, but I will talk more seriously about phasing out western benefits when he starts talking about phasing out eastern benefits, particularly in the Maritimes, in terms of what it costs us westerners as taxpayers about running the ferries between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, about building the fixed link, multimillion-dollar bridge to Prince Edward Island along with those other transportation subsidies the minister has referred to.

Let us all calm down and talk reasonably about how we adjust government support in this area.

Manitoba Product Stewardship Program Market Development

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I am going to read from a news release from the Canadian Industry Packaging and Stewardship Initiative, and they say: Manitoba industry is deeply concerned about the impact of a government-run packaging stewardship program announced yesterday by Environment Minister Glen Cummings. Manitoba industry has been negotiating in good faith with the minister to introduce its innovative market-driven proposal based on a partnership between industry and government. However, despite agreement in principle, the minister unilaterally suspended negotiations with the industry six weeks ago—

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

Ms. Cerilli: My question for the Minister of Environment: Can the minister show that he is not jeopardizing Manitoba's ability to access the national market development program being developed by the Canadian Industry Packaging and Stewardship group since he has abandoned this group and walked away from the table?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid the member seriously misunderstands the process that we have gone through in negotiating with the industry. We indicated to the industry on several occasions near the end of the process that we wanted some greater acknowledgement that municipalities would not be receiving an open bill, that there would be some comfort provided to the municipal authorities, particularly the City of Winnipeg, that they would not have unstipulated costs that they would have to pick up, the same as happened with the Ontario Blue Box. We were unable to reach agreement in principle on that concept.

Further, when the industry says that it will only be through the development of markets that recycling will become efficient, I sincerely hope and I trust that the industry will work with me and with this province to develop those markets because recyclables will not be collected only in Manitoba. They will be collected, I hope, across this country.

I think the member seriously should reconsider her position if she believes that the kinds of things I am talking about should have been included in an agreement.

* (1355)

Ms. Cerilli: My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, for the minister is, what is the plan for market development in Manitoba under the regulations being prepared by this government? Are we going to have a program in Manitoba that is indeed going to be a waste reduction and recycling program and not just a collection and storage or dumping program?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe my ears. This is the most appalling misrepresentation of the recycling concept in this province that I have ever heard—an appalling misrepresentation.

First of all, we have indicated clearly that the priority items will be those products for which we have markets. Secondly, we indicated that some of the funds could be redirected for market development for other products that need to be

collected, i.e., plastics. Thirdly, in talking about an assurance that the municipalities would not receive an open-ended bill, we have said that we will provide, on a contractual basis, agreements with the municipalities so they know up front what costs they might be picking up, and those costs will be clearly defined. I think we are about to see one really good recycling program starting in this province, and I invite her to get on board.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, I am on record as applauding the concept of what the government is doing. I am concerned about the implementation.

I want to ask the minister if he has not learned from the situation of tin cans going into Saskatchewan without us being involved in their deposit system. If we are not going to have the same kind of thing happening under this program, what guarantees can he give the House and to the people of Manitoba that we are not going to become an island in a sea of waste?

Mr. Cummings: An island in a sea of waste. Well, I take it that that means she thinks we are going to get the recycling accomplished here.

Mr. Speaker, the very example that the member gives is exactly why this type of program needs to succeed. There was a national agreement on packaging standards that was agreed to, and then most jurisdictions went off and did their own thing. Manitoba is really the only jurisdiction in its negotiations with CIPSI and in following through on the principles with this regulation and legislative changes, we have stayed strictly to the national packaging agreement and the principles that are involved therein.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we intend to invite industry to the table to be part of running this program. We think we have encased all of the principles that they were putting forward, the distributor and product stewardship, the protection of the unbridled costs that can accrue to municipalities if the program is improperly designed. I suggest that she help us design the type of materials she wants recycled.

* (1400)

Crown Corporations Joint Venture Projects

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, back last fall the First Minister went on a trade mission to Asia with some representatives from the private sector in Manitoba. One of the things which was mentioned in the press release and mentioned by the Premier was the operations of Manitoba Hydro in joint venturing projects in China, amongst others.

My question for the Premier is: What is the position of the government with respect to Crown corporations operating in joint ventures or otherwise in foreign markets for profit? What is the current position of the government? They have been very critical, of course, as we all were, of the MTX deal, Mr. Speaker, but can the minister put clearly on the record what the current position is for all Crown corporations?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the Crown corporations of Manitoba are operated by a board of directors. Those boards of directors, within the ambit of general government policy framework, are encouraged to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible those Crown corporations.

As a result, we have had dramatic improvements, of course, in the operations of all of our Crown corporations. Not only have we managed to keep their rates down so that we have very low and competitive rates—our Hydro rates are probably the lowest in North America—but in addition to that, we have been doing so in a manner that has also produced very efficient and effective results in terms of long-term planning and development of the mandate of those corporations so they are a credit to the people of Manitoba.

Having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, clearly there are some things that can be done without putting at risk taxpayers' money, for instance, and without putting at risk the efficiency and the effectiveness of the operation that can utilize the expertise of Manitoba Hydro. They have throughout the decades utilized their expertise, for instance, in areas such as high voltage direct current transmission line.

I might say that in high voltage direct current transmission line, the development of more than half the world's capacity has been done by firms, consultants and others who have been involved with Manitoba in the past because their expertise is world calibre. So we see opportunities for continuing that without putting taxpayers' dollars at risk and without adversely affecting the operations of the corporation.

Mr. Edwards: Those two conditions, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear from the First Minister and, obviously, we agree with those conditions.

Manitoba Telephone System Joint Venture Project

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): My further questions to the First Minister and specific to the Manitoba Telephone System: We have received, and I want to table a fax message from a company in Malaysia that has been approaching Manitoba Telephone System to offer services.

I want to very briefly quote one line from that fax message: It is paramount that MTS be willing to send one of their top people who knows quite well the entire offering of MTS. Although the field is very competitive, Rason—that is the company that is involved—is willing to bet on MTS's expertise and technology.

Is the First Minister aware of this proposal from a Malaysian consortium to MTS? Is MTS going to be allowed to in fact offer their expertise for profit for the people of this province or can he give us an update on that arrangement and negotiations?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of it. I will be happy to take it as notice and review it and see just what is involved.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, perhaps—and the minister responsible may want to answer this as well—but I will ask by way of further supplementary, to confirm in fact that the government would confirm that it would not be just Manitoba Hydro, as the First Minister talked about earlier, but indeed Manitoba Telephone System, that if there is a technology which can be offered for profit—they are selling off MTS every

day, but MTS is in a position where they can sell for profit some of the knowledge and technology they have developed—that they would be allowed to do it if there were not taxpayers' dollars put at risk and it was simply a sale of our knowledge and our expertise.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier has made it very clear. The general parameters under which we would think it expedient to do that, the board of directors and the management of MTS will certainly analyze the request in the context of what the Premier has said here today. I am glad to hear the member opposite would support that sort of approach.

Health Care System Employee Restructuring

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the government is planning a press conference in the next two weeks to announce their package for employees who have been laid off by the government's reform package. We also know the government's plan to cut a hundred million dollars further from the urban hospitals in Winnipeg, and it is the government's plan to cut an additional 1,500 staff from St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre.

Can the minister advise this House that when the plan for employee restructuring is to be announced, it will be comprehensive and will include such things as the VSIP education and retraining plan and Employee Assistance Program, as well, when they are moving these people out of employment?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member basically has all of his facts wrong today. Usually it is just most, but today it is all.

We have been very sensitive to the labour aspect of changes to Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital. After all, we have received the recommendations from the very staff who will be affected by those recommendations. We owe it to them to look at the labour impact of following their own recommendations, and we are doing just that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I guess my problem is I am using government documents to make these claims.

My supplementary to the minister: Can the minister advise the House whether the government committee, the committee established by the government to deal with employee restructuring, has reviewed various other plans in other provinces for restructuring, like the Nova Scotia plan that is a \$70-million package and offers a four-year eligibility in order to determine employee eligibility to take part in the process?

Mr. McCrae: I am sure the Labour Adjustment Committee is looking at packages that have been made available elsewhere and what is possible elsewhere.

I cannot imagine what kind of package they must have had in Ontario when Michael Decter, the friend of the honourable member, closed 5,000 beds. Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, how many people are affected by the closure of 5,000 beds with Mr. Michael Decter and the New Democratic Party in Ontario? Do you realize how many people are affected when the NDP government of Saskatchewan shuts down 52 rural hospitals? Can you believe it?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary to the minister: The minister knows full well, the province of Manitoba could full well use Connie Curran's \$4 million—

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

Mr. Chomiak: My final supplementary to the same minister who helped negotiate the Connie Curran contract and helped signed it is: Will the minister confirm, will the minister advise the House that the government, when it announces its employee restructuring, will guarantee that it will be comprehensive, not just cherry picking like the government intends to do with some, and will be comprehensive and reflect all of the recommendations of its own committee for the benefit of patient care in Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: Well, first the honourable member does not want us to adopt any recommendations put forward by the staff of these hospitals; now he

wants us to accept all of them. In the meantime, he refers to Connie Curran.

Well, you know, the honourable member does not know what he is asking, so I do not know what to answer.

The Forks Archeological Funding

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Urban Affairs.

For the past few years, The Forks has become a major tourist success in the city, winning many awards. At the same time, some of the public priorities have not been prioritized as much as they should have been. Both the federal and provincial governments have cut their funding for the archeology dig at The Forks.

Given the major success and public interest in the archeology dig, why did the province cut its support?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate, first of all, the member's compliments for the success of The Forks. It has indeed become all that the visionaries who first had the concept hoped that it would become.

We support it to a considerable degree. We support it to many, many dollars in a wide variety of ways. It is a supervised trilevel-supported project. As you know, the federal government has indeed cut its funding for the archeological dig that the member referred to. There is no more federal funding for the archeological dig. We, however, have continued to support the archeological dig provincially. Five thousand dollars this year was the amount that went specifically to that particular initiative, and we wholeheartedly endorse the concept.

We know that The Forks has plans for expanding it. We look forward to the implementation of phase two, which would see the archeological dig expand when the time comes for it to be done.

Rail Heritage Facility

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): The Forks has been a success, and we do not want it to be a failure.

Given the importance of railways to both the history and present economy of this province, can the minister tell us when the rail heritage facility will be completed?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Urban Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker, I cannot in fact tell the member that, although I will take it under advisement to see if there is an update that could be provided to him. I will get back to him with the details if they are available.

* (1410)

Travel Centre

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Can the minister explain why the travel centre at The Forks was designed by someone out of the province instead of one of the thousands of unemployed Manitobans?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Urban Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that The Forks board had tendered out that work and that the people who were successful in obtaining the contract to do the work were, in the opinion of the board, the best people to do the work and have it become noted for the various components that were in it. There are very few firms that do the type of components that are inside that particular centre.

Northern Fly-in Sports Camp Lottery Revenues

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Manitoba Lotteries.

I was enlightened the other day in Estimates when I heard the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) talk about the special needs of northern Manitoba. As members of this House are aware, the need for recreational facilities and activities in many remote northern communities is severe, and it was for this reason that the northern fly-in sports camps started in 1986. The program has been

extremely successful with support from the communities themselves and organizations like the RCMP, North West stores, the University of Manitoba and others.

I would like to ask the minister, given the huge increase in lottery revenues in this province, much of which is coming from northern Manitoba as well, why the support for the fly-in camps is not increasing beyond the \$50,000 currently allocated.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Foundation Act): Mr. Speaker, the expenditures of monies within the government of Manitoba are determined during the budgetary process, not necessarily on whether income to the Lotteries corporation is higher or lower than it was previously.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would canvass the House to determine if there is unanimous consent for, should the Estimates process this afternoon conclude for the Department of Northern Affairs, to consider the Estimates of the Department of Rural Development dealing with Decentralization, and if that concludes this afternoon, the Seniors Directorate.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to alter the sequence in which the departments are to be held in Room 255, upon completion of Northern Affairs, to move with the Department of Rural Development and, upon completion of that, on the Decentralization part of it, I understand, to the Seniors Directorate? Is there leave to alter the sequence? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be

granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Northern Affairs, and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Justice.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs, item 3.(a)(1) on page 131 of the Estimates book.

Item 3.(a)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$334,300.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I believe the last time we sat, we had gone through the Northern Flood Agreement section, and what I wanted to do briefly this afternoon is to maybe go through the treaty land entitlement portion and ask the minister to—

An Honourable Member: Resign?

Mr. Lathlin: Not yet—to explain again. I know he mentioned the Island Lake Tribal Council treaty land entitlement agreement on Tuesday, but I would like the minister to maybe elaborate a little bit on the Island Lake Tribal Council agreement, and then maybe give us an update on the remaining 18 First Nations, I guess, because I think there were 22 First Nations whose claims had been validated, and I believe he told us the last time that four First Nations—[interjection] Oh, okay, I am sorry, four done and 22 remaining.

Elaborate a little bit on the Island Lake Tribal Council, the four First Nations whose land entitlement has been completed, and then maybe dwell a little bit on the 22 remaining First Nations.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Northern Affairs): Mr. Deputy Chair, the member has asked me to elaborate a little bit on the Island Lake First Nations settlement which involved four First

Nations—Garden Hill, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack and Red Sucker Lake.

The total under the agreed upon, so-called equity formula that was negotiated with the treaty land entitlement chiefs—the equity formula that was negotiated between the various parties at the two bilateral tables, the equity formula, the allotment of treaty land entitlement acres for those communities was approximately 100,000 acres.

What we did as part of that process, which I think is a good precedent for other negotiations—we are trying to implement that as a process—is to identify the range of land around those communities in which that 100,000 acres would come and basically put that as a first priority on those acres. Now that we have reached an agreement and signed, those communities with our provincial government and the federal government are in the process of selecting the exact 100,000 acres that they want transferred to them and which the federal government will incorporate into their current reserves, so that land will in essence become the land of those communities.

* (1430)

As a part of the agreement, one of the things that the province, to make the agreement come about, and I think was a very innovative response to the negotiations, and I am very pleased we were able to do it, what we also offered to those communities was the right, an option to purchase up to approximately another 95,000 acres of land in that same box of land around those communities. Each community would be able to pick their pieces. This particular land, though, would remain provincial land. It would be titled land, registered at the Land Titles Office, and they would buy it like any other citizen, group or any other corporation for the appraised price of \$25 per acre, and they have two years to exercise that option. So we are working with them, as well, to identify their pieces of property.

The great advantage to this, and I know there is always the argument that should this be turned into reserve land or not, one of the things that is very exciting about this as being titled land, is that it will be able to be mortgaged. It will be able to be

used by those communities for development purposes, the ability to do a lot of things that they cannot do on reserve land because of the inability to use it as security. So it was an additional payment of land for which we are receiving \$25,000. I mean, it is not a lot of money, but it is an additional sale which was part of the agreement, and I think is very innovative and to some degree may become part of a model in other settlements, because it gives those communities an economic opportunity that they might not otherwise have.

So at the current time, we are involved in that process with those four communities in identifying the specific parcels, and as they are identified, they will be transferred over, either through one process or the other to meet that obligation, so I am quite excited about that settlement.

With respect to the other 22 communities, the other 22 claims, I believe that 19 of those have been validated, and we are dealing with the 22 communities under the umbrella of the treaty land entitlement chiefs. We have a protocol now in place with those chiefs to notionally agree by December of this year on a process to do virtually the same thing as we did in the Island Lake area. We are hopeful that this set of negotiations from now until December will put in place virtually the same process so we can then conclude agreements with each of those communities with validated claims, again, blocking off appropriate land in the vicinity of those communities, get the agreement done, and then begin the nuts and bolts work of identifying the specific property within those blocks that will be transferred.

Mr. Lathlin: As negotiations continue on treaty land entitlement, when does the minister see these negotiations being concluded?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, the federal government has given indication that the monies available for this process will only be there until the end of the 1994-95 fiscal year, so the consequence is that has put pressure on negotiating the one table between the chiefs and the federal government in terms of concluding their agreement. We are the secondary player on the second bilateral, because we then negotiate with

the federal government on the property that is available.

I am very much a stickler for process, because I think there are jurisdictional treaty issues involved in this, of which the province has to be very cognizant and should not be interfering. I do not say that to back out. I say that out of respect to the parties who have those obligations under treaty.

That decision by the federal government has created pressure at the bilateral table between them and the chiefs. It is my intention as minister, and the intention of this government, to be as accommodating as possible in working out using the Island Lake model on our bilateral with the federal government to identify the blocks of land around those communities.

Once we get those agreements, then the First Nations involved can take some time in choosing their property within those areas. We certainly provided two years option on the sale of the Crown land, the additional 95,000 acres, but at least that means we have an agreement in place, and then we can take some time for those communities to select their land and go through what is an important process. They should select land that they are comfortable with and works for them and gives them the most opportunities.

We will not be, we do not intend to be the slow cog in this wheel. The federal pressure is there. I think everybody is responding to it on the other bilateral table, of which we are not a part, to make the thing move forward, so I would hope within those time frames, to the member for The Pas, that we can conclude agreements like Island Lake and then get down to the nuts and bolts of actual site selection.

Mr. Lathlin: I am not so sure if I understand the minister insofar as the—if the negotiations are concluded and the time comes when we would start looking at land, what types of land really would be available for those First Nations, in the event that an agreement is reached? What kinds of lands would be available for selection?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I should make one clarification to my previous answer. I am advised some of the treaty land chiefs are not

entirely happy with the Island Lake model, so that may not be the one that they particularly adopt. One of the difficulties I know the member for The Pas and the member for Rupertsland fully appreciate is, we are talking about a great variety of parts of the province.

The provincial obligation is to provide unoccupied Crown land. Obviously, there is some room for definition as to what is unoccupied Crown land. In the northern part of the province where we have a great abundance of unoccupied Crown land, the issues are much easier.

One of the rules of thumb that has been used as well is the land should, as much as possible, be contiguous with the current community, because that is land that they would have likely received and it fits administratively. There will be exceptions to that, I am sure, but it is not so difficult in the North because we can identify with those communities as part of the agreements, as we did at Island Lake, a block of land with more than enough acres.

I think, in the case of Island Lake, it is probably three or four, five times—the block of land that we have reserved for this process is five times the size of the combined acreages, both the TLE and our sale that we are providing. So that was agreed as a block and in many northern communities that will be relatively easy to do. The problem, of course—we are also in the process providing as much up-to-date information on those particular properties to help those First Nations make their decisions as we have.

The problem, though, in the southern communities or communities where Crown land may not be as readily available and particularly in the southern reserves where the amount of unoccupied Crown land is not available, and Saskatchewan, as I know the member for The Pas appreciates, had a big problem in meeting its treaty land obligations because the amount of unoccupied Crown land was not there.

* (1440)

Those are areas that we will have to negotiate if we have unoccupied Crown land to meet that requirement in some other part of the province, but

if unoccupied Crown land is not available to the satisfaction of those communities, then they will have to, at that first bilateral table, work out with the federal government appropriate arrangements for compensation. If that means the federal government purchasing neighbouring lands, as I think some chiefs in Saskatchewan have requested or those communities receiving money in purchasing land as has happened in Saskatchewan, that is an issue that those two parties at that bilateral table will have to meet.

As well, if the member will just allow me a moment here—so that process is going to be between the federal government and those communities. We will try to accommodate as much as possible with unoccupied Crown land as can be provided, but if that cannot be, then the federal government and those First Nations will have to work out between them an agreeable, between them, method of providing compensation.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, perhaps then I can ask the minister to deal with—when he talks about unoccupied Crown lands, I agree with him that in the North there is a considerable amount of unoccupied Crown land available, but the minister also understands that there are other stakeholders, even though the land may be unoccupied, and I am referring to hydro development, rights-of-way and so on, mining activity that is going on. We know that Repap and now Louisiana-Pacific has access to practically all of northern Manitoba by way of their cutting rights which were granted through the licensing process.

What happens to those areas in the event that First Nations lay claim to such land?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, the member for The Pas asks an excellent question and one with a complex answer, I guess, because there is no specific rule of thumb. Each community will be involved in perhaps varying negotiations of how those are handled, and there will probably be a range of solutions, depending on those communities. The member correctly identifies some of the other rights that are there.

In some cases, I would imagine, particularly when it comes to forestry rights or cutting rights, if

communities see those as lands that they particularly want to retain, the federal government may negotiate the purchase of the existing rights of right holders on that property and turn them over as part of the settlement. That is a possibility. One should not preclude it. In fact, I would suspect that a number of communities that are in those areas may just want that to happen because it will present them with an economic opportunity to pursue that they otherwise would not have. I would want to be encouraging of that. I think we all would be.

In some cases, in dealing with Manitoba Hydro, for example, one of the requests we are making is for Manitoba Hydro to truly identify what the realistic needs are in terms of land where they have interests on property in the North and what is really surplus to those needs. I had that same problem in my constituency on the Winnipeg River with Hydro rights-of-way and what they need. So we have to have our Crown corporations reassess truly what their needs are. In some areas where there is a larger public good in maintaining a Hydro right-of-way or what have you, then we would have to accommodate that in those negotiations, on the specifics.

The one area where there are mines and minerals that the member has asked about, we know that in the case of mines and minerals, if the land is turned over, those, of course, go with the reserve land as an asset of that property. If there are existing mining claims on those properties that are identified, those will be the subject of negotiation and compensation to those people.

I leave that in the hands really of the federal government because they are the ones who have to meet the obligation. As the member can appreciate, there is probably going to be a cost there which is properly borne by the federal Treasury.

But in each case, First Nations, the federal government and we, as a provider of this land, will have to deal with a case-by-case situation, and I am hoping that reasonableness will prevail in most cases and that we will be able to accommodate in

each situation land that is of value to the communities that are receiving it.

I am hoping, and I believe this is going to be the case, that many of those communities will be pursuing particular properties that present them with some economic opportunities that they otherwise would not have, and I want to be encouraging of that.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I put my question to the minister in that way because I know that a lot of the difficulties that we are experiencing now in terms of any further development that may be coming into the North—I think the days are gone now, hopefully, when we can just go in there, into the North, without giving due consideration to the first inhabitants of the land.

I know with Repap, that is exactly the problem that we are having, because Cross Lake, First Nations and others are adamant in trying to ensure that their interests are given due consideration before we go ahead and give large—well, like I said, practically all of northern Manitoba to cutting rights for Repap. Also, you know, the reason that there is some opposition from First Nations around the Louisiana-Pacific area proposal is again for that reason.

I know in the House we asked repeatedly of the Minister of Northern Affairs and others that before anything happens, there should be consultation, there should be meetings held with the First Nations in that area in order that their concerns and interests can be addressed prior to going ahead with such development. I think it is only fair, and I think it is only right that we do that.

I neglected to mention other stakeholders on the land that First Nations might be laying claim to, and those would include proposals for national parks. I know we are dealing with one or two locations right now, as well as provincial parks proposals. First Nations are quite concerned that the government will go ahead, along with the federal government, and designate lands that they may be potentially laying claim to.

I know the minister mentioned mineral rights, and I am glad that he did. I want to also ask him,

however, about water rights, when it comes to selecting land that would have any kind of waterways. What about water rights?

* (1450)

Mr. Praznik: Yes, just on the water issue—a great subject in law, water rights, being a student of the law. I am advised by my staff that the tradition has been in the establishment of First Nations reserves—the tradition in surveying has been to the water's edge or actually 90 feet from the water's edge in Manitoba because of Hydro's easements.

That is one area which I mentioned before, why we have been asking Hydro to assess their true needs, because wherever there is not a need to maintain an easement, we are talking about going to the water's edge, but the tradition in any of these types of surveys, for any type of a land boundary, has been to the water's edge. I appreciate the issue, talking about the larger issue of water rights.

When the member raises this issue, I would tend to agree with him. I think the days are quickly passing, if they have not passed already, when you can plan a major project without taking into account all the legitimate interests. We always know there are some people who do not have legitimate interests, who get their nose into these kinds of things, but where there are legitimate interests, and these are certainly the most legitimate of interests, that a lot of these things have to be worked out on some basis, because it does come back to sting you at another day, and there is no doubt about that from experience throughout the world.

But what we have done in the case of the current negotiations on the Louisiana-Pacific lease agreement, on cutting rights, in the case of our agreement for national parks, anyplace where we are seceding some right or giving some proprietary interest, seceding a right in terms of a national park, returning provincial Crown land to the feds for a national park, we are working into the agreements that the transfers are subject to the settlement of neighbouring land claims.

So if those land claims involve those properties, then our lease does not become applicable, and the

land has to be returned for the land claim. We are putting that caveat or that provision into these agreements, to take into account the kind of very legitimate concern that the member is wearing, and I understand the treaty chiefs are aware of this through our protocol with them, so they are aware of that concern.

The other side of that coin, which is kind of interesting, and I see Island Lake a little bit like this, with some of these developments going on, if there is the ability to put packages together that everyone is comfortable with, they do present some good opportunities for First Nations to take advantage of economic development opportunities there, whether it be a park, whether it be forest management or harvesting, et cetera.

Although there are lots of them and there is lots of work to be done and probably hundreds of roadblocks to be overcome in these processes, I just want to say to the member, I am committed, as I know he is, to giving people the opportunities to take advantage of the good things here and not be cast aside into areas where there are limited futures because of the terrain.

I recognize that and we are going to have to work diligently, continually, on trying to make sure that people are fairly treated, and that is a commitment I make to him.

Mr. Lathlin: Well, maybe the last question I wanted to ask on that, and then I will give the Liberal Party an opportunity if they have any questions, and that is, the minister mentioned with reference to Island Lake, the tribal council land agreement, treaty land entitlement agreement, about First Nations purchasing available unoccupied Crown land. I was always under the impression that when it comes to treaty land entitlement, we are, in fact, revisiting those agreements which were never really fully recognized or implemented, and that, in fact, we are dealing with a sort of a shortfall, I guess, a type of a shortfall.

An agreement was made. One party did not fulfill the terms of the agreement, and now the grieving party is coming back to the table and saying to the other party, you have not fulfilled

your terms of the agreement, yet it seems like if First Nations are going to be put in a position where they have to purchase land that really should be allocated, because it was land that was supposed to have been given to them in the first place by way of the treaties—perhaps I could ask the minister to explain or clarify as to what he meant by, you know, some First Nations will purchase available unoccupied Crown land.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, I want to thank the member for giving me the opportunity to clarify this statement, because it is a very complex area when you come into it, and it was fascinating as minister to be briefed in this area of the issues.

The member is very right. What the treaty land entitlement process is fulfilling is its obligation to those communities in terms of a land base that was not met at the time that the treaty was signed, and for the benefit of members of the committee who are not fully aware of the process, under the various treaties that were signed, an amount of land was to be provided for a number of families or individuals in those particular communities.

Literally what happened is when the Dominion Lands surveyors came out to survey these communities, they miscounted or did not pay attention to their numbers, et cetera, and today, it has been verified that the number of acres that were to be provided based on those formulas and those treaties was not provided. Often it was very easy to do because the so-called Indian agents of the day had very accurate records of their communities, and one could determine how many people were there, how much acreage should have been provided, and when you look at the current survey, it is not there. So we knew we had shortfalls.

I believe the verified number of shortfalls today is about 4,000 acres. In the case of the Island Lake community, they were to receive 22,000 acres. They actually received 18,000, and so they had a shortfall of 4,000 acres under the treaty.

Now here is the issue. A hundred years later, how do you compensate for those 4,000 acres? Do you provide 4,000 more acres? Well, the population of that community has increased

significantly over that century, and that community has been without those acres. So there was a loss to them. So after a long period of time of negotiation between all of the parties, the equity formula was developed which took the percentage of shortfall at the time of the survey and multiplied it by the current—if the member will give me a moment, I will just get this formula right.

In most communities, we have been dealing with this equity formula that took the percentage of shortfall at the time times the current day population. In the case of Island Lake, there were some adjustments made to increase that to 100,000 acres as the agreed upon compensation for the shortfall, from 4,000 to 100,000.

So that land is turned over without a penny to the province. That is under our obligations under the 1930 Natural Resources Transfer Act, where we have an obligation to turn over unoccupied Crown land to the federal government to satisfy the agreements. As part of this arrangement and as, I think, a good will gesture on the part of the province to see this concluded, and with the desire and the full agreement of the Island Lake community, the Province of Manitoba agreed, in addition to what was required to satisfy the treaty land entitlements, to conclude this arrangement, that we would provide an option to purchase on an additional 100,000 acres of land, just as any other group of people could purchase land. It would be identified within that block, and it was viewed, I believe, very favourably because it provides titled land in that area.

That is why the selection of that land is very important, because I am sure, I am speculating somewhat, that if that community has tourist development potential or lodge sites that they want to develop, they will want to choose property for which they can provide secure financing to do that kind of development.

So there will be that kind of process going on, and this was made as an additional provision over and above the acreage that was required to fulfill treaty land entitlement. So we are not forcing people to buy the land back to which they were entitled. What we are doing is providing an

opportunity to purchase more land over and above their entitlement, which we are providing to the federal government for them to turn over to those communities.

So I appreciate the confusion that some can get into because it is complicated, but we are in no way forcing people to buy back land to which they are entitled. In fact, we are adding to their ability to enlarge their land.

* (1500)

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, unfortunately, on Tuesday when it was decided to bring forward the Northern Affairs Estimates, I was not around, and I was busy in my constituency working with about 100 people raising issues, but it was agreed by the House leader that we should proceed because they did not want to waste time in the Legislature. I appreciate his decision, but I would have liked to have been here.

I know my colleagues raised a couple of questions, but one—I do not know whether it has been raised; I just started to read the Estimates today that went through on Tuesday—about the Norway House First Nation in regard to being fully informed and involved in the decision-making process regarding the restructure of the Northern Flood Committee. If this has been discussed, I will read it, but if not, I would like the minister's comments.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: One moment, please. Is there leave for the honourable member for St. Boniface to revert to 19.2 at this time? Leave?

Mr. Praznik: I would just advise the member that there was a fairly extensive discussion on Norway House, the issue being raised by I believe by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) where we had quite a—the long and the short of it is that there are two options under the agreement which they signed either to proceed in a comprehensive manner or by claim-by-claim basis, and they will make their choices to which way they wish to proceed and we will proceed on that basis. So they have an internal decision to make.

Mr. Gaudry: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, another issue that has been brought to my attention here

sometime back is the 55 Plus, the Manitoba income supplement, where the aboriginals residing on Indian reserves were denied the 55 Plus program. Has this been discussed?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if we could save that for moving into the Native Affairs Secretariat discussion and, if I may, just to recognize that Mr. Harvey Bostrom, who is the Director of the Native Affairs Secretariat, a senior official in our department—Executive Director, I believe, is the title—has joined us, and he will be available for questions on that particular area.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, before we move on to the Northern Affairs Secretariat, in my opening remarks on Tuesday, I made reference to the Northern Economic Development Commission, and it was my intent during those remarks to ask the Minister of Northern Affairs as to the status of the initiative. I wonder if I could have the Chair's co-operation to maybe revisit that area even for a brief moment.

Mr. Praznik: Just waiting for the question.

Mr. Lathlin: Oh, all right, then. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I will ask the minister to give us a status report on that particular study and the report that resulted from this study. The report, as I said on Tuesday, has been completed now for a little over, no, just about a year, I guess. I believe it had been completed last August. A considerable time has elapsed since the completion of the report, and we have yet to hear or see anything in terms of plans that may be contemplated by the government towards implementing those recommendations put forth by the report.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Just to clarify for the record, the honourable member's question is dealing with 19.3, which is where we are dealing at the time. The honourable minister to respond.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am glad we have the opportunity to discuss the Northern Economic Development Commission because many of the concerns that the member for The Pas raises are concerns that I share with him.

When I was appointed to this portfolio, a philosophy that I brought with the job, and it is one I have learned in my role as an MLA, that

governments cannot do all things for everyone. It is important we as political leaders help move people along to a common cause to be able to pursue the kind of things that they wish to pursue.

In terms of the Northern Economic Development Commission, one of the major recommendations of that report was that the North, through a vehicle, all of the various parties in the North—the municipalities, First Nations, Northern Affairs communities, various economic development groups—be able to have a vehicle by which they can co-ordinate their efforts and work strategically for the development of their region.

Last January, when I was in northern Manitoba, we arranged a meeting with a major group representing all of the municipalities. There were a number of tribal council representatives there; there were Northern Association of Community Councils, a number of the Economic Development people. We had an opportunity to have a fairly lengthy discussion over an afternoon. In fact, I think we just about filled the council chambers of the Thompson city council to discuss where we go from here.

A number of interesting things came out. Obviously, those communities saw as a benefit the ability to have a vehicle where they could sit down as northerners and prioritize what they wanted to do, particularly with respect to larger projects—road construction, various kinds of development—to give priorities to the provincial government, to give their priorities to the provincial Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) just on roads, for example, and say, here are the 10 priorities of roads we have in the North. We know we may not get them all done this year or a couple of years, but this is the most important because it means this development in this particular region.

There was a sense at that meeting that they needed a vehicle with which to do that. So we discussed that. We discussed it in great detail.

I did not want to ride into northern Manitoba as particularly representing a southern Manitoba constituency and say, I know what is best to you. That was not my intention. I said, here we have this recommendation for a vehicle. I put to that group

the challenge very clearly of saying that I wanted them as a group to come back to me with a recommendation as how we could take the existing resources that we were spending, because there are not a great deal of new resources, everybody recognizes that, but take the existing resources—I think the budget of the Norman Regional Development corporation is about \$100,000 a year, \$140,000 with provincial and municipal money. A number of those municipalities, a number of those tribal councils were spending dollars on economic development efforts—and how we could pool those existing resources into developing some sort of co-ordinating body that could meet regularly for northern Manitoba, involving all of the players in economic development, and be able to work strategically towards particularly those larger-type projects—recommendations on road construction, recommendations on a number of things, work with various ministries.

At that time the group agreed to sit down and sort this issue out and come back with recommendations to us. I also made the offer at that time, once they had agreed on how they wanted to constitute their body and put together the resources, and I indicated at that time, for example, if they as constituent bodies of Norman wanted to take those resources and put them into this kind of new body, that I would raise that with my colleague the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), who I am sure would be very amenable to that kind of diversion of resources. I said to them: When you have decided what you want to be, I am prepared to put together a team from my department of two or three officials and they would identify two or three people and that would become a way of plugging in with our department and other departments like Rural Development to begin to look at specific processes.

* (1510)

I must tell the member that to date I have not heard back from this group, which causes me some concern, so much so that a few weeks ago we wrote to them again and we asked to see where they are at. They did undertake at our meeting in

Thompson—my deputy minister was with me at the time; my ADM Mr. Boulette was there as well—to sit down as a group and to come up with a proposal of how they wanted to organize themselves for that function.

I say to the member for The Pas, I noted in their discussions as I put that challenge to them that there were differences of opinion as to the value of that process between a number of communities. So I have left it in their hands, and I look for their reply in the near future.

Point of Order

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is not really a point of order, but I am intrigued with my colleague's philosophical description of how he is approaching things. I am wondering if he would permit this one question, if honourable critics would agree.

Is that similar to this concept that I must go and find out where my people are going so that I can lead them?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister did not have a point of order. This is not an opportunity for him to put a question forward.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: I just say, we have written back to that broad-based group that we met with. I intend, after we get out of session sometime this summer, to also go back up to the North and meet with the group again and see where they want to take this.

I do say to the member, one very strong point that has to be made is, the North in all my travels has said to me that the North has to come to grips with a lot of its issues. We are prepared always to work with people in trying to better their situation. They undertook the challenge of getting back to me with various recommendations as to how they wanted to constitute this organization. I hope they are in the process of giving it very deep thought.

I am not sure exactly where they are at, but we have written to them again, and I intend to be up in northern Manitoba once the session is finished to meet with them. I am hoping that all of those

participants in this process will be able to find common cause to work together. If they are unable to do that, then I am not quite sure how we put all of this back together.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, yes, I agree with the minister, with his reference to transportation as being a very important component when one talks about northern economic development.

I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), when he was Minister of Natural Resources, can well appreciate that when we talk about fishing, for example, the transportation or lack of it really prohibits the people of northern Manitoba from taking advantage of the benefits that fishing can bring as compared to the fishermen in southern Manitoba. In southern Manitoba you drive—what?—in some cases two hours, maybe three or four hours and you are right there. In northern Manitoba you can only fly there in most cases, and the costs are really quite high.

I want to, if I can be permitted, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to come back to an area that we discussed on Tuesday. I am not quite sure whether I am clear or whether I understand the minister's response in regard to the arbitrator's decision which had been favourable to the Cross Lake First Nation.

Why, and I ask that question because we are talking about the Northern Economic Development Commission. We were also talking about Northern Flood issues. I guess what I wanted to know was why was the arbitrator's decision appealable when, from what I understand of the arbitration process, when an arbitrator is selected, do not all parties have to agree to the selection of the arbitrator? So I am asking the minister: Why was the decision appealable, and on what grounds was the arbitrator's decision appealed, on what basis?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Northern Flood Agreement is a complicated agreement which I am just still familiarizing myself with, as I am sure the member is and the members of the Legislature are.

When the arbitrator made his ruling, he made his ruling on all-weather access, not a bridge. Parties returned or appealed to that arbitrator. If I indicated that there was another arbitrator to which it went, then that was my error and I apologize to members of the committee for that, but they went back to the arbitrator in appeal and the arbitrator has sent them back and they are in a negotiating position right now. But the issue is all-weather access to the community, not a bridge.

So whether or not a ferry, an ice bridge system, meets all-weather access as opposed to a bridge is really the question in dispute. It is not as if this community has been left without any access or only a seasonal access. It is a question as to whether a ferry, an ice bridge, constitute all-weather access or not. That is currently in negotiation between the parties and I am told has been sent back by the arbitrator to the parties to negotiate. So, as the member can appreciate, it is to some degree a definitional issue, and we will have to see what comes out of those negotiations.

* (1520)

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have a copy of the arbitrator's ruling and, according to the Recommendation 25, the summary of recommendations that was put forth by the Lake Winnipeg, Churchill River and Nelson River Study Board, there was a summary of recommendations and No. 25 called for an all-weather road, not for an all-weather road with a ferry-ice bridge service. According to the arbitrator's concluding summary, he said, and I quote: In summary, I am drawn to the conclusion that the defining characteristic of the term "all-weather road" is the service type and that there is at present no all-weather road connecting Cross Lake and Jenpeg. In addition, the road as it presently exists does not share, at certain hours and during periods to the year, the characteristics of an all-weather road, which is to afford a traveller, under a normal range of weather conditions, a reasonable expectation of passage.

So I guess my question would be: How long does the Cross Lake First Nation have to go back and forth from one arbitrator to another arbitrator,

if every time they are going to get a favourable decision from the arbitrator, the government is going to appeal? That is one question.

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

The other question is: In this set of negotiations that have been started up again, what if there is no agreement? Where does the Cross Lake First Nation go from there? Does it go back to arbitration? Is there any legal recourse that the Cross Lake First Nation can look at, instead of going around, mucking around, if I can put it that way, in the arbitration process, where two levels of government do not recognize those decisions that are being made by the arbitrator?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, I think if one reads through this entire document there are a number of issues that come out, including road surfaces, and, clearly, this arbitrator's decision was that what was current there did not meet the definition of all-weather road, without giving guidance as to what would.

I believe in putting together what the member is bringing to this committee and in this document and the information I am getting from my staff. I gather the difference in opinion was, what then does constitute an all-weather road, including the road surfaces and the river crossing? It was for that issue that they went back to the arbitrator for a ruling, if I am being informed correctly. The arbitrator then sent both parties back to negotiate exactly what would be acceptable to both.

The member does raise a valid point, but I think that when you start dealing with these definitions and one might view it as a moot point somewhat, but there are more than just the crossing issues. There are issues with surfacing. I take the member's point, and I say to him that I am going to have some more discussions with my staff on this particular matter and get an update, which I would be glad to share with him as to where those negotiations are at currently. I appreciate what the member is saying, and sometimes what may appear to be the splitting of hairs is very important, sometimes it is not. I appreciate the issue he brings forward, and I recognize the point that he makes. I

will undertake to do some more inquiry as to the course of action and the status of negotiations for the honourable member.

Mr. Lathlin: I just have a couple of more items on that. I just want to say to the minister that when I read court decisions like Sparrow and the Henry Flett case and they are dealing with treaty and aboriginal rights, the judges or Supreme Court and Court of Appeal in Manitoba have always said that in the event that, where a decision is being made and it is a close call, like it could go either way, if one could put it that way, the Supreme Court has always said, the Court of Appeal has always said that when it comes to those situations a favourable decision will be given to the First Nation.

When we are dealing with things like treaty rights and aboriginal rights, I know the minister may differ with me on this because we are talking about Northern Flood, but we are talking about something that is similar to treaty where when treaties were made, an agreement was made to give land away and, in return for that land given away, certain things were going to be done by the government. When this land was flooded, when the Northern Flood Agreement was reached, whenever it was reached, 16, 17 years ago, there were certain things that both levels of government had agreed to do. There were certain things that the First Nations agreed to do. Now, we come to a situation or a point where there is disagreement as to how this can be interpreted.

I just wanted to say that because other more senior levels of courts have always said that when it comes to those situations where you are not sure where you are going to go but it looks like the First Nations may have some valid points and the government may also have some valid points, make a favourable decision towards the First Nation.

* (1530)

That has been the recent court cases, anyway. That is how they have been decided. I just want to mention that to the minister because it seems to me that, even though there is the arbitration process in place, one can go on forever and ever and argue on

the interpretation of what does this mean. I just wanted to point that out to the minister.

The one question that I asked, though, earlier on was: If there is no agreement in these other sets of negotiations, what then? Do we go back to arbitration and appeal that decision again, if it were favourable? Or do we go to court? Clearly, according to the arbitrator's decision, he says: I must conclude that recommendation 25 has not been complied with.

It is almost like we are talking about treaties here.

Mr. Praznik: I just want to make a comment about the reference to treaties, and I know that the member for Rupertsland raised that with me in a question the other day. I was giving it a great deal of thought in terminology. I sometimes get the impression—and I stand to be corrected—that always the reference to treaty is because so many of the treaties that exist between the federal Crown and First Nations people involve obligations that go on forever. There are many treaties that are time limited, so I just wanted to clarify that, when I come to the word “treaty,” “treaty” is another word for an agreement. It does not necessarily mean obligations go on forever. I think there is a little difference in definition and experience and nomenclature, so I thought it was worth putting that on the record.

The member's point is noted. I am going to take his concern back for some discussions with my staff to get a handle on exactly where those negotiations are. It is clear that the arbitrator did make a ruling that that particular position was not satisfied by way of surface or crossing and instructed the parties to go back and to negotiate something else. I will make that commitment to him; I want to get a handle as to where that is. Ultimately, the issue is going to have to be settled, and I appreciate the time concern that goes with that.

So I want to thank him for bringing it to my attention, and I will make that commitment to review this particular matter with my staff.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I will leave that area if the minister would give an indication as to what would happen next in the event that there is no agreement in these negotiations. Do we go back to arbitration, or can we go to—the First Nation always, I suppose, has the option of going to higher levels in the judicial system.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if any party to the agreement is in breach of the agreement, then, ultimately, there is redress in the courts. I would hope that this can be worked out in a satisfactory manner to all the parties involved. I will undertake to review the current situation with my staff.

If the member will just give me a moment here.

Mr. Deputy Chair, this is one of the rare moments in a minister's life where one has a problem brought forward and a solution within moments.

I have just received a report from our head of our Northern Flood Agreement negotiations. I understand that today we reached an agreement with the Cross Lake First Nation as to a process to resolve the specific issue of which he speaks. Again, one has to trust in the negotiation process. I am pleased that he raised the issue, and I am pleased that we have been able to work out a process with which to resolve it.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one other thing that I wanted to say about the Northern Economic Development Commission report is the observation that was made earlier in the hearings when an interim paper was produced. I want to visit that area because I think I want to emphasize to the minister that there were some major recommendations that were put forth by the report which need to be acted on, need to be implemented.

There were other areas which I thought warranted some close examination with a view to maybe, I do not know, developing policies or programs or services which would lead to alleviating some of those inequities that were pointed out by the interim paper. I speak specifically about the nonaboriginal organizations and aboriginal organizations, industry, employers,

et cetera, where a comparison was made as to the number of women hired by industry in northern Manitoba and the number of women hired by aboriginal organizations and aboriginal businesses in northern Manitoba.

* (1540)

It was not surprising, of course, but I mention it because I think it needs to be looked at very closely. That is, both in terms of the way we treat aboriginal people and women in general, not just aboriginal women but women in general, the wages or salaries for aboriginal organizations were, of course, way lower than nonaboriginal employers, and that includes industry, government, organizations and so on. The wages were way lower for those aboriginal organizations.

There was also another observation made. That is, women working for nonaboriginal industry, government, organizations, et cetera, were paid far less than men, and yet when we went into the native organizations, the observation was made that the gap was not as wide in aboriginal organizations. In other words, in the aboriginal organizations, the wages of men and women were about even. It also pointed out that there were more women working for aboriginal organizations, and at the same time the wages were not as far apart.

I mention that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, so that the minister is aware that there is this kind of discussion that goes on in northern Manitoba, not just southern Manitoba, and that there needs to be a realization on the part of government that we need programs and services. We need policy developed that would address those very—well, I call them inequities. Other people call it discrimination. But there is nevertheless a sharp contrast, even in the way we pay aboriginal people, women and so on.

That is why I say to the minister that the Northern Economic Development Commission will have to be acted upon, at least zero in on those major recommendations that would go a long way to addressing this very serious issue that I just brought forth.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not want to, for any moment, give the impression that

differences in wages between men and women or aboriginal people and nonaboriginal people are not of interest. They are, and some of the inequities there are certainly I think addressable.

But, I want to make a comment to the member that one must remember that government again cannot be and maybe should not be the answer to all problems—or they cannot provide the answers to all problems and issues in society. I speak from the experience of administering The Construction Industry Wages Act which sets various minimum wages in the construction industry and all of the difficulties that one gets into when you come to regulate wage levels. There is no single answer to a problem.

Government has the ability through education, through working with people to develop their skills, encouraging people to develop the skills, but above minimums that we set and we have the ability to do things in our own shop. I say to the member in all sincerity that government has made efforts in our own shop among our own employees to deal with the pay equity issue among our own employees, and we have. We have dealt with the pay equity issue in hospitals for nurses by way of an agreement. So where we have been the employer, we have attempted to address those particular issues.

I also say to him as a member of the New Democratic Party—because so often the problems we wish to resolve cause us to cross principles or to contradict some principles for which we stand from time and time—one of the principles of his party and of the labour movement which is a part of it has been access to collective bargaining. I have always had to ask this question of myself in dealing with some of these issues, particularly in unionized shops where there has been a bargaining agent—for example, with nurses, with government employees—where we have had to address pay equity by way of special legislation and programs. Those are really bargaining issues. The inequalities that have developed in those shops have happened through the collective bargaining process and that is where they should have been fixed.

Now that did not happen and governments in their wisdom other days decided to address, among its own employees, pay equity issues through special legislation, but I have always had to ask myself was that really the right way to go if you believe in the principle of collective bargaining in those areas. So it does present a bit of a dilemma no doubt.

On the larger issue of the inequality of wages in different industries in areas of the North, there is no doubt—my deputy minister and I have talked about this, him being a northerner and coming from Thompson—that there are great disparities in wage levels and income-earning level potential throughout the North. You have some of the wealthiest, highest wage-earning communities in our province in northern Manitoba and, on the other hand, you have some of the poorest communities, some side by side, because of the disparity in resources, of skill levels, of opportunities that are there.

Those things, I do not believe government can address specifically, nor do I take it from the member that he is asking us to come in with a legislative program to raise these things or to bring equality. They come about by a number of factors, skill levels, improvements, opportunities, and I have to say, ultimately, economic opportunities that allow people in northern Manitoba to produce goods, services, products that they can export out of their region to bring in wealth.

Some of the steps we have taken as a government in terms of changes in mines policy that my predecessor Mr. Downey brought in as Mines minister and Northern Affairs minister, have created opportunities there that might not otherwise have been there, the opportunity to look at exporting more product through the Port of Churchill. All of those things present opportunities.

The challenge for all of us here is to ensure and to work through what tools we have to ensure that as many people in northern Manitoba as possible can take advantage of those opportunities and ultimately through the collective bargaining level to make sure they are able to obtain wage levels

when they can take advantage of those opportunities that are as high as they possibly can receive. There are a lot of players. There are a lot of different dynamics.

I appreciate the frustration that is there between the disparities that are involved, and I do not think there is one specific solution and I did not hear the member for The Pas say that there was, but the role of government in solving that has to be to target where we can be effective and do something in helping people achieve their potential and creating the climate to take advantage of opportunities that are there. I do not know if government has ever entirely been successful in getting into those areas and making the direct decisions that end those disparities. I reference The Construction Industry Wages Act, that I am very familiar with, as an area where it does not really work.

* (1550)

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I recognize what the minister is saying, but given the situation in northern Manitoba where the unemployment rate is currently sitting around 24, 25 percent and in the majority of the aboriginal communities it is much higher than that, anywhere from 60 to 90 percent, should we not be looking at developing some sort of a strategy as a government to address that very serious situation. Because he is right.

Just because I mentioned those inequities, what I was really driving at was, hey, we need training programs. He recognizes there is lack of skills and I agree with him a hundred percent. So what can we do? Common sense would tell me that we need training programs. We need more education, because ultimately that is what is going to help to deal with the economic situation, unemployment rate and so on. When that happens we will have more people paying taxes which will service the government's operation.

I would like to ask the minister. As we are sitting here, is there a strategy to address the northern Manitoba unemployment situation, and if there is not, is the government intending to develop a strategy?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I say to the member for The Pas, this is, I think, quite a productive discussion that we are having, and I am enjoying it quite a bit because the member for The Pas, in his other life as chief of the Opaskwayak First Nation, was probably one of the leaders in Manitoba in building and taking advantage of opportunities that were in his back yard, virtually literally, and building upon them, the opportunities that come. I say this that this Department of Northern Affairs is attendant at one of the projects in that community, the Otineka Mall.

It is also, in terms of a strategy specifically—as a new Minister of Northern Affairs, one takes over the mantle that comes with the Economic Development Commission, and other things, and I am in the process now, with my department, of formulating our strategy for some of these issues. I have to elaborate for a moment because there is no doubt that the largest unemployment rates are in our First Nations communities, particularly those that are remote. That is where probably the most pressing need at the current time is for our efforts.

In the other extreme, a city like Thompson, with the growth of Inco, a turnaround in nickel prices, expansion of another mine, and one has a lot of other activity going on there, and the problem begins to resolve itself. That opportunity is not going to flow to many of those isolated communities.

I know we are going to get into the discussion under the Native Affairs Secretariat, but this is a good way to begin to get into it. The Grand Chief Phil Fontaine and I have had some very informal discussions because obviously the work that he is doing now with the federal government is very important work and very exciting. As that evolves over the next few months and their processes are developed, we as a provincial government want to be working with the Grand Chief in the areas where we can be of assistance, where we can be productive in this process.

The reason I raise this is to sort of set the scenario. I have had to ask myself, in many of those communities, as, I think, has the Grand Chief, as have others, what opportunities are there

that currently see dollars flowing out of the community? One, for example, which the Grand Chief has talked about, is housing, the need for housing in those communities and yet the outflow of dollars in the construction of those homes. I understand from media reports, not wanting to get into the confidences of our discussions, but housing has been an area that the Grand Chief has identified for transfer in terms of getting housing dollars.

One of the discussions that he and I have had is about how to stretch that and how to see more and more of those dollars spent locally employing people. One of the areas that my departments have the ability to be of assistance, and I understand the Grand Chief made some comment today about it, was the area of building codes, fire protection, those areas tied in to how you construct those homes. So we are beginning some very practical discussions that I think can see those First Nations do a lot better in developing their local economies. employing people locally, stretching their dollars on housing, building better, more appropriate housing that has a much higher local labour component than is currently the case.

Very practically, we become not a player because there is a jurisdictional issue, but we become an invited associate to this process to basically provide expertise. So, when the member asks me about strategy, yes, we are in the process now of developing that strategy very closely with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs as to how we will have that involvement and will pursue that.

In terms of some of the other communities that I am particularly responsible for, our Northern Affairs community, that is an issue that we are discussing with NACC about how we can create more opportunities locally and will continue to do that. Because of the dynamic of what is happening now, our strategy will be very much tied to the processes that the two main parties at the table develop. I am not saying we do not want to be there, but I am cognizant of the dynamic. The Grand Chief and I have had those discussions. I am hoping within a reasonable time we will be able to make some public statements about our strategy in

dealing with this, which will tie in to the goals that the member for The Pas has so rightly identified.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 3. Northern Development and Co-ordination (a) Northern Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$334,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$92,900—pass.

3.(b) Northern Flood Agreement (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$112,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$39,500—pass; (3) Northern Flood Program \$1,659,800—pass.

3.(c) Economic Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$443,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$120,200—pass; (3) Corporate Projects \$100,000—pass.

3.(d) Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission, zero.

3.(e) Communities Economic Development Fund \$1,434,100—pass.

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,336,700 for Northern Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

We will now move on to Resolution 19.4: Item 4. Native Affairs Secretariat (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$441,100.

Mr. Gaudry: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in regard to the 55 Plus program, I received a letter.

This letter is written to advise you of the policy of the Manitoba government of denying benefits to Indians residing on Indian reserves under the 55 Plus program. Specifically, Indians who are aged between 55 and 65 are being denied benefits. So Indians over the age of 65 receive benefits along with Guaranteed Income Supplement. Can we have comments from the minister in regard to why they are denied the 55 Plus program?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, as the members of the committee may well be aware, this is an item that appears in the budget of the Department of Family Services in whose budget these decisions are made.

I appreciate it being raised here in terms of the Native Affairs Secretariat as a co-ordinating body.

I understand that the logic behind the particular decision was that this particular program with Status people living on reserve that they fall within the jurisdiction of the federal government, and so are not viewed by that department as eligible for this particular program.

I recognize fully that there are two sides to that opinion. That may be tested at some point in court. I cannot provide any more information to the member other than that because of the decision being another department. I do recognize that there are two sides to this particular coin, and that department has chosen, and Treasury Board has chosen, to view that particular community is in federal jurisdiction.

I would say to the member, in the context of the discussions that are now going on with the First Nations and the federal government and the discussions that I have had, beginning to have with both parties, that these jurisdictional arguments become very much the basis, the issues of jurisdiction for much of what is being discussed. So this particular question, I suspect, is going to get subsumed into a larger table of discussions and, quite frankly, become probably an academic one within the not-too-distant future.

* (1600)

Mr. Gaudry: The minister has mentioned that is part of the Department of Family Services. Is the minister prepared to discuss this issue with the Minister of Family Services so that we have something in regard to having a policy for that program for the aboriginal communities?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I just say to the member that this will form part of the discussion that the secretariat and myself as minister will have with the Minister of Family Services and other ministers whose departments are affected by the general self-government negotiations going on now. So the assurance I will give him is that it will be an issue that will be discussed, but the caution, of course, is that as jurisdiction becomes an important part of the discussions in self-government, that larger table is likely to subsume this particular issue in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Gaudry: I thank the minister for his comments.

Another issue that was brought about yesterday was the Buffalo Point, and I understand that there are some comments or answers to be given to us today. Can the minister relate those comments?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am advised that with respect to Buffalo Point, we have had some discussions with them regarding revenue-sharing taxation issues. Staff of the secretariat have met with the chief and his representatives on two occasions to obtain a clear understanding of exactly what they wish to pursue—the parameters of it—and will continue to meet and try to reach a better understanding or appropriate agreements.

I would say to the member, we as a government currently have negotiated with quite a number of First Nations arrangements with respect to collection of gasoline tax and tobacco tax. So we are not averse to these types of agreements.

But I say again—and I do not mean this to become a pat response—but as we get into these self-government negotiations, these issues all become part of that larger table. To date, they have been dealt with, quite frankly, almost—not on an ad hoc, issue by issue. They will likely become in the very next while part of a much larger framework and undertaking, and most of these agreements that we have signed, whether they be in gambling or in taxation, et cetera, have been viewed as interim agreements awaiting the larger negotiations.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there are several questions that I have, but I think that I will be very careful on some of the questions that I ask because some of them relate to other departments and I am just gaining awareness as to which ones fit in this particular one and if the minister will forgive me—

Allow me to begin with last year's cuts by this department to aboriginal people and also aboriginal organizations during the International Year of Indigenous Peoples. Many organizations felt it was inappropriate that their organizations were cut of finances.

Now I would like to ask the minister to begin this portion by talking about any further cuts that may be there that do not appear in writing before us.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in last year's budget process there were a number of grants that this department made that were eliminated, but in this particular year we are maintaining in our budget dollars for the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, the Indigenous Women's Collective and the Manitoba Metis Federation for core funding and tripartite funding.

With respect to the Manitoba Metis Federation, as the member is aware, that organization has gone through a very difficult year, I guess, beginning sometime in the fall following their elections. The result was that the entire board of directors and the president of the organization exercised provisions under their constitution and resigned. Before doing so they did not put in place an interim means of governing themselves. The board went to court and an interim board of directors was appointed.

Most regrettably, many of us, I know the Leader of his party being one whom I have had discussions with, as well as the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Edwards), we were all inundated, as one does in these cases, with hosts of accusations as to how money was being sent, et cetera. We met with the representatives of the interim board on a number of occasions. The conclusion of those meetings was to offer our payments with certain safeguards to be put in place, which the interim board rejected. So the unexpended payments did not flow.

We have had some discussions with them since. I think there has been a meeting of the minds as to those safeguards, and obviously they will be holding an election, I believe, on the 23rd of this month. We may be able to meet some of those requirements from the previous year, and we have in our budget dollars for this year which once the new board is in place and there is some—which I think it has happened over the last month or two where there has been a settling down of the community in terms of this very heated debate and

issue, we will continue to fund those organizations in this fiscal year.

It was a difficult year for them, but as I have said, I think most of us who have some dealing with these issues were lobbied by hosts of people, and I did have some discussions with Leaders of the two opposition parties who were getting the same kind of lobbying efforts from various sides as we were.

Mr. Robinson: I think that certainly on our behalf too, we are looking forward to the Manitoba Metis Federation and their elections coming up on June 23. We want to see the organization reactivated and serve the needs of the Metis people of this province.

I would like to go back a little bit to what the member for St. Boniface was asking on 55 Plus for on-reserve people. I understand that there is a government study on this issue, and I am wondering what the contents of this study may be.

Mr. Praznik: Could the member be somewhat more specific? I look to my staff who are not quite sure which particular study. I do not think we are aware of one—if he could be more specific, it would be helpful to us.

Mr. Robinson: We have had calls from different communities in Rupertsland along with the different First Nations communities in The Pas constituency. We are told that there is a study that is somewhere—I do not know what it is called—that does in fact have a look at the 55 Plus program on reserves. I am sorry I cannot be more specific than that.

Mr. Praznik: That may be within Family Services. We will endeavour to see what was out in terms of analysis, but I do say to the member for Rupertsland, as I said to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), as we get into the self-government negotiations and issues of jurisdiction and from indications that I have had to date, I think that issues like 55 Plus, for example, and some of the taxation issues will quickly get subsumed in the broader debate in the issue.

The concern that he raises is certainly one that I appreciate. As the member knows, the applicability of provincial law or programs to

status people on reserve flows from a 1951 provision of the national Indian Act which made our laws applicable on Indian lands. That becomes the basis of the federal government and the First Nations in Manitoba removing jurisdictions or bringing jurisdictions back into their community for governance.

When that happens, then our jurisdiction of those communities, which has only been granted by the Parliament of Canada, ends to some degree. So that has to be part of that process of negotiation and discussion and where things will be. So as I said, I am cognizant of the concerns that are raised, but I suspect that these negotiations will subsume this issue and several others as we move into them with some speed come the fall.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to now ask the minister some issues on housing. It was brought to our attention by one of the Northern Association of Community Councils' communities, Berens River, who brought this matter to us a couple of months ago now that they wanted to be able to be in a position of allocating and being able to make decisions on their own as a community council with respect to housing. I know there has been some dialogue with Canada Mortgage and Housing, or at least one meeting, to discuss this matter.

* (1610)

I am wondering if the minister would go to bat and go to the side of the community councils to enable them to exercise some governing powers, as well, with respect to housing and how they deal with that in their own respective communities like Berens River.

Mr. Praznik: The member for Rupertsland is getting into an issue that I just started to get a sense of about four or five months ago, which is one that is—I would not say a complicated one, it is rather a simple one, but it is two conflicting organizations looking to make decisions in that area. Currently the authority over housing has been delegated or contracted between us and the federal government with the Manitoba Metis Federation Housing authority. They are the ones who are

administering those houses and making decisions with respect to occupancy, et cetera.

The Northern Association of Community Councils, when we met with them some months ago, one of the issues they put on the table was their ability in wanting to get into the housing business and take over that contract that the MMF Housing authority has. When one adds the fact that probably in many of these communities over 75 percent of their residents are Metis and also belong to the MMF, it is quite a scenario of different groups within the same community vying for issues of housing. It is not simply one of a bureaucracy of government not dealing with the housing issue and local people should be governing it. It is two groups within a local community as to who should be dealing with housing.

Putting it in that context, I am not quite sure at this stage where this will evolve. The Northern Association of Community Councils are just themselves getting the ability to have some expertise in managing their affairs, and as an association they have had some difficulty. They are gaining expertise. Whether or not they are currently in a position to establish an organization like MMF Housing authority, I am not sure, but what it does say is that MMF Housing has some work to do with its client base in some of those communities in accommodating some needs.

As of today, I am not quite sure how we are going to handle it. I guess one of the things that we will have to do over the next few months, once the new MMF Board of Directors is in place, is probably get NACC and the MMF and its housing authority together at a table to see if we can work out some solutions that work for everybody. It is not a simple matter, as I am sure the member for Rupertsland can appreciate in the local politics that are involved in this situation.

Mr. Robinson: I just want to conclude that part by asking the minister whether or not he is going to leave the door open for the possibility of local housing authorities in Northern Association of Community Councils' communities.

Mr. Praznik: The major part of the dollars expended on these programs are federal dollars so they obviously have to be part of this. Part of the difficulty, of course, is there is certainly a need for a local component, particularly in management and repair and people being on the ground in those communities. There is also a larger issue of bookkeeping and buying and the costs of centralization.

This is an issue that all of the players are going to have to sort out as to what will work. I view my role, and I think the role of the Minister of Housing (Mrs. McIntosh) is to ensure that all the parties are at the table and working through these difficulties. There may be some need for MMF Housing to re-evaluate how they deliver some of these programs. They may wish to subcontract some of their services locally to people in NACC communities or NACC councils.

There are lots of ways I think we can accommodate it. If there is a general desire, a general good will on behalf of all the parties, maybe we can work something out that is cost-effective, administratively sound and delivers quality service to the people in those communities with giving some more opportunities for employment, et cetera.

It is not an easy scenario, but we are committed to working with all the parties to see this thing through. As I am sure all members appreciate, there is a lot of internal politics involved between the various organizations, and one has to tread ever so delicately in those kind of situations.

Mr. Robinson: The minister mentioned earlier about housing and the whole dismantling possibilities in Manitoba with respect to Indian Affairs and the role that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs are playing in that. Speaking as a First Nations' person, I think this is something that we have been waiting for for a long time, and certainly a lot of opportunities are there.

While we are here in this committee this afternoon, of course, the chiefs are just winding down from a three-day conference to discuss the whole dismantling. There will be some communities in Manitoba that will want to

approach this whole issue with caution. We have met on numerous occasions with chiefs of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs along with the Grand Chief Mr. Fontaine.

There are four areas that we are told they would like to move into that the province has a direct role to play in. I just want to get the views of the minister with respect to those four areas. One of them he mentioned, but the others are: capital management, firefighting services and social assistance, from what I recall in our conversations with the Grand Chief. How does the minister view his role as a minister of this province, and how does the province relate as a partner in this whole arrangement?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to first of all just preface my remarks by giving members a little bit of an update as to the current flow as to process, because I have had, as minister, some discussions with the Grand Chief, nothing formal, a lot of informal discussions trying to get a handle as to where things are going. We have had some discussions with the national minister. Our own provincial position is one that is in the process of evolving and developing as we get a better handle on where the two principal parties to this arrangement, the Government of Canada and the First Nations through the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, are developing their process. My remarks are prefaced with that caution that it is an evolving process and our position is evolving and developing.

First of all, as well, by way of background, one has to appreciate the jurisdictional issues, as I pointed out earlier, that our jurisdiction, the applicability of our law that our Legislative Assembly does not have constitutional authority over those First Nations' communities, but our laws apply because of the Parliament of Canada through the Indian Act, my understanding of the legality, making them applicable.

We certainly recognize that flow of events and that makes obviously, as Grand Chief Mercredi pointed out in Quebec City at our ministers' meeting, the obligations, particularly under treaty, are between the Government of Canada and those

First Nations. We recognize that. So there is a bilateral process there.

This is the point that is made to me by our Grand Chief in Manitoba. On a practical nature, the Province of Manitoba has a great role to play simply because many of those current services are delivered provincially. We are closer to those First Nations. We border them, and there are lots of issues where just out of a practical need, one wants to deal with the province. So we recognize that and we are certainly willing to be part of those discussions.

The First Nations and the government of Manitoba, I have noticed, also agree on another principle to the financing of this arrangement that I think is fundamental. I know when I was in Quebec City, Grand Chief Mercredi made the point very strongly that the responsibility financially rested with the Government of Canada, and that is a position that this province has pursued, so we are very much in common cause in that particular part of it, although I must admit to you that the federal minister seems to be somewhat unclear as to these relationships and seems to want to push off the federal government's responsibilities onto other levels.

* (1620)

So we are finding common cause with First Nations leadership on that issue. Having said that, we are certainly prepared to discuss all of those areas and enter into discussions where we can be of practical assistance, because I am sure the First Nations are going to have to ask the Government of Canada, as part of this, to remove those jurisdictions from the province, the applicability of provincial law, and turn it over to them.

That is something we have no say in because it is not our jurisdiction. It is the Parliament of Canada, but we certainly want to be accommodating and helpful to those First Nations in providing expertise, experience, support, whatever, for them to be able to develop their administrations as they so choose to do in those particular areas.

One that comes to mind is fire that the member has mentioned, and I say to the member clearly that the Grand Chief and I have had some very

preliminary discussions. The fire service is one area that currently is in the Department of Labour, and our people are quite excited by the opportunity to work with a First Nations fire commission on an equal basis to develop a number of things that we can do and share resources and work with them to develop their own expertise in those communities.

So as this develops, I want to make very clear that we are excited by some of the possibilities that are here to address long-standing issues of grievance between the province and some First Nations. We are excited about the opportunities that are there to see development that before did not or could not take place.

The only caution I put to the member is that as this process which is appropriately driven by the federal government and the First Nations communities advances and moves forward, we will be developing our positions and moving along, but generally speaking, we have been, to date, fairly interested and see a lot of opportunities here to resolve many outstanding issues, so it is going to be a very exciting period over the next few years.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I appreciate those comments from the minister, and I also understand the chief's position with respect to the trust responsibility with the federal government. After all, the treaties were made with the Crown in the right of Great Britain. Later, that responsibility, the way I understand it, was transferred over to Canada, certainly not with the blessings of the First Nations, but that is how things happened in our history.

I would like to ask the minister now, has there been any dialogue with the federal counterpart of this minister, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, with respect to the enormous opportunities that seem to be unfolding before us here in this dismantling process in Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: We have had some informal dialogue, I think, when Mr. Irwin was first appointed, and he visited Manitoba, I believe, in December. He met with me, along with the member for Parliament for Churchill, Mr. Harper, and at that time he raised the issue of dismantling

and was quite excited by that opportunity and indicated that he might be proceeding. It was something he was looking at, and then, of course, the announcement was made.

We have had two meetings of First Ministers over the last number of months, and we have had some discussions, we have had some private discussions about things. But I say to the member for Rupertsland, one of the difficulties in this is, I think, the momentum to do this is moving faster in the federal scene than are the abilities of the appropriate bureaucracies in the federal government to keep up to the momentum.

One of the frustrations—I would not even say it is a frustration—one of the realities of this process is I am not quite sure yet that the federal government fully appreciates where it wants to be and how it is going to handle these matters. I do not even think their agents in Manitoba are—you know, they know the general principle, and they know they are going to be moving there—but they are not quite sure what the game plan is or the process. Part of that, in fairness, is that I think the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has been proposing this concept and now it is moving forward and they have to get their ducks in line in essence and know where they want to be and how they want to tackle it.

As the member has pointed out, rightly so, some communities are approaching this with great reluctance are concerned. Others are much more prepared to go into it. Some are very far advanced in their own government. The member for The Pas' home community, the Opaskwayak First Nations is one that comes to mind, that is very far advanced. So it is an evolving process. It will continue to evolve, and we will be having discussions and looking for opportunities.

I say to him, the interesting dynamic is that I think the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the government of Manitoba will have lots of opportunities to have bilateral discussions on the practical areas of where we can be of assistance to each other in developing some common strategies with respect to financing and other things, because we do have common cause. So it will be a very

dynamic process, and I am, quite frankly, looking forward to it because I think this is one place where a lot of good can be achieved.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do want to thank the minister for his comments. I am sure that we could spend the afternoon talking about this very exciting initiative by First Nations and Manitoba; however, I do know that we have to move on to other areas of the Estimates.

One thing that we talked about, and I know that the discussion that occurred last year on June 28, 1993 with the minister at that time, Mr. Downey, and also the critic, Mr. Hickes, was with respect to an urban aboriginal strategy. Now we know that in Canada over half of the treaty and Status Indians live in off-reserve environments in places like Winnipeg, Vancouver, or Toronto, but specific to Manitoba about 40 percent of the treaty and Status Indians from reserves are now residents in Winnipeg, and often Winnipeg has been viewed as the largest Indian reserve in Canada. Many times our people, who seek to have a better life elsewhere from the economically deprived reserves that they come from, hope to find that in situations like Winnipeg. Unfortunately, those dreams of bettering themselves are not always met.

The situation is this: We have roughly 85 percent of the aboriginal population in Winnipeg unemployed. Certainly, I do not think anybody feels proud of having to live on social assistance. In 1991 there was a three-level meeting—a four-level meeting actually—with the City of Winnipeg with Mayor Bill Norrie at that time, the province, the federal government represented at that time by Mr. Epp, this government represented by Mr. Downey and Mr. Ernst, and also the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. Resulting from that was a draft Memorandum of Understanding to begin the workings of an urban aboriginal strategy to address some many long-standing issues that have dominated aboriginal people in the city of Winnipeg and to begin addressing these many, many serious issues that do exist in Winnipeg, and we have not heard anything.

There has been no movement with respect to an urban aboriginal strategy, not only for Winnipeg,

but also in larger urban communities in the province of Manitoba. I just want to find out, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, whether or not the minister has examined this area and if there is a plan in place to address this very, very serious problem.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to thank the member for that question, when he asked if I am examining it. I, as all new ministers who take over a portfolio, want to get a comfort level with the issues that are involved.

This is one particular area that I have been spending some time on in the last while and trying to get a feel for in my own mind as to what recommendations I can make to my colleagues as to where we should be, but there are a number of avenues or a number of issues within developing this particular strategy that I have come to see, and they fall on different plates. If the members will allow me just for a moment, I would like to go through them.

I have had a number of people through my office, a number of groups who look at developing an urban aboriginal initiative very similar to that being undertaken by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and even the words jurisdiction and legislative authority being devolved through a host of organizations. Obviously, it is almost, to some degree, like wanting to copy the initiative that is taking place among First Nations under treaty and under very set obligations. There is no legal background for that necessarily, because these people are all members of First Nations who are currently negotiating with the federal government. That is certainly one extreme.

* (1630)

There are hosts of organizations that I have had the opportunity to meet with and visit who are doing a lot of very good work in the city of Winnipeg and who have some very interesting proposals and plans. I have had the opportunity to spend a Saturday afternoon at the new centre in Winnipeg in the old CPR station and met with a group of entrepreneurs. I have had some meetings with the urban council, of which Jim Bear is president, and others, and have been getting a sense of where we want to be.

I am not quite sure yet as to where all this will take us. I do know that as we are negotiating a new core area agreement in which the Department of Urban Affairs has the lead, that there will be some opportunities presented there to be able to support a variety of services and programming that is currently in place or potentially can take place.

The Friendship Centres is another avenue I would like to just mention right now. I have had two very good meetings with them in the last number of months. I believe it was just before Christmas, I met with representatives of all the Friendship Centres in Manitoba on a Sunday afternoon. We spent quite a few hours, and quite a number of these groups have a very big role to play, in my opinion, in the whole area of social policy reform that will be going on over the next number of years as a result of Mr. Axworthy's initiative.

I know this issue has come up in the context of the Friendship Centres and funding for Friendship Centres, just like the Manitoba Metis Federation housing authority has proven to be a very efficient means of delivering housing policy in Manitoba in a cost-effective manner, a reduced cost for government and I think a closer-to-the-people, closer-to-the-communities service delivery model. I think many of the groups that the member is well aware of in the city, like the Friendship Centres, have the possibility to play a major role in delivering service in this whole area of reform.

Between the renewal of the Core Area Initiative, the social policy reform that the federal government is embarking on, I view our role as a secretariat is working with those groups to find their place in those two initiatives, to be able to pursue the kind of good work that they do because they are much closer to their communities, much closer to the people who need assistance and help and need to be worked with, than any kind of bureaucracy the provincial or federal or municipal government can develop.

I do not have specifics for the member today, but I see two great opportunities. We have already started the process with the friendship centres, and the Core Area Initiative gives us some other

opportunities. Over the next number of months and years, I see our role as working to bring those people in and finding them places within those two opportunities, to do the things they do best and which will provide them another revenue source and probably save the taxpayers some money. As I found, they can often do it more effectively and for less cost than if we do it ourselves. I am trying to combine all these concepts and working with those particular groups to improve their general situation.

Mr. Robinson: I do have other areas that I want to talk to you about, but before we leave this, there are varied estimates of the total aboriginal population in Winnipeg. Throughout Manitoba we have, and as the member for The Pas stated, unemployment situations in some communities of 98 percent; in Winnipeg, I said, roughly 85 percent out of the estimated 60,000 aboriginal people that do live in the city of Winnipeg.

I am just wondering, based on these rough estimates that we have and the high unemployment and the critical situation that our people are in, not only in northern remote communities, but indeed in the Third World conditions that they have to live in in the city of Winnipeg—even though the United Nations may declare Canada a nice place to live, there are still these unfortunate living conditions that First Nations people and other aboriginal people have to live under.

I am happy to hear that the minister is open to addressing many long-standing issues that have been around. I just wanted to get his view now on entertaining arrangements on an urban aboriginal strategy with people like the friendship centre, the Manitoba Metis Federation, Winnipeg chapter, or Winnipeg region, I guess it is referred to as, or the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg or the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. It does not really matter who, but whether or not this minister is prepared to begin a process to start attacking this very needed service for the aboriginal population of Winnipeg.

Mr. Praznik: Absolutely. I think, to the honourable member, he has named a number of organizations that I have had the privilege of getting to know and work with. I am not just

Minister of Northern Affairs for my own constituency, like the MMF. I am very excited by what is taking place with the chiefs, because I think even those First Nations are going to have a role to play in what goes on in Winnipeg because so many of their citizens have moved in and reside here.

I am already detecting a sense of being involved in providing services and working with people in Winnipeg for citizens who come off those First Nations. There are lots of players there now, but one common theme, I think, runs through this, and that is, that people are helping themselves or want to help themselves to solve those problems. Communities want to help themselves. I think it is so important for us in government to be open to finding ways to help those people who want to go in and do the work in those communities, to build up their own ability to deal with so many of those issues.

One example that comes to mind, just so the member has a sense of where I am coming from, is the Kinew Housing co-op. I had the opportunity to know Mr. Stan Fulham, who ran that for many, many years. He told me about his early days where the purpose was to buy old houses, employ people primarily from the Metis community, but aboriginal people, in building, repairing them, learning the skills that went with that and then leasing them out. That particular housing co-op has generally been a success, but one problem that it came into was the application of The Construction Industry Wages Act that establishes a rate of pay and a number of other things with respect to apprenticeship. It never was designed for that kind of co-op but made it very difficult, if not impossible, in some situations for them to fulfill their mandate.

It was not because of an ill intention on the part of The Construction Industry Wages Act or the people who framed it; no one ever contemplated about it. One of the important parts in undertaking this commitment, I say to the minister, is we have to be working with people to find the barriers that stand in the way of people doing the things they want to do to help themselves and be willing to adjust them, move them, cut through them, to let

people find their own way, the way that they know they want to go and the things they want to do without these artificial barriers standing in their roads.

We can talk a lot of antidotes and in a lot of generalities, but the long and the short of it is that I am very prepared as minister, as I think are all my colleagues, to find new ways of doing things that at the end of the day are far more productive than many of the things we produced in the past or used in the past that have never had the results that have made anybody happy.

I do not know where that is going to lead us. I am not sure all the problems we are going to have with it, but we are open minded and prepared to work toward those ends, as I know the honourable member is as well.

* (1640)

Mr. Robinson: One of the unfortunate realities, in northern Manitoba currently and perhaps in some communities more than others, is the whole issue of solvent abuse. In the mid-1980s, the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., the MKO organization, talked about and agreed on Cross Lake being a location for a solvent abuse treatment centre. There are no words to explain the seriousness of this issue. There are people dying, and it is sad to say as well that babies are being born with the syndrome, whatever it may be called, as a result of solvent abuse.

This is an issue that is not simply an Indian problem; it is an issue of society. Northern Manitoba does not have the facilities to deal with this problem appropriately. The Sagkeeng First Nation does, and certainly we commend them on the work that they have done. I think they need all the support in the world.

But northern Manitoba has been needing a solvent abuse treatment centre. I would like to, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, ask the minister for his views with respect to working in partnership with the northern chiefs and establishing the solvent abuse treatment centre in Manitoba, whether it be in Cross Lake or Norway House or somewhere in between the two communities, so that we will

enable aboriginal people in northern Manitoba to begin addressing this very, very serious issue.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in another life, as an assistant to the then Minister of National Health and Welfare, one of the projects that was just coming to fruition when I went to work for Mr. Epp was the Sagkeeng alcohol rehabilitation centre, which was once in my constituency and is now in his at Fort Alexander, and the work that went on with Health and Welfare Canada in identifying that centre and building it. It has turned out to be a tremendous place. It does a lot of good work, and it has been a big plus to the community at Sagkeeng.

Part of our discussions with the chiefs, as we get into self-government—one area that is obviously there at some point in time for chiefs to take over jurisdiction is certainly health and welfare, in which that particular issue falls. Currently, health is the responsibility of the federal Ministry of Health.

I can say to him that, as a Manitoba minister, I am more than prepared to work with the chiefs, have our staff work with the chiefs, in providing whatever assistance we can, but I am cognizant as well that this issue is one that is going to fall within their jurisdiction in self-government. I view our role as working with them to help them as they request our help and assistance, but the work is going to have to come within their level of government if one is to respect that principle of self-government. So that is the commitment that I make to the member.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, approximately 10 percent of Manitoba's population is aboriginal people, I am told, and yet over 60 percent of the inmates at the Stony Mountain penitentiary are native people; The Pas jail, at any given time, roughly about 90 percent to 98 percent, sometimes 100 percent; Dauphin, about 50 percent; Brandon, 60 percent to 70 percent; Headingley, at times, 80 percent.

First Nations people and other aboriginal people in this province are often perceived as being a burden to the taxpayer, and yet I do not think what is taken into consideration is that in fact First

Nations and other aboriginal people do contribute to the economy of Manitoba by providing employment for guards and parole officers and people like that. As well, added to the misery of First Nations people, we consume alcohol, and we pay for that, and there is no return on the money that is spent.

I do not want to make light of the situation. It is a very serious problem, and I have met that problem personally in another life as well. I have had to meet it head on and I have had to deal with that. That is the situation.

We have a fine looking document called the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and I know it does not really relate to this minister, nor his department, but I would like to get a few comments from this minister, being that he is the Minister responsible for Native Affairs in this province, about the tremendous recommendations that were made by the Commissioners Justice Hamilton and Judge Murray Sinclair, and the fine work they did and the 293 recommendations that they came up with, 101 which relate directly with the province of Manitoba.

I would like to get a few comments from this minister, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on how he views this AJI and how he feels we can advance the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chair, first of all, I say to the member there is no doubt that there is a problem in this system when so many aboriginal people ultimately end up being incarcerated. Some of the work that has gone on, I know, supported by this administration financially, with healing circles and other things in northern communities, which have looked for alternative ways of dealing with problems—I know on my northern trip, one comment there, one story that was related to me and impressed me very much was with the young person who was breaking windows in town. Traditionally they would be apprehended, put on a plane, brought down to the Remand Centre in Winnipeg for three or four weeks and brought back, and you ask yourself, what kind of punishment is that, in essence, if you are being taken out of the community, et cetera. The healing

circle in that particular community, when this event occurred again, sent the young person out on a three-month trapline with an elder.

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

In many ways, this is just common sense, reinventing what was the case in virtually all our communities 50 years ago, where the community, to some degree, took care of problems in its own communities themselves, whether it be young people or others who had difficulty. So there is a lot of really hard common sense behind these approaches that is applicable, not just to aboriginal communities but, indeed, all of Manitoba and how we approach some of these particular issues.

One comment I make to him, I think that as we move forward with the self-government initiative that there will be—because jurisdictional issues become involved, you cannot escape those things, but inevitably, the way to resolve some of these and implement some of the recommendations that I am sure the member has in mind, will find opportunity in the next few years as this larger plate of discussions is dealt with. So I think there are a lot of opportunities to address long-standing issues through this self-government process.

I am not trying to sound, for one moment, that I am putting everything off to a process, but as I am sure the member for Rupertsland and the member for The Pas, who have been involved in these issues for a long time, appreciate even more than I do that as people take over their own affairs, with all that entails, it brings opportunities to do things that have never existed before.

I think that is going to be a good thing for all involved, and we will probably see this representation of aboriginal people in our institutions of incarceration, I would hope and I expect, to decline significantly as this whole process of self-government starts to develop and involve. I think it will change the whole nature of many of those communities and societies, and perhaps in some ways that is long overdue.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I know that I am very aware of the time factor here, and I certainly do not want to prolong this. I want

to thank the minister for a very healthy discussion on many outstanding issues facing the aboriginal people in this province.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

I would like to just make a few comments about the infrastructure program of the federal government. Unfortunately, many of the communities in northern Manitoba did not benefit from this infrastructure program and, of course, we are faced with further cuts in education with reference to ACCESS. These things are going to mean hard times for First Nations, aboriginal people in Manitoba. Then we also should consider the cost of living of aboriginal people in northern remote communities where the cost of living is sometimes three, four times greater than that in the city of Winnipeg.

* (1650)

Fifty-one percent of Manitoba's aboriginal population is made up of women now, and they are served with a double whammy. First of all, they are women, secondly they are Indian and that is truly unfortunate in our society. One of the realities that we have to face in today's society is racism and the attitudes that do exist, and I think that we have a lot of work to do with respect to addressing the many outstanding aboriginal issues in this province.

I guess one of my final questions will be under 19.4 (c) Aboriginal Development Programs. I would like to ask the minister about that and why there has been a decrease of about \$100,000 to this particular program. I want to get knowledge about what the program is and why the decrease.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am advised that that is the allotment for the Urban Native Strategy which has moved from this department as part of the Core Area Development, so the funding has been reduced by us, and we are talking about a rather large program under the Urban Affairs area, so there is the reason for the decline.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 4. Native Affairs Secretariat (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$441,100—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$138,300—pass; (c) Aboriginal Development Programs \$637,600—pass.

Resolution 19.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,217,000 for Northern Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

19.5 Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Northern Communities \$2,379,600—pass; (b) Community Access and Resource Roads \$235,000—pass.

Resolution 19.5 RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,614,600 for Northern Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs is item 1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary. At this time we ask the minister's staff to leave the table. Thank you very much.

1.(a) Minister's Salary \$10,300—pass.

Resolution 19.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,012,900 for Northern Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

This concludes the Department of Northern Affairs. We thank the staff and the minister.

We will now go on to the Department of Rural Development and Decentralization.

Order, please. Is it the will of the committee to call it five o'clock? [agreed] The hour being five o'clock and time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

JUSTICE

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): 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 4.(d), page 113 of the Estimates manual, Community Corrections.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

4.(d) Community Corrections.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I believe that we had just begun, or I had just begun asking questions on the long-term programs for abusers

who had been found guilty of domestic violence when the time ran out at our last sitting. So I would like to again ask the minister, and I apologize again for covering ground we may have already begun to cover, but I think it may be appropriate to start sort of at the beginning.

It is my understanding that the government of Manitoba, department of probation, does not provide any internal, long-term programming for individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence and has not provided those programs since shortly after the Pedlar report was tabled in 1991. Is that an accurate statement of the situation as it pertains today?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Chairperson, no, that is not quite accurate. Within our institutions, there is long-term, one-on-one counselling. But following the Pedlar report, the Pedlar report recommended that Probation Services should use its resources to develop an educational program for offenders. That is what has been done following the Pedlar recommendations, and we are now in the process of looking at developing long-term group programs for within the institutions.

Ms. Barrett: I do not believe that the Pedlar report ever specifically stated that long-term programming, long-term group programming should not be implemented for domestic violence cases. The Pedlar report did state that the short-term educational programming should be undertaken, and I understand that is being undertaken, but the Pedlar report did speak about the fact, and I believe it is on page 13, that the long-term group programs that were then in place had waits of from four to six months. So my concern is in—nowhere did Pedlar say instead of long-term group programs we recommend the implementation of short-term education programs assisted by a one-on-one work with the staff at the institution.

So it is my understanding, then, that there is no, and has not been for close to three years now, long-term group programming provided by the Department of Justice for men who have been convicted of domestic violence, and that prior to

Pedlar there were long-term groups provided by the Department of Justice. Is that accurate?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, before Pedlar there were some long-term groups which were offered, but they were of a variety of models, and following Pedlar's report, we consolidated those programs and followed Pedlar's direction. I quote from page 59 of the report, "Probation Services should use its resources to develop an educational program for offenders convicted of partner abuse. This program would be for a set period of time, (no more than 10 sessions)."

So the recommendation was quite clear about a direction. However, as I have said in previous meetings in the Estimates of the Department of Justice, that we are now working to finalize the long-term curriculum. The long-term curriculum for group treatment of individuals convicted of domestic violence offences will be available both within the institutions and within the communities, and ongoing. There is also one-to-one counselling within the institutions that is long term.

Ms. Barrett: There were long-term programs available to offenders prior to Pedlar. There will be a long-term program available to offenders sometime. Why has it taken almost three years without long-term programs available to offenders for this to be established? Yes, Pedlar said, put resources into the short-term program. Pedlar never stated that these programs should be instead of.

What I would like to ask the minister is why, in almost three years, men who have been convicted of domestic violence have not had access to long-term programs to try and break the cycle of violence? As I mentioned in an earlier question to the minister, anyone who knows anything about this issue knows that education and short-term programming, even with one-on-one counselling, is not the answer for many of these cases. You require long-term therapy, counselling and programming in order to break that behavioral and attitudinal set that leads men to behave the way they do. Now, why has it taken almost three years for the government to say, well, maybe we will

look at, again, long-term programming? What has happened to those men in the meantime?

* (1430)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, again I refer the member to Pedlar, and I will quote: Probation Services should use its resources.

It was a directive. Government did accept the directive that there should be a consolidation of the unstandardized programming in the group model that was offered before Pedlar, and that could work. Then there had to be the development of a curriculum or a protocol which did not address this issue in a fractured way, but rather addressed it in a more standardized way in which we could actually look at the effects. Individuals, as I have said, have continued to have one-to-one programming.

Now, the member may be the only expert in the world. I do not think so. She puts forward a position in which she tends to speak for all the experts in the world. I do not think so. The member has an opinion of a type of programming. I have explained to her that we are offering one-to-one counselling in the long term. We are offering the short term as stated by Pedlar, directed by Pedlar, and we are in the process of developing long-term group programming which will be in a more standardized protocol to meet the needs.

As the member knows, in working with any kinds of groups or individuals, we have to look at, is this program actually meeting the need? So that is exactly why we have taken the opportunity to develop a more standardized protocol. We are very close to that protocol being able to be implemented, and so we have moved in all three areas. If the member is attempting to make a point that there is only one way in which to treat individuals to break the cycle of violence, I wonder how it is that she has become the only expert in the world, because I believe she is only stating an opinion.

Ms. Barrett: I have never said that there was only one way. As a matter of fact, my whole line of questioning is designed to say that there must be more than one way of dealing with this issue. One major component that the government is saying

they are actually agreeing with now, because they are going to put something in place, one major component of that continuum of services is a long-term group program, and I still am concerned about the fact that it has been—and the minister was not even able to tell me when the last such program under the variety of models prior to the discontinuation, when that last group was handled, but I am assuming from her response to that that at approximately the time Pedlar was tabled, which was August 1991, until today which is close to the end of June 1994, there have not been long-term programs available. So it is almost three years since an element of the—

Point of Order

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the member continues to repeat some information which is wrong. She continues to say there have not been long-term programs available. She is wrong. I have explained to her there are long-term programs available in the area of one-to-one counselling. The correct information should be reflected on the record.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: The long-term group program has not been available for three years more or less. I am concerned about that. I am not for a moment putting myself up as the only expert or even very much of an expert, but I do know that there is an overwhelming body of research into this problem that says that you must have a range of services, that you need to address the whole continuum of the issues and problems that are dealt with in this area.

The government is agreeing with that by the fact that they are actually going to put back into place some long-term group programming. I am concerned about the fact that there has been no such programming available for the past three years, long-term group programming.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am sure the member would add another qualification to that,

that the programming should actually be good, that the protocol should actually be one that we believe works. The member could have put forward a whole grouping of programs, of long-term group programs, a whole range of them very quickly just to say that we had them, and that might have satisfied on paper what the member has asked for.

This government and the department of Corrections has been working to see that the programs offered offer some level of standardization to the protocol and also offers a program that we believe will be effective rather than simply putting something forward on paper so that it might read fine, but might not necessarily meet the needs of the individuals to break the cycle of violence.

So I would like to say again for the record what has been done. This is what has been done. There is one-to-one, long-term programming available for offenders. Following Pedlar's advice and recommendations in which Pedlar directed that "Probation Services should use its resources to develop an educational program for offenders . . . ," that has been done. That is operational in the short-term programming.

Then, in the third instance, the Corrections area has been developing a protocol for long-term programming of offenders. I have explained to the member that that will be operational very shortly, I am told. So I look forward to that being in place because a range is important, and it is sometimes simply the judgment of the professionals working with those individuals as to exactly which of the types of programming or combination may be the most helpful to that individual.

We are certainly moving in that direction, have moved in that direction with care. I am sure the member would not suggest that we should move ahead without care and without making sure that we understood exactly what we were doing. In fact, I am sure she knows that putting forward a protocol which is not been put together with care and caution could in fact cause additional problems. So I am sure that she will be supportive of the fact that we have taken some time to do that.

Ms. Barrett: There were, as the minister has said several times, a variety of models of long-term group programming made available prior to the Pedlar report and prior to the discontinuation of that long-term group programming within the department of Corrections. As well, Madam Chair, there is a body of knowledge, a body of research on this issue and, more particularly, there are at least two programs being delivered in the city of Winnipeg that do deliver long-term group programming to men who have been convicted of domestic violence offences.

I can see, Madam Chair, a three-year delay if you were developing something from scratch, but there is a body of knowledge, there are actual programs that are available in the province of Manitoba. I still do not understand why there have not been the resources developed and put in place within three years to deal with this very important area. I do not know that I am going to get an answer on that particular one, but I do have a couple of specific questions on the program that is being developed.

Can the minister tell us when this long-term group program will be implemented and in place in the department of Corrections?

* (1440)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that we are looking at implementation in the fall of '94.

Ms. Barrett: When it is implemented in the fall of '94, this fall, will the minister give us a sense of what she means by implementation? Will it be implemented in all of the correction services? Who is going to be delivering the program, where will it be delivered and to whom?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the curriculum, I am advised, has been developed jointly by Adult and Community Corrections. The program will be available within the institutions and the community. I am informed we will start with the largest institutions and also the community area likely around the city of Winnipeg, as a start.

The program will be delivered by corrections officers and probation officers, and individuals will take part in the short-term program. Following

the short-term program, there will be an assessment of need as to whether or not the long-term group is what is required by that individual or whether or not it is continued one-to-one counselling which is required by that individual.

The member also made reference, in an earlier question, to programs currently being delivered by the community. I would just remind her that those programs being delivered by the community, I am informed, are for voluntary attenders. The programs which will be offered by Corrections and Probation, those are for people who are not attending voluntarily but who are to attend as a result of their sentence.

Ms. Barrett: The program will be delivered by corrections and probation officers. Will the minister tell us what training these individuals will receive or have received in order to be able to deliver this program?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the individuals delivering the program will all have had an eight-day training. Several of those individuals have also had extended opportunities either through conferences or workshops by some of the leading practitioners in this area. Each group will have two facilitators to operate the group.

Ms. Barrett: How long will the group last? What is the definition of long term, and how many individuals will be in each group, the range of number?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am informed that some of the details are to be finalized, but the sessions are to run once a week. They are to be approximately two to three hours in length, and it is being finalized whether they will operate for 40 or 50 weeks, but it will be in that time frame. The number of participants in each group has not been finalized. I am not able to give her that number today.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to ask a couple of questions about the financial element of this program. My understanding, and I am looking at page 67 of the Detailed Estimates, Note 3 under Other Expenditures, which is the Programs and Grants line, and the note says that program costs

have been reduced—and it is a reduction of \$150,000—due to the nonrecurring funding provided in '93-94 for the research and development of an ongoing community correctional program for domestic violence offenders. I understand that to mean the long-term group program that we have been discussing. With the number of cases having reached a plateau, funding will be provided from existing resources.

I am wondering if, No. 1., I am correct in assuming that this is dealing with that long-term group program development, and if she can explain the last sentence in that note to me about the number of cases having reached a plateau, and the funding will be provided from existing resources.

* (1450)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the \$100,000 was for the ongoing community correctional program which is now in progress. It was our effort to deal with any backlog or people waiting to take part in the short-term program, and we are in the process of reassigning resources, financial resources, from the Fine Options Program to continue to assist us in the area of delivering this program.

Then \$50,000 was due to The Summary Convictions Act amendments in which Bill 49 removed Highway Traffic Act and parking fines from the Fine Options Program. That came into force in November 1993. The bill also stopped the incarceration of people who do not pay these fines and provided for other mechanisms to recover the funding.

Ms. Barrett: Will the minister tell us where the funding for this long-term group programming is going to be found?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, yes, that comes from internal resources.

Ms. Barrett: So there is a new program being put in place for two to three hours a week of group, plus preparation time, I would assume, for between 40 and 50 weeks for an as yet undetermined number of individuals, to be provided by corrections and probation officers with no additional resources, no additional external resources, but funding found from within. Will

there be additional probation and corrections officers put on staff to implement this program, or will the existing complement of probation and corrections officers be asked to take on this additional responsibility?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that two years ago four staff were reassigned to this initiative. So we have four staff identified there, and we also have funds, as I explained to the member, which we are reassigning from the fine-option program.

So the member speaks about the internal resources and how may we find those internal resources. I have explained to her already exactly what we are looking at.

Ms. Barrett: The four staff that were reassigned two years ago to this program, what are they currently doing, since the long-term group program has not been implemented yet?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, initially those four staff were assisting in dealing with any backlog in the area of the short-term programming, but now that we have caught up in that area, those four individuals will be available in the long-term group program area.

Ms. Barrett: We have to make sure we both agree on the title for this program. Are these four staff going to be implementing, leading the long-term group program, or is it going to be other current corrections and probation officers who will be actually delivering the long-term group program?

Mrs. Vodrey: I think the best way to look at it is not specifically to focus it on individuals or these four individuals. We are in fact looking at functions, and so we will be looking at those individuals who are best qualified to deal with this function and to work in this area. Those are the people who will be then doing the work with the long-term group.

Ms. Barrett: These people who are identified as being best qualified to work in the long-term group program area, will they then have their duties reassigned to encompass the time requirements for the long-term group program, or will the long-term group program be put in place in addition to their normally assigned duties?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the assignment of workload is done by managers. Managers will take into account the workload that is currently being managed or handled by the individuals. I am told that the workloads will certainly then be equalized, and this will simply be part of the overall workload.

However, the member's concern about will it simply be an add-on for a few people, I am told no, that managers will be reviewing who is doing work, what assignments they have and that there will be an opportunity to equalize.

Ms. Barrett: So there will be no additional staff laid on for this program between now and when it begins. There will be some people identified who will be the ones who will be delivering the program. Can the minister tell me how many of these corrections and probation officers will be or have been identified who will actually deliver the program?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I have certainly done my best to answer questions which deal about a program which is not yet in place with the questions that the member has asked. The questions require us to speculate and put on the record speculation of exactly who and how many, so I am not able to give the member that detail at the moment.

I have explained to her that we are in the process of finalizing the details of the protocol, who is best to deliver the protocol, how we will equalize the workloads. At this point, I can say that it is work in progress, and that next year in the period of Estimates we will be able to provide her the detail of the information when the program is operationalized.

* (1500)

Ms. Barrett: The minister stated that this program will be provided not only in the institutions but also in the community, beginning with Winnipeg and the larger institutions.

I guess the question I have is how often—and maybe this is a question that is impossible to answer, I do not know. For those after the assessment period who have gone through the short-term educational program, and then there is

an assessment process undertaken, I guess the first question is, who undertakes that assessment process with the individual and decides whether they continue in the individual counselling or if they go into the long-term group counselling? Who decides that? If they go into the long-term individual program, how often are they seen then by their probation officer or the person in Corrections?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, in terms of who decides, the decision is made by the two group facilitators who run the short-term program, and they do that in conjunction with the probations officer. Following that, in the assessment there is an assessment of the level of risk and need, and based on the level of risk and need of the individual, then it is determined how often the person would be seen should they move into the one-to-one counselling process.

Ms. Barrett: I do not think I have any more questions in this area—well, maybe a couple of comments.

The first one is, I will be looking forward very much to the implementation of this program and seeing how it plays out. The second one is, I have a concern that I would like to share with the minister and urge her to be aware of the potential for this concern, and that is when you have new programs coming on stream with virtually no additional human resources—I know there have been four staff years signed two years ago, but still within the whole context it will mean a reassignment of duties and obligations among a staff that is pretty much, to my understanding, constant, and you have a date-keeping function at the point where it is determined if an individual go into the what is already in place, the short-term individual counselling, or will go into the group.

My concern is that finances will play a part in this, as they always do, because you can never make a plan or a project or a program without looking at the financial implications, but if you have not put in additional resources either to deal specifically with a long-term group program or to move things around, then I am afraid I am concerned that there might be a pressure to say,

well, we do not have any more people to deal with the program. We are already at our maximum in the group program, so we will just put this person into the individual counselling rather than into the long-term group program.

I just want to leave the minister with that concern that I have about the implementation. Again, this is based on not knowing the details of the program or who is involved or what the content of the program or the training looks like, but that is a flag that for me is a concern. I have no further questions in this area.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I asked a question—it was actually in Adult Corrections, but seeing we still have Mr. Demers possibly who could give the information—I asked a question about the range bars at Headingley Jail and I have got some clarification. What I understand is that there is a proposal from management about taking the range bars down in Blocks 5 and 6 and closing down Dorms 3 and 4 and then double bunking Blocks 5 and 6 and changing Dorms 3 and 4 for programming. The concern from some staff members is that this would cause staff members, in order to get to their post, to walk through the entire dorm to get to the area where they would be posted, and there is some concern this is not a secure and safe situation that they have now.

I am wondering if the Justice minister could tell me anything about this proposal and whether it does look like it, in fact, is going to be initiated.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am told that we are always looking at improving program space, but we are always concerned also about the security of staff. I am told from the staff members who are here at the moment that there are not known to us at this time short-term plans to move in this direction. However, we will look into it to see where this has come from.

Mr. Kowalski: My next question is in regard to correspondence that the minister has received, and I received copies of the correspondence she has received and her response in regard to the probation office at 2031 Portage Avenue. In the correspondence, the minister has indicated that Government Services is exploring options for an

early relocation of this program to a nonresidential area.

Is there any update since she wrote that letter on—I believe it was May 10 of this year?

* (1510)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I do not have a detailed update for the member other than to say that we will not be running those particular programs from that location by this September.

Mr. Kowalski: Of course, the area that I have always been interested in for a number of years is the youth justice committees. I have some questions in regard to the direction that it is moving into.

The first one is deferral of cases, the criteria. From what my understanding is, right now the present situation is the Crown Attorney in charge of that—I believe it is Don Slough; I may be inaccurate about that, but that is my belief that it is Don Slough—reviews the files and decides which ones are referred to Ray Lopuck for alternative measures. Is there any contemplation of a change in the criteria of what types of cases are referred to alternative measures?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, we have at the moment a staff seconded to enter into consultation with the youth justice committees. That individual will be looking at the possible areas of expansion of the work of youth justice committees, and criteria will be among the issues which that person will be consulting about.

Mr. Kowalski: Right now, what are the criteria?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that the criteria at the moment are for nonassaultive offences, property offences where there has not been a threat to an individual, and that offenders can be referred up to three times to the youth justice committees.

Mr. Kowalski: One of the practices that has concerned me for a number of years—and I do not know if it has ever been brought to the department's attention—is the practice of parental action letters, where usually I think the criteria are first-offence shoplifting and other offences. When cases are referred to Community and Youth

Corrections for alternative measures, quite often what happens is a letter is sent to the parent, directing that it has been referred to alternative measures by the Crown, and one of those alternative measures can be parental action. There are certain suggestions for parental action in that letter. It invites the parent to write back and say what action they have taken.

That in itself does not concern me. What does concern me is that if no response is received, these cases are closed and marked successful. This practice has been going on for a number of years, and I think it skews the statistics that we have on how successful alternative measures have been and where there are weaknesses in the program. In fact, I know cases where these letters have not been received by the parents, they were never received, where the young offender has intercepted the letter, and a couple of years later I talked to the parent, and they said, oh, nothing ever happened, the police just arrested them, and we never heard anything further. Is this practice still occurring?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that there was a follow-up study done in the area of parent action letters and that there was a significant number who were sampled. Parents did indicate a very positive response to the parental action letters. We are concerned if parents are not getting the letters. Our sample indicated that the parents were receiving the letters but as the member suggests there may be cases where in fact that is not the case. However, our indications so far have been that they had.

Again, the response has been good, and the importance of it is again to put some responsibility back with the parents of the young person.

Mr. Kowalski: As I stated, I do not have any problems with the concept. It was just the actual application and how it was working. Some of the incidents I am aware of happened at the time that Community and Youth Corrections was going through a reorganization. There was a piling up of cases. Cases had been backlogged especially in the inner city area.

The success of the parental action letter, because of the transient nature of many of the families, is directly related to how quickly these letters go out

after the case. These letters are going out six months, 12 months after the case. They are not very effective, and there is a good chance that the family will not be living there, and they are not very effective.

I hope the department will continue to look at these parental action letters. Still, the idea that when they come back, when they are not received, there is no response, that on the computer form they are marked off as successful concerns me.

I think that the computer form that is used to monitor these cases, there should definitely be a criteria for no response so that could be kept track of.

* (1520)

Mrs. Vodrey: I think that is an important point too, and we will certainly look at that.

Mr. Kowalski: Not specifically about youth justice committees now, but in Community and Youth Corrections, the predisposition reports—is there now a greater number of predisposition reports requested? I am not just talking about sheer numbers but as a percentage of cases going to court, is there a greater percentage now of where they are requested than there was a year ago, two years ago?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that in the last approximately nine-month period there has been an increase in the predisposition reports that have been requested.

Mr. Kowalski: A clarification on that answer, a greater number in just sheer numbers or percentage of the predisposition report has been requested.

Mrs. Vodrey: We are not able to say if this is a greater number of percentage of cases requested by the court, but we know that there has been an increase in the reports which have been requested by the court.

Mr. Kowalski: The information I have been receiving is that, of course we know, because of an increase in youth crime, there are more cases, but I am also told that now predisposition reports are more frequently requested by judges than before. That is the information I was looking for. Is that information obtainable? Is there any

contemplation to see if that is becoming a tendency in the judiciary to ask for predisposition reports more often than was in the past?

Mrs. Vodrey: We could undertake to find the percentage increase, certainly, year over year for the member.

Mr. Kowalski: I would be especially interested to know if the percentage changed during the time that the provincial court judges were negotiating the retirement package, and after, if there had been any change in the percentage of predisposition reports they were asking, just as a benchmark.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the member is suggesting that the personal interests of the judiciary in the area of their compensation and their salaries were interfering with their responsibilities. I think that is a very dangerous question and really reflects adversely on the integrity of the judiciary.

Mr. Kowalski: I agree wholeheartedly that that allegation would and that is exactly why I would like the information. I have heard that comment within branches of the government, and I would like the information to be able to defend the judiciary of this province with that type of information, that the percentage I am hoping will show that the total number of cases has remained the same. That is exactly why I would like that information, to be able to defend the integrity of the judiciary.

Going back to youth justice committees now. Several years ago, a probation officer by the name of Rosemary Broadbent was charged with the duty of liaison with the different justice committees in Winnipeg. I cannot say too many good words about her performance in doing that.

During the time that she was performing that function, justice committees throughout Winnipeg were brought together for training exercises. During that time, we had a one-day seminar at the Garden City Inn with Judge Cramer, Crown attorneys, Corinne Deegan, people from victims services met and talked about different aspects of the youth justice system. We met evenings where we compared our dispositions.

There was a lot of good work done during the time that these justice committees got together and there were many people who had been involved with justice committees since its inception. In the past year, maybe even two years, I am not aware of this liaison committee doing any projects, of getting together, discussing dispositions, doing any ongoing training. This liaison committee was responsible also with creating training opportunities such as—I developed a native cultural awareness training session for the justice committees of Winnipeg. There were other such training sessions.

Because of the increasing knowledge in the public of youth justice committees, the interest of politicians, the value of justice committees being more interested, can this group be reinstated and some of those programs and some of those very beneficial things that were being done by this liaison committee—is it possible to have them continue what they were already doing?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I explained a little earlier in questioning that there is a staffperson assigned to meet with the youth justice committees, undertaking an initiative which will look at their needs and will, following that consultation process, attempt to address their needs. This is part of what is being examined, so one part is the looking at expansion of possible kinds of work that the youth justice committees might be. Another part is to look at what are the needs of the youth justice committees.

* (1530)

Mr. Kowalski: While this review is going on, getting the justice committee chairpersons together, this was all done on volunteer time. Gerry McGarrett [phonetic], who was chairperson of the Central Winnipeg Youth Justice Committee, allowed the board office of Digital Corporation to be used for the meetings. I do not think that there would be any hindrance to the review, that if these people were brought together and could do what they were doing before, having these training sessions, meeting together to discuss their dispositions. There are many beneficial things that came out of them getting together on a regular

basis. They used to meet once a month. Does it have to wait till the review process is completed before this is reinstated, what was already there?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I would not want the member to suggest that this has not occurred at all because I am informed that we did very recently bring together the chairs of the youth justice committees in the city of Winnipeg. That occurred about two weeks ago. There is no reason why these cannot occur. They would occur for a reason, for a purpose, because as the member said this is volunteer time and people want to believe they are coming to something with a purpose. It has occurred through the process of the consultant doing the consultation with the committees.

As well, on an individual basis we will have the opportunity to see what kinds of things they would be interested in, but I would hesitate to suggest that we would just bring them together without a purpose. We would need to know what kinds of things that the committees or the chairs would like to discuss, not just our speculation as we are looking at what we think they would want but rather to hear from them. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Kowalski: I think some of the people who had worked on that liaison committee in the past and who put on a number of very successful events who have the background since youth justice committees first came to Manitoba and know some of the things that were tried and did not work, whether it be Rosemary Broadbent or Gerry McGarrett [phonetic]—there are so many people. Eleanor Milne, who, I believe, works in the minister's department, has been with youth justice committees since the start. I hope they could be used as a resource because we do not have to reinvent the wheel.

These committees have been doing many positive things in the initial stages, in the formation stages of these youth justice committees, and did a lot of good work, a lot of hard work. I hope these people who were there at the initial stages will be used as a resource in any continuum of the justice committees.

The other question I have about youth justice committees and about volunteers generally in Community Youth and Corrections is volunteer training and volunteer assessment. I know when volunteers come into Community Youth and Corrections there is a stringent application process, a police review, but without an annual review there is the possibility of someone, after getting on a justice committee, of having some problems in their performance or having some problems. Is there any policy as far as ongoing assessment of volunteers in Community and Youth Corrections, a monitoring program, a supervision program and a recognition program for volunteers?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member, who may know this, that there is annually a recognition event for members of youth justice committees.

In the area of performance, the youth justice committees, because they are members of the same community, have a responsibility to evaluate their members, their participation and exactly what their contributions are. For government to do that kind of evaluation, if that is what the member is suggesting, may really be seen as very heavy-handed. Community youth justice committees, which are operated by people who live within a community and set their own community standard and standard of participation, would have the expectation to communicate with each other, to support each other, and a government kind of evaluation may, in fact, be seen to be stepping into an area where communities feel that they have responsibility.

Mr. Kowalski: The assessment that I have always thought was required does not necessarily have to be done by the probation officers in Community and Youth Corrections, although I know from my experience working in the north office that there are very good relations between the volunteers and the probation officers that work there. The volunteers very much look up to and respect the probation officers. I do not think any assessment process would be viewed as heavy-handed, but I realize there is that possibility.

Whether or not it is done by the probation officer or the community itself, what I am saying is,

should that be part of the department's policy of volunteers, that they shall be assessed annually. It gives a way of saying that your work is valuable. It is assessed. If you do not do a good job as a volunteer you can be fired, because there are lots of people who are very interested in volunteering. In fact, some justice committees have waiting lists of people waiting to get on.

By having that policy even direct in the committee itself—I understand there is a policy of volunteers in government, but that should be part of the policy that volunteers shall be assessed annually. Whether the government does it or the volunteers have a volunteer co-ordinator who does that task and it is helped by government—because sometimes with the volunteers in government, right now it saves a lot of money having these volunteers. If it was not for these volunteers it would cost the Justice department a lot more money to process many of these alternative measures. If all of them were done by probation officers we would have to hire a lot of probation officers.

To provide some training, some support, some assessment I think is still very financially responsible. It is the policy I am looking at that I am suggesting there should be a policy that these volunteers' performances be assessed annually.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we always hope that volunteers will make a commitment and continue to live up to the commitment that they have made. When they do not, it is harder on those other people who are volunteers to attempt to pick up the work of someone who does not do it because they want the project to be successful, and so they tend to pick up that slack from another member. I am a very strong supporter of volunteers and volunteerism. I think that it is important to give volunteers feedback as well.

I am supportive in this case of the feedback coming from the community, and we can certainly look at a mechanism to require an evaluation. It may go by another name. It may go by another name that volunteers are more comfortable with where a community group or in this case, a youth justice committee, is able to assess the

participation of someone who has volunteered, and if they are not able to meet their commitment, to perhaps negotiate with them another kind of role so that somebody who is able to meet the commitment can come on and be a part of it and be a vital member.

So we can certainly look into that, and I understand the reasons why that would be useful.

* (1540)

Mr. Kowalski: I will just make one further comment about it. I am thinking of volunteers that come in and are very well known in the community and very well liked, but then when the volunteers start sitting down with young people and their parents and interviewing, they find that they are just not good with young people, that they just do not have that natural ability. It is hard for the community members themselves to tell someone from their community that they are not meant for this volunteer experience, that maybe there is another volunteer experience where they are better suited and by the annual assessment, it takes care of that.

I just wanted to say some words about the north office of Community and Youth Corrections and commend Lawrie Barkwell, the executive director, and all his staff there for the excellent work that I have seen them doing over a number of years out of that office. Out of that office, there is the North Winnipeg Youth Justice Committee, the Park West Justice Committee, Anishinabe Respect and I think Ma Mawi Justice Committee report to that office.

We started our Maples Youth Justice Committee with the help of that office with myself and Tracy Sumka who has done a wonderful job with that committee. Now I understand there is another justice committee, Keewatin Justice Committee, John Emery [phonetic] being the chairperson, and they are doing wonderful things out of that office.

I have a question about another program that I have been hearing coming out of that office, and I think the minister mentioned something earlier about an anger management program where the probation office is going to be working with the school division and, if I heard her correctly, with

the Child Guidance Clinic, I believe Ron Burns from that probation office.

I wonder if she could give me anymore information about what that program is going to look like and what it is going to entail.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, let me just start with the member's remarks about youth justice committee and particular youth justice committees as well. It really is my view that in the process of Estimates we do have the opportunity to signal and speak about a lot of good initiatives and good work that is being done. I think it is important where we can speak about the hard work of individuals to be able to take that opportunity, the hard work of people who work in programs. So in the course of Estimates, in these Estimates, it has certainly been my intention to indicate a lot of the good work that I believe is being done through the Department of Justice.

The member raises a program which is being done by community volunteers in conjunction with the Department of Justice. I think it is important and good for the community to be able to speak positively about the work of that group. So I am pleased to hear the member's comments. I am sure the people of Manitoba will be pleased to see them and that community will be pleased to read about them. I think that is a constructive approach.

I would say that for those who are not named, have not been able to be named because they may not have that direct association, I would just like to acknowledge that I know there a number of volunteers and very hard-working people who are taking part in these programs, and it is important to acknowledge them and acknowledge them on the record as well.

For the specific program regarding anger management, I cannot give the member any more details other than to say that, yes, there is a program of anger management for youth. It will be offered in conjunction with other agencies, but we do not have the details with us at this moment.

Mr. Kowalski: I have a question. I was looking in Hansard. I thought this had already been asked in Estimates, but I could be wrong.

In regard to the bail supervision program by Ma Ma Wi Chi Itata bail supervision program, I understand that in previous years Community and Youth Corrections were one of the funders and that this year the funding is in question to that bail and supervision program. Am I correct in that statement?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the agency withdrew from the project this past year and that there has been no new proposal from this agency. So it appears that it is the agency that has been in the decision-making position this time.

Mr. Kowalski: I will be in contact with that agency to get some more information about that.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I do not know if this touches on Community Corrections or on Corrections generally, but I am wondering who is admitted to the short-term partner abuse program. Is the enrollment limited to certain types of individuals?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, as I said in an earlier answer, it is everyone who is convicted who goes through the short-term educational program.

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to clarify it then—

Mrs. Vodrey: I should clarify that answer, I beg your pardon. Everyone who is convicted of domestic violence offences goes through the short-term educational program.

* (1550)

Mr. Mackintosh: Actually, the minister's first answer corresponded with some information I had that in fact people who were incarcerated related to charges of impaired driving, for example, were being admitted into the program. I just wonder if the minister can respond to that.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that people other than those who are convicted for domestic violence offences may attend. If the offender has identified this as a problem area, then yes, they are asked to take the program, or in a second case, people sometimes voluntarily enter the program.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has the department had any concerns as to whether these individuals are causing any backlog in the program?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that there has been no backlog within the institutions.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my understanding that the long-term partner abuse program—I think it was focused at relapse prevention—had been developing and looking at a start-up date of October 1993. I understand there were expectations raised and some substantive work had gone into that program development. Then I understand that in August 1993 departmental officials ordered that the program development cease. I am just wondering what the reasons were for that and if the minister can confirm my information.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, no, the program development has been ongoing. However, in that time period of 1993, there was a focus on any backlog which existed for the short-term program and that became an area of concentration. However, now that there is not a backlog in that area, and as I answered in earlier questions we have been working very diligently toward the development of a long-term program protocol, we expect to have that operational in the fall of '94.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just want to better understand why the backlog in the short-term program at the time affected the development of the long-term program. Were there not different people involved in the development of the long-term program rather than front-line people or councillors or program deliverers?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, the short-term program, which began in the fall of '92, was a new program, and we wanted to make sure that those offenders within the institution could actually get through the short-term programs. We put extra resources in place to see that everyone got through the short-term program, and as the member knows—I have spoken about it today—everyone goes through that short-term program who has been convicted of a domestic violence offence and then, during the course of that and following, there is an assessment of what type of programming would next be most beneficial to that individual.

The answer is that resource is focused with the introduction of this new program on making sure that everyone went through this program, and then consequently we did continue to develop, though, the long-term program. We are now at a point where we look for its operationalization quite shortly.

Mr. Mackintosh: On the Fine Options Program, has the department considered the effect of the changes to the program as a result of amendments to The Summary Convictions Act last year on community agencies that relied on people coming out to help them?

Mrs. Vodrey: The amendments did make two changes. First of all they took away incarceration as a consequence to the failure to pay a fine. It took away, in the case of these two areas, the possibility that somebody may, in fact, go to jail and spend time within the institutions.

Yes, it also changed people in the fine-option program working, but the member references the effect on community agencies, but he has to understand that the purpose of the fine-option program was to provide a consequence to the offender, and as a consequence to the offender, yes, there was some community work done. There are still fine-option programs available, but the purpose was to provide a consequence, and now there is another kind of consequence to an individual who fails to pay a parking fine or who has an offence under The Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Mackintosh: I appreciate the consequences part of the equation, and it is a very important one. I will deal with that shortly, but there are always effects, and it may not be the dominant purpose of the former fine-option program, but it certainly had significant effect on community organizations. So my question is, has the minister been receiving communications from the community organizations, and have they been asking for further changes to the legislation, and has the government otherwise assessed the impact on community organizations as a result of the amendments to the act?

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

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chair, I am told that we have not received requests in the Department of Justice for further legislative changes in this area, though the federal government may receive some in view of some of the changes that they are proposing to make in the area of the sentencing option.

Bill 49 did reduce the fine-option registrations, in some cases by about 50 percent. Yes, there were some complaints at the time that the bill was being contemplated and, I gather, being put through the House.

The complaints primarily came from nonprofit agencies which deliver the program, and they had to adjust then to a reduced revenue. But I come back to the point that the purpose of the program was to provide a consequence, and if the member is suggesting the purpose was really to keep these agencies in business, then I think he maybe has to re-examine his line of thinking.

* (1600)

Mr. Mackintosh: No, I want just to make it clear that I recognize the purpose of the program as being consequences, but nonetheless as public officials we have the responsibility to assess the impact that change in the Legislature makes in the community.

Looking at the new penalties that are being pursued, I had an interesting call from a fellow yesterday who brought my attention to the other side of the issue as someone who is facing the consequences of losing a licence for extended periods of time, this individual for five years as a result of multiple convictions. Clearly, the type of convictions cannot be countenanced by our society and by the justice system, but it was interesting to hear his account of how he has been unable to find employment or maintain employment as a result of his inability to drive. In his area of work, he had two specialties. He really needed the use of a vehicle.

I am wondering if the minister has been receiving complaints on this issue as to whether the changes to The Summary Convictions Act have been causing problems for employment and for families in Manitoba to get by in what is a

difficult economic environment. I want to make it clear to the minister that I am thinking it through in this area. It was just the first time that I had talked to someone who has been going through the consequences. I am just wondering if there is something here that we should not be exploring further.

I understand, too, the role of the License Suspension Appeal Board. This individual had already sort of blown the wad before that board. But I am wondering if in fact there is a problem that is arising as a result of changes to the act in the way of consequences.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I want to be very careful because there is also a bill which will be coming before the House, and I do not want to in any way enter into any discussion until that bill has been presented to the House and members of the Legislature have had the first opportunity to see that. So my comments will be very general.

I would say that the law does provide in cases of hardship for the individual to appear before a magistrate and to have that person's case reviewed. That is a general possibility, and I do not know whether the member was aware of that. Other than that, some of these questions are properly addressed to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) who has the responsibility of administering The Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, it is an issue that I will consider further certainly and perhaps it will come up during the discussion on the proposed legislation.

I have a question about the accessibility of the fine-option program, particularly to aboriginal women. I understand that there has been some concern expressed in the past about the difficulty of some individuals performing community work. There are problems of daycare, there is no access to daycare, for example. There are transportation problems. There are culturally inappropriate work situations. That is the kind of complaint that I have heard and, of course, I hope all of the members would share in the objective that the fine-option program must be accessible to all Manitobans.

I understand that as a result there may be an over representation of aboriginal women in Portage la Prairie, at the institution in Portage la Prairie, as a result of nonpayment of fines and inability to work off those fines through the fine-option program. I wonder if the minister could comment on that.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the community resource centres—there are 144 of them—do make every effort to provide for accessibility and for flexibility. The fine-option program provides for the work to be done in the evenings and on the weekends. There are a number of options. It is not just a set of work which has to be done within a very time-limited period, for instance, nine to five in a day.

Efforts have been made to allow for people's needs to carry out their fine-option commitment, and we continue to try and hold discussions with agencies to make sure that these options and this flexibility is available in the fine-option program.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could the minister advise whether the department is looking at any changes though, specifically, to meet the needs of aboriginal women?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that the concerns of aboriginal women, specifically, have not been raised, that there has been, in the past, general concern around services to women, and there has been an effort to provide the flexibility required and the options required for women who may have those child care concerns and may have needs which require flexibility and those have been attempted to be met.

We are always looking at trying to meet the concerns and the needs of women, where is their best access to programs which might assist them and services which might assist them, so that has been the approach to this point.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have information on the percentage of inmates in provincial correctional institutions incarcerated for nonpayment of fines?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that prior to the amendments it was in the range of 30 percent, but since the amendments, when we no longer provide for incarceration for The Highway Traffic Act

offences and the parking offences, we do not have a number. Sometimes I am told also it is quite difficult for us to get an accurate percentage. Sometimes people are in the institutions not only for the nonpayment of fine but other related sentencing.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just wonder what the minister's position is about putting people in jail for nonpayment of fines, is that in her estimation good public policy and if she could just comment on that.

* (1610)

Mrs. Vodrey: I would think that our thinking as a government would be very clear on this. It was this government that brought in the amendments so that there would not be incarceration, particularly in these two areas, The Highway Traffic Act and parking offences. I believe that our thinking has also been backed up by action.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, given the minister and the government's view, does the government have in mind any program to attempt to reduce the number of people who are in the jails because of nonpayment of fines for fines other than under The Highway Traffic Act or unrelated to the amendments to The Summary Convictions Act?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chair, the Criminal Code, which governs sentencing and offences for other criminal activities, is not the responsibility of the provincial government. It is the responsibility of the federal government, and it would require changes by the federal government which would perhaps bring about some of the changes that the member is speaking about.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have corresponded with the minister about an open-custody facility for aboriginal male youth in the city of Winnipeg, and I understand that there are some other similar open-custody facilities in the city of Winnipeg which have a number of beds, perhaps not specifically for aboriginal youth.

I am just wondering what the minister's position is on those open-custody facilities, whether the government sees those as positive. Is there any program to either expand or reduce those open-custody facilities?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chair, I am told that the experience of Corrections has seen these as positive, and where the risk levels are appropriate, where the community is not put at undue risk, where the operators are not put at undue risk, then we would certainly continue to use these facilities.

If the member is speaking about kinds of expansion, I would say that I have been clear that we are moving towards wilderness camp models. We would like to move into the wilderness camp models and look at that as another mechanism. Following that, we will have to examine whether or not expansion in the area of open-custody homes is the way to go.

Mr. Mackintosh: Has there been any change in the per diem rate paid to the operators of these open-custody facilities?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chair, I am told that there has not been a change in the per diem rate in the open custody homes. It is \$52.72 north of 53, and \$51.65 south of 53.

Mr. Mackintosh: Other than the per diem rates, are there any other payments that are made to the open custody homes?

Mrs. Vodrey: We are not aware of other payments being made. The per diem includes supervision and also maintenance for the individual who is in the open custody home.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise how long those rates that she quoted have been in effect?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that our rates are the same as the child welfare rates and that when child welfare makes a change then we also make a change. So because they are following child welfare, we do not have the details of date here and would have to ask the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister saying that the rates are the same in terms of dollar amounts as the child welfare rates, or are they simply tied by some formula to the child welfare rates?

* (1620)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Chair, they are tied by formula to the child welfare rates.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister have information for the committee on how the probation officer caseloads have compared over the last, say, three or four years?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, the statistics that I have available are April '93 to the end of this fiscal year, April '94. The average number of court reports done April '93 was 1.62; and the average number of court reports done April '94 is 1.82. In April '93, the average number of supervisions was 69.30; and in April '94, 69.33.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister also advise of the range of supervisions?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I will try and answer the question as I understood it. The offenders who are on probation are classified according to risk and need. They are classified within a range of maximum, medium and minimum. If the question is, how many maximum, medium and minimum might each probation officer have, we do not have that information available.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just wanted to know if the minister has the range of the number of supervisions per probation officer. In other words, what is the highest number of supervisions that a probation officer would have? What would be the lowest number?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that Westman had the highest average with 2.83 reports and 85.54 being the numbers for supervision. I am told that we are attempting to move some resources into that Westman-Brandon area to assist in reducing that average.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just wonder what the low end of the range is.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chairperson, I am informed that the lowest end is in the area of Winnipeg Youth. It is an average of 2.96 reports and a supervision of 29.65.

Mr. Mackintosh: I notice in the Detailed Estimates book, it says that the supervision cases are expected to show little increase in '94-95. I am just wondering how that can be, given my

understanding of the changes, particularly in youth crime rates, at least certain charges.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, I am told that over the years the youth numbers have remained fairly static and the domestic violence area has appeared to level off somewhat. If, however, the proposed changes by the federal government require some greater intensity or greater numbers, then we will certainly be looking to the federal government, as a result of their policy changes, to assist us in the area of resourcing.

Mr. Mackintosh: Other than changes that might come from the federal law change, is there any plan to increase the number of probation officers in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: At the moment, we do not have a proposal to increase the numbers.

* (1630)

Mr. Kowalski: I have a couple more questions on Community and Youth Corrections.

In the alternative correctional facilities that are being contemplated, wilderness camps or boot camps or whatever they are called, part of the program, from what I have understood, will be supports when the young people get out of these facilities. Will the program be part of their probation, or will Community and Youth Corrections, even if there is not a probation assigned, will there be supports for people coming out of those wilderness camps, boot camps, or whatever?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member that the model that is being developed is addressing that issue, but I have not yet announced the model.

Mr. Kowalski: I would like to ask some questions about supports that exist within the community to help ex-inmates find work and carry on rehabilitative efforts that may have been used during incarceration.

Right now I am asking for information for Community Youth Corrections. Right now what supports are existing in the community for inmates to find work and carry on some of the programs that they are getting in the correctional facilities? I

am thinking more adults than young offenders at this point.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, when an inmate is on probation and we are looking at employment, we look to the existing employment agencies, agencies such as Canada Employment Centres. We do use those Canada Employment Centres extensively, existing employment agencies as well.

We offer the help that we can in terms of job location, but there are agencies already existing who are in the business of making this a priority, and that is who we rely on.

Mr. Kowalski: Can the minister tell me the names of some of those agencies that she is referring to?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, as I named in my last answer, Canada Employment Centre is the major agency. I am sure the member understands how that agency works, it being a federal program. We also deal with a number of temporary agencies. We do not have the names of the agencies that we deal with for temporary employment with us today. Those are the main ways.

Mr. Kowalski: What efforts have been undertaken by Corrections to promote the use of native cultural traditions and spirituality within penal institutions to assist native inmates to maintain or develop their cultural sense of identity?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, the member asks about the kinds of inventory of aboriginal initiatives that we have, so I am pleased to talk about those. The Corrections branch has responded to the cultural and spiritual needs of aboriginal inmates through the development of several specific initiatives. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry pointed out that with the percentage of aboriginal inmates and their numbers, it would be important to make sure that we had some of these initiatives. So we have the following activities in Adult Corrections, and these are an attempt to deal with some of the issues which were brought out in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

In the area of elders services, first, to date Adult Corrections has managed to secure the services of

an elder or an aboriginal worker at all seven provincial institutions. The Winnipeg Remand Centre, Headingley Correctional Institution, the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre have full-time positions. Due to the smaller inmate population at Brandon Correctional Institution, Portage Correctional Institution, Dauphin Correctional Institution and The Pas Correctional Institution, they are employed on a part-time basis. Spiritual services, cultural teachings and individual counselling are available to both aboriginal and nonaboriginal inmates.

Secondly, an elders council. The elders council was formed approximately three years ago and meets several times a year. The council is composed of institutional elders, aboriginal workers, the co-ordinator of chaplaincy services and the co-ordinator of Inmate Programs. All adult institutions are represented, as well as the Manitoba Youth Centre and Agassiz Youth Centre. The council provides a forum for mutual support and exchange of ideas. It provides a link between the elders and the institutional chaplains. It provides the elders with a forum for input into existing inmate programs, as well as developing new ideas for aboriginal programming. Finally, it provides a forum for the elders to raise concerns to senior correctional managers in regard to institutional operations as they affect aboriginal inmates and aboriginal services.

Third, we have native advisory committees. At present, Brandon Correctional Institution and Portage Correctional Institution have established committees for their respective institutions.

Fourth, we have a native program committee. The co-ordinator of Inmate Programs sits on this committee as a representative of Adult Corrections. This committee is composed of representatives from Parole Services, Stony Mountain and Rockwood Institutions, the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society, Ma Ma Wi and Anishinabe Respect, the St. Norbert Foundation and Native Clan. This committee has been in existence for a number of years. It meets several times a year to exchange ideas on native programs and resources to fund further initiatives.

* (1640)

Fifth, an affirmative action support. A number of months ago, the Civil Service Commission set up a government-wide affirmative action committee in regard to aboriginal staffing. One of the tasks completed by this working group was a survey of the issues and needs of aboriginal staff. The results of this survey suggested that aboriginal staff were experiencing some concerns in the workplace and occasionally felt an alienation from their co-workers

In response to these survey results, Adult Corrections assigned a staffperson to a special project. This individual is a native correctional officer who works at Portage Correctional Institution. She is also an elder within her community and was a member of the previously mentioned affirmative action task force. This individual spent three months visiting each of the adult institutions, and during her visits she met individually with native staff members to identify their specific concerns and to obtain their view on the branch's direction in this area. This individual presented to the institutional superintendents and senior management her preliminary findings and recommendations. Two issues emerged, and she is presently writing her report.

Sixth, the native brotherhood. Headingley Correctional Institution and Milner Ridge Correctional Centre have facilitated the establishment of local chapters of the native brotherhood. The native brotherhood councils are composed of native inmates within a given institution. The brotherhood is an elected body which functions as a lobby group for native inmates. They support special cultural events and native programming in general. The brotherhood acts as a vehicle to raise concerns and interest to the institutional managers.

Seventh, native friendship centres. Dauphin Correctional Institution and The Pas Correctional Institution have formal service arrangements with the Dauphin Friendship Centre and The Pas Friendship Centre respectively. Dauphin Correctional Institution regularly sends native inmates to the friendship centre to attend sharing

circle ceremonies, powwow and other special events. Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are also held at the Dauphin Friendship Centre. These meetings are also regularly attended by inmates from the Dauphin Correctional Institution.

The Pas Correctional Institution has a contract with The Pas Friendship Centre to supply a full-time native counsellor. This counsellor works full time at The Pas Correctional Institution carrying a native caseload and facilitating various native cultural events.

Also, in the area of aboriginal recruitment, Adult Corrections has attempted to increase the level of native staff within its total staffing complement.

Ninth, cultural awareness training. All new staff are provided several days of aboriginal cultural awareness training to orient and to sensitize them to aboriginal traditions and issues. About half of all the correctional officers have received refresher training or are scheduled to receive some within the next six months.

That is quite a long list so far of initiatives which have been put into place and who are working within our institutions. In addition, we have aboriginal communities with existing youth justice committees, and there are 21 of those communities: the Amaranth Youth Justice Committee, the Bloodvein River Justice Committee, Camperville Aboriginal Justice Committee, Crane River Justice Committee, Easterville Judicial Alternatives for Youth and Family, Ebb and Flow Youth Justice Committee, Fairford Justice Committee, Fisher Justice Committee, Fort Alexander Justice Committee, Garden Hill Mesowin [phonetic] Justice Committee, Grand Rapids Elders Committee, Mallard Youth Justice Committee, Nelson House First Nations Justice Committee, a justice committee at Koostatak, the Peguis Justice Committee, Poplar River Justice Committee, Roseau River Tribal Justice Committee, Sandy Bay First Nation Justice Committee, Shamattawa Justice Committee, the Pukatawagan Justice Committee, Little Grand Rapids Justice Committee.

In addition to these community and youth justice committees, two aboriginal youth justice committees exist in Winnipeg: Respect Youth Justice Committee, the Anishinabe Justice Committee; and the Weechi-Way-Wen [phonetic] Justice Committee.

We also have a number of aboriginal communities with community participation agreements and that is the Berens River Band, the Bloodvein Band, the Chemawawin First Nation, Cross Lake Indian Band, Fort Alexander Band, Gods River Band, Grand Rapids Indian Band, the John Howard Society of Manitoba, Lake Manitoba Band, Lake St. Martin Band, Little Grand Rapids Band, Little Saskatchewan Band, Mathias Colomb First Nation, Moose Lake Band, Nelson House Band, Oxford House Band, Poplar River Band, Sioux Valley Band, Waywayseecappo Band.

In addition, Madam Chairperson, we have aboriginal communities with honorary probation officers: Granville Lake, Garden Hill, Split Lake, Tadoule Lake, Lac Brochet, Island Lake, Red Sucker Lake, Brochet, Shamattawa and Norway House.

Aboriginal communities with residents, aboriginal probation officers: Norway House Reserve, Gods Lake Narrows Reserve, Waywayseecappo Reserve, Roseau River Reserve, The Pas Reserve and the Peguis Reserve.

Madam Chairperson, the Community and Youth Corrections branch has taken several specific initiatives to address the high proportion of aboriginal population and also the need to involve communities in partnership with Corrections to deliver community correctional services. I have some information which reflects this branch's commitment to provide appropriate aboriginal programming and to involve aboriginal communities in the delivery of community correctional services.

The 1993-94 community and youth correctional services objectives in relation to aboriginal offenders are to make available offender programming, the intervention strategies and training aimed at dealing with offender risks and needs and to make sure that this is culturally

relevant to offenders from minority groups, in particular, aboriginal offenders. Secondly, to provide correctional services to northern offenders and communities in a manner consistent with their local standards, their cultures and their needs.

Madam Chairperson, in terms of recruitment, the branch has an objective to increase the level of affirmative action staff in the branch and, in particular, aboriginal staff. Its strategy is to accomplish this, making allowance to interview native applicants in their own communities or friendship centres including an aboriginal staff member on the interview panels, screening of bulletins by aboriginal staff to ensure that the content is clearly understandable, publication of job bulletins in the aboriginal media. The probation officer position recently filled at Waywayseecappo Reserve involved consultation with four reserves served by this position. Reserve representatives were consulted in the screening and selection criteria, and they also participated on the selection panel.

Community Corrections had nine open bulletins for probation officer positions in rural and northern offices in 1992. Approximately a hundred applications were from applicants who declared themselves as being aboriginal. Forty-one of those 100 applicants were interviewed for the position, and out of nine positions, six positions were offered to aboriginal applicants.

Both youth institutions have had the same thrust in an attempt to recruit aboriginal staff. There was a competition for two JC1 positions held in April '92 at the Youth Centre, and one of the successful applicants was aboriginal. The Agassiz Youth Centre has also had a number of full- and part-time JC1 positions available in the past year. A total of 26 aboriginal candidates applied and two were offered positions.

In addition to recruitment the branch has attempted to support the aboriginal staff in the following manner:

One aboriginal staff has been granted educational leave to complete a B.S.W. while another has been given educational assistance to complete an M.S.W.

* (1650)

One aboriginal staff was given a four-month secondment opportunity to work with the Department of Environment.

An aboriginal corrections officer was seconded to Community and Youth Corrections for nine months to cover a maternity leave.

Two aboriginal staff who were classified at the HS2 level were successful in being promoted to an HS3 through a branch promotional process.

An aboriginal staff member from Parkland Community and Youth Corrections region was seconded to a one-year term position in Winnipeg as a probation officer.

An aboriginal person was recruited to fill an 18-month term probation officer in Brandon.

An aboriginal person was recruited to fill a two-month term position as bail co-ordinator.

An aboriginal JC1 from the Youth Centre was seconded to Community Corrections as a probation officer for four months.

An aboriginal JC1 at the Agassiz Youth Centre has been appointed as an acting JC2 for a nine-month term position.

An aboriginal probation officer from Gods Lake has been granted a two-year political leave to serve as chief.

Approximately 10 aboriginal staff from the branch have taken a recruitment and selection course operated by the Civil Service Commission.

As part of the overall strategy for enhancing aboriginal program development and support for aboriginal staff, guidelines for the establishment and the development of the aboriginal advisory committees were issued in August '92 for use by individual operational units within the branch.

Aboriginal advisory committees are active at both youth correctional centres. The Agassiz Youth Centre was instrumental in developing and establishing a sweat lodge in that institution. The Manitoba Youth Centre committee has developed a powwow for residents at that facility as well as a sweat lodge experience to help staff understand native culture.

Madam Chair, in October '92, June '93 and January '94 the branch held consultations bringing together aboriginal staff from youth institutions and Community Corrections. The objectives of this consultation included to bring aboriginal staff together as a way to get to know each other in order to communicate, to lead and support each other and to address common issues and concerns within the system, to encourage aboriginal employees to discuss issues, such as personal and professional goals, and their aspirations within the system; and to allow aboriginal staff to consult with managers regarding issues, goals and aspirations across the province and to develop a common strategy for their implementation.

The first consultation led to the identification of various issues and the development of the following work plan to address these issues.

Madam Chair, I have given quite a comprehensive answer to the question, but I am pleased to offer further information. However, I will ask the member if he has a further question in this area.

Mr. Kowalski: Well, first of all, thank you for that detailed response. I will be looking forward to reading Hansard and using that to get feedback from the aboriginal community as far as this government's record of working with the aboriginal community and the successes of this department and the shortcomings. So thank you for that detailed answer.

I recently read a proposal by Allen Smoke [phonetic] of the Stony Mountain Penitentiary for a cultural house for ex-inmates to provide cultural support from the native community for ex-inmates to ultimately reduce the repeat rate among native offenders.

In this eloquently written report, Mr. Smoke [phonetic] has presented a strong case for the consideration of a culturally oriented approach to reduce the number of repeat offenders from within the aboriginal community.

Has the minister received and read a copy of the report from Allen Smoke [phonetic]?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I am informed that we have had an opportunity in Corrections to review that proposal, and we will be responding. However, we do offer, as I have been explaining to the member, a number of programs ourselves. We have inmates for a shorter period of time and recommend that he speak to the federal institutions.

Mr. Kowalski: I found the report very interesting, very well written, and I am glad the minister has received it and will give due consideration.

The last question I have on this line in the budget is in regard to the centralization of the different branches in Winnipeg of community youth corrections. One of the things that happened as a result of it is that before alternative measures were sent to the different districts of the city to be assigned to justice committees or be handled by parental action or to be handled by probation officers, this was in keeping with the idea of keeping corrections within the community.

Now, because all alternative measures go to a central office, some of that input that comes from the local community and from probations officers being familiar with the community is lost. There is not a sharing of information in that Ray Lopuck in the east district office receives referrals from all over the city. Can the department see the benefit of returning the assignment of those cases back to the local districts who are familiar with the cases, quite often familiar with the families, with the schools, with the different situations in the individual districts?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, we made the decision to centralize to offer what we considered a more effective and comprehensive programming. However, we have spoken about a consultation being done. We can look in the consultation, how people get referrals and if, in fact, it could be done more efficiently through another method.

Mr. Mackintosh: Perhaps we can pass this line, and then we can go to the Corrections line No. 4. I have one question on that line.

Madam Chairperson: Item 4.(d) Community Corrections (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits

\$7,379,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures
\$1,310,200—pass.

4.(d)(3) Program Development.

Is this the line the—

Mr. Mackintosh: No, we have to go back to No. 4.

Madam Chairperson: Oh, until we get to the resolution. Is that where you wanted to ask your question?

Mr. Mackintosh: I can ask it now. Just a question on the training allowances that we were discussing the other day. There are a number of explanations that say that the training allowance has been replaced with a living allowance. I am just wondering, were the training allowances subject to the collective agreement with workers in the correctional facilities?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Chair, no, these are not employees. These are recruits.

Mr. Mackintosh: I have heard it said that there are currently volunteers who are working at the Manitoba Youth Centre, working in the position as security staff. I am wondering if the minister can respond to that.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed they will not be working as security staff, and they always work under the supervision, in work that they do, of Corrections staff.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., and time for private members' hour—

Oh, did you wish to pass this line quickly?

Item 4.(d)(3) Program Development \$1,328,00—pass.

Resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$54,408,900 for Justice, Corrections, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

DEBATE ON SECOND
READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 206—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), Bill 206, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les armoiries, les emblèmes et le tartan du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Are we proceeding with Bill 207? No. Are we proceeding with Bill 210? No. Are we proceeding with Bill 211? No.

DEBATE ON SECOND
READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—An Act to amend an Act to continue Brandon University Foundation

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), Bill 300, An Act to amend an Act to continue the Brandon University Foundation; Loi modifiant la Loi prorogeant la Fondation de l'Université de Brandon, standing in the name of

the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to be able to stand and to put some words on the record on Bill 300. It is in fact, as I had indicated two days ago, a bill which the Liberal Party does support, as I am sure that all members inside the Chamber support this particular bill.

It is in essence increasing the size of the board from I believe it is 21 to just over 40, and by allowing the University of Brandon this particular opportunity it will allow it to enhance its future prosperity in terms of getting more individuals throughout the city of Brandon involved with the University of Brandon. I think that could be a very positive thing.

I did want to express some concern because in between private members' hour at five o'clock on Tuesday to now, I did receive a phone call that interested me. It was a phone call that expressed, Mr. Speaker, in terms of why it is that I was standing on this particular bill and why it was at least implied that the Liberal Party would oppose a bill of this nature.

I must say, I was somewhat disappointed in it in the sense that I believe that, had the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), the introducer of this particular bill, and government approached us to indicate that this is a bill that they would like to see passed, had given us some sort of a notice on it, it would have been something that we could have, at the very least, considered, and if our critic would have been able to speak on it at that point in time, then we could have seen it passed.

We would have liked to have heard some sort of an indication in terms of when it would be that it would be going into committee stage, because as I assured the individual over the telephone, the second reading is one aspect, there is a committee meeting hearing process that it has to go through, there is a third reading process that it has to go through, that if in fact the government of the day and the New Democratic Party were wanting to see this particular bill pass, then it would have assisted in having some sort of negotiations. I would even

suggest that if it is as important to the two other, the government and the NDP, that in fact we sit tonight in Private Members' Business and see it pass through committee and then come back in tomorrow for third reading and give it Royal Assent, if the government and the NDP, in fact, do not do that, is it then fair for myself to go to the University of Brandon and say, look, the NDP and the government is now filibustering on your bill and they are the ones that oppose it?

You know, one member makes reference by saying, do not feel sorry for yourself. There is somewhat of a process that has to be gotten through in government bills and private members' bills, and I have respected that in terms of the negotiating in the past and will continue to respect that whole process, and those individual private members' bills and resolutions, which through negotiations it is decided that we want them to be able to come to a passage or at some point in time to pass that, that will occur.

The timing might not necessarily be as expedient as many individuals would like to see, but that has not prevented private members' bills to pass in the past.

So having said that, I do want to indicate that the Liberal Party, as I had indicated when I had stood up on Tuesday, does in fact support this particular bill. We do want to see it go to committee, and it will be most interesting to see when that committee is called but, either way, whenever the committee is called, I can assure both the government and the New Democratic Party that I will not be going saying that the government or the official opposition opposed this particular bill because it has not gone through committee this evening or tomorrow or the following day, Mr. Speaker.

So having said those few words, we are quite prepared to allow the government the opportunity, at the very least, to call it to committee.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 300, An Act to amend an Act to continue Brandon University Foundation; Loi modifiant la

Loi prorogeant la Fondation de l'Université de Brandon.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? [agreed]

Bill 301—The Misericordia General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), Bill 301, The Misericordia General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le "Misericordia General Hospital", standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

* (1710)

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 20—Breast Screening

Mr. Jack Reimer (Niakwa): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render),

WHEREAS breast cancer is a serious threat to health and wellness of women in our province; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba wants to ensure that all women in Manitoba have access to breast screening to reduce the threat of the disease; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has implemented a province-wide breast-screening program for women between the ages of 50 and 70 years of age, offering the opportunity for breast screening once every two years, delivered at screening centres in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislature support the government of Manitoba in its efforts of providing the women of our province with a breast-screening program that combines screening and diagnostic assessment using the best preventable technology currently available, and

that this Legislature also encourages women to take advantage of this program.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to just begin by saying that yesterday, here in the House, when there was the debate on Bill 3, The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment Act, there were a fair amount of interesting comments put on the record by all members of the House that spoke on that particular bill.

I would like to make comment on one of the speeches that was put forth by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and her comment, and I must agree entirely with the one portion of her comment where she was saying that cancer is a disease that is in need of more and more understanding, more and more research, and to the fact that it has become a disease that, unfortunately, has become all too prevalent in our society, and that the need for all legislators to become aware of it and the importance of trying to come to some sort of resolve and cure of this disease. It is not only a benefit for the people of Manitoba but for all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise today to raise the awareness of this government's efforts to ensure that women in Manitoba have access to breast screening to fight breast cancer. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death from all causes among Canadian women between 35 and 55 years of age, and it also is the leading type of cancer in Canadian women.

In 1993, Canadian cancer statistics estimated that 16,300 Canadian women were diagnosed with breast cancer and 5,400 women died of this disease. In 1993, in Manitoba, the National Cancer Institute of Canada statistics estimated that 710 women were diagnosed with breast cancer and that 210 women died in Manitoba because of this terrible and dreadful disease.

Let me put it in perspective, Mr. Speaker, in another way. Since 1979, 262 women have died of AIDS in Canada. During that same period, more than 60,000 Canadian women have died from breast cancer. I can also tell you that breast cancer federally gets only \$4 million a year in federal

research funding, while AIDS research gets almost \$18 million a year.

There is no question that breast cancer is a very important health problem for women, and it often strikes them in the prime of life. This disease must be caught in its early stages, and the breast-screening program is the best way we currently have to identify this threat.

Last October, the Honourable Jim McCrae, Minister of Health, announced a program which would give access to breast screening to approximately 100,000 Manitoba women between the ages of 50 and 70. Once every two years, these women will be able to take the screening tests at centres in Winnipeg or Thompson or Brandon.

Information gathered by the Canadian Cancer Society suggests that while the number of women who die from breast cancer has remained stable over the years, the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer has increased by an average rate of 1.5 percent since 1981. In Manitoba, approximately 28 percent of Manitoba's women are in the age group of 50 years and older, which gives us a significant number of women who need breast information and education. I am pleased that this government has taken a proactive plan for the prevention of this disease. Preventative help is good common sense and it makes good economic sense.

This screening program came about following the recommendations of the Manitoba advisory committee on breast cancer screening. That committee looked at the issue and the wide number of options that surrounded it. They concluded that this government's new program is an important step in meeting preventative health needs.

I should point out that the committee spent two years reviewing current literature on breast screening. They also consulted widely with women, the medical profession and the scientific community. I want to acknowledge the work of all committee members for their excellent work on this project.

I can tell you that all my colleagues place a high priority on women's health issues.

One of the many positive components of this program is the ability for women to have access to the program without a referral. For this program, the referral is not necessary. It would only add an unnecessary cost on our health care system. I am pleased to see the co-operation of the medical community, in particular, in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I believe another important component of this program is the follow-up that is done with women who have an abnormal mammogram reading. They are then directed to diagnosis and to treatment.

Education and information are also key parts of this plan to enable women to make informed decisions and choices about their own health care.

There is no clear evidence about the cause of breast cancer, although the probabilities increase with age, a family history of disease and other factors. That clearly shows us that early detection is the best way to prevent this disease from advancing.

I believe this breast-screening program is a model of how a good preventive program should work. I ask all members of this Legislature to support this resolution and to work to promote the awareness of this program for the goodness of all women in Manitoba. The words of Hippocrates are still true today. A wise person should realize that health is their most valuable possession. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this resolution. The health of women and the number of cases of breast cancer that we have in Manitoba is indeed high.

It is important that the government has moved towards implementing a province-wide breast-screening program for women over the ages of 50. It is a good move. We have to increase the amount of services and make that service more accessible to women of Manitoba. It is something that has been a long time coming, and I am pleased that it is here.

I would like to just look at ways that we can expand the service, Mr. Speaker, and bring to the

record some of the comments that were made by residents of my constituency. When this program was expanded, the people in my constituency said, well, you know, it is good. The service has been expanded in Brandon. It has been expanded in other areas, but it has really not addressed the concern in our area. It may be more accessible. There may not be such a backlog of services, but it is still a great distance to get to wherever the appointments are available.

I would like to recommend to the government that they look at other provinces and at what they are doing to improve services in breast cancer screening, which is a very important service, as I say, for women. Breast cancer is a disease that takes many lives, and we must make screening more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan they have implemented a mobile pilot project. This is a project whereby they have a mobile unit that travels to various communities. In fact, the test program has been in place for over a year now. It has been looked at, at a cost of about \$70 to \$75 per client, that is not a very high cost when you consider that this could save lives.

I think that would be just an excellent way to go if we could bring this unit into Manitoba, as well, and take the service to the people. We could reach many of the remote communities, many of the rural communities and offer the service there, right in the communities, and make it much more accessible. I think this is something that the government should give serious consideration to as a way to improve the service.

* (1720)

As I say with services in Winnipeg and Brandon and Thompson, certainly there is some additional accessibility there for the people. If we could expand it further there would be nothing wrong with that. If we could look at what has happened in other provinces, there would be the ability to take the pressure off the centres that are in place now but bring the service to many more people. I think that is one thing the government could be doing, looking at this possibility and bringing the diagnostic services to many more people.

Along with the screening and these services, I think that we have to look at other ways to improve the services because even though we have screening, we are not seeing a reduction in the number of women who die from breast cancer or the number of women who are getting breast cancer. What I am saying is the problem is not addressed. Although there is an improvement in the services, there is much more that has to be done. I would encourage the government to look at putting money into research, to put money into education. The public has a responsibility to do research into these kinds of things, into diseases. It is not the responsibility only of the drug companies to do research into various diseases. I think we have to take greater strides in trying to conquer a disease that takes the lives of many people.

Many times we hear discussion about whether breast screening is the best way to go to address the high number of cases of cancer that we have in women. I believe that, although it is one of the answers, to be testing is very important. We have to look at other alternatives, as well. I think much more has to be done in the area of education. More research has to be done into looking at diets. There has to be a way of looking at the cause of this disease.

When we look at statistics from other countries, our statistics are much higher, and we have to wonder whether it has something to do with the diet of people in this country. So there is a tremendous amount of work that has to be done, and I would encourage the government to move and look at the preventative side, as we have to look at the preventative side of many health problems that we have.

We have a responsibility to look after our own bodies, but the public purse, the government has a responsibility to put funds into research and bring the information out to the people to provide them, the people, with the knowledge to keep themselves healthier, and I think that is something that we have to look at. So I think the move that the government has made to increase the availability of breast screening in the province by extending it

to other centres is an improvement to the service. I think also that we have to look at other things.

I am particularly interested in the mobile unit that is in place, as I have indicated, in Saskatchewan. I think that this would—in a short time we would be able to bring the service to many more people. If we could prevent, reduce the number of cases of women who die from breast cancer by increasing the amount of screening and make that screening more accessible in some of the remote communities, in the rural communities, it would be money well spent. If it can work in other provinces, and as I have indicated, the cost is not atrocious at \$75, when you look into the whole cost of it, at \$75 per client.

When you take into consideration what it may cost a woman from northern Manitoba to get to Thompson, it is much more expensive. Seventy-five dollars is not that much money when you compare what it costs that individual, for example, for a person to come from Swan River either to Brandon or to Winnipeg, the time that it takes and the costs that they incur. I think that we have to give some consideration to that and look at ways that we can bring the services closer to the community and in that way hopefully prevent some of the cases of breast cancer that we have in this province.

Also, I think that it is very important that we provide information to young women on the importance of self-examination, the importance of diet and the educational part to make people more aware of what risks they are taking by not taking some of the preventative steps that they can.

There is much to be done. This is a very serious disease. It is a disease that only affects women. It is a disease that has not been researched nearly enough, and I think that the government, along with increasing the screening, should be doing much more to pressure, to put funds in place for research into this disease and encourage other levels of government to also research. I do not believe that the research should only be done by the companies who provide drugs for the treatment of diseases. I think that there is a role for government to play, for the public to play in

finding cures and also in educating the public on how they should protect themselves.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the government recognized the need. It has been a long time coming, that there is a need for more screening, and I encourage the government to continue on. This is an issue, as I say, that should not be ignored.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words—I was distracted for a minute and I have lost my train of thought here. I just want to say that I think that this is a good resolution. We should encourage the government, but the government should not think that because they have done this much it is enough. There is much more that has to be done, and not only with breast cancer, but with other diseases as well. In this particular case, we have to do much more education, more steps toward preventative care, more encouragement for people to live a healthy lifestyle and more encouragement for people to be aware of their own bodies and take the precautions that are necessary to keep us healthy. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my comments and, again, encourage the government to look at what other governments are doing.

As I say, as a person from rural Manitoba, I can understand the concerns that people have. There are many people who cannot afford that trip to the city for their screening. As a result of that, it does not happen. So I would encourage the government to consider that option and look at how we can possibly extend that same service to women both in the North and in rural Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it was brought to my attention that in 1991 there were some 590 women with breast cancer in the province of Manitoba. In addition, 230 women died as a result of breast cancer during that very same year. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer for women in Canada, and it is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths.

Statistics show that one in 10 Canadian women develops breast cancer sometime in her life. While these statistics are themselves extremely disturbing, they do not tell the whole story about

the human side of breast cancer. These statistics cannot capture the fear associated with breast cancer, the fear of developing the disease, the fear of disfiguring surgery, the fear of effects from therapy to treat the cancer and the fear of death itself.

It is likely that many members of this House or this Chamber know a woman, whether it is a mother, a sister, a daughter, a friend or a neighbour, who has developed breast cancer. I am sure that we will all join in today to applaud government's efforts to provide Manitoba women between particularly the ages of 50 to 70 years with breast-screening programs. Given that there is no cure at this time, we must do what we can to ensure early detection of breast cancer. We have seen significant movement from this government dealing with that, and that movement does merit, Mr. Speaker, some credit.

* (1730)

I believe strongly in this breast-screening program and the need to encourage women to take advantage of these services. Thus, health education and health promotion must be linked to any breast-screening program to ensure that Manitoba women are aware that such services exist for their benefit.

We must concentrate on getting the message to women especially those between the ages of 50 to 70 years of age to have regular mammograms. We must also keep in mind that the development of any future policies or initiatives relating to breast cancer must include women with the disease as full partners in setting the establishment of priorities in dealing with breast cancer, Mr. Speaker.

Having had the opportunity to go over the resolution, and I have had a number of different resolutions in which government at times wants to be able to pat themselves on the back, I look at this particular resolution and there is some merit, as I pointed out earlier, in terms of the government has taken some action in this aspect of breast cancer, and we want to acknowledge that aspect. Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, they will not, after making some positive steps toward it, back off on

other areas because research is in fact important as made reference to from the speaker before me.

Having said those few words, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be able to speak to this particular resolution.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to stand this afternoon and speak on this resolution. I would like to share the comments to begin with of my colleague the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in applauding the government for the actions that it has taken in this area. I also would like to say that it is a beginning but it is not nearly what needs to be done. It is not nearly what needs to be done not only in the ultimate goal of eradicating breast cancer from the lexicon of diseases but also what could be done even now without spending a lot of extra money.

I think the member for Swan River has raised a very interesting and potentially very exciting suggestion which is the mobility unit that is being implemented in the province of Saskatchewan which would allow women throughout the province of Manitoba to access the screening program that now is currently available in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson.

We all, Mr. Speaker, in this House know the challenges that face us in the province of Manitoba with 60 percent and growing of the population living in greater Winnipeg area and Brandon and Thompson being the other communities of size. That is why, I am sure, the government has taken to implement the breast-screening program in Brandon and Thompson because they are the next largest centres of population and it is a decentralization process. Still between 25 and 40 percent of the people of Manitoba live outside those three centres, and they should have access to the same quality of care with the same ease of access that women in Brandon, Winnipeg and Thompson have access to.

We have the technology that would bring that service to those women, and it is the mobility unit that is being implemented in the province of Saskatchewan. Therefore, it would not require

research into the technology or even much research into the delivery of service for this government to talk to its government in the next province to the west and say, this is a good idea. How did you do it, and how can we put it together for the province of Manitoba? The one province in this country that is most similar in characteristics to Manitoba is the province of Saskatchewan, and I think we should reduce those interprovincial barriers that this government is talking about reducing all the time and take advantage of a program that is working, and working well, in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, breast cancer may be of major concern to women between the ages of 50 and 70. That appears to be the age, postmenopausal age, that women mostly contract this disease. As the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has discussed, we also need to look at prevention so that women, when they come to the age of 50 to 70 or when they are postmenopausal, and for some women that is much earlier than the age of 50, they do not have to worry as much about the possibility of contracting breast cancer if we have done some research and education and programming with women at younger ages.

I would like to talk about the idea of some of those alternatives. We do know that research into women's health issues in every area is maybe one-tenth, or even less, of the research that is into areas that relate either only to men's health problems or that relate to health problems that affect both men and women. We all know that up until very recently, for example, research into heart disease and stroke and heart attacks have used mainly men for research because the argument has run, women with their menstrual cycles and their reproductive cycles cloud the issues, the health issues and the research issues and make it less clean as far as determining cause and effect.

Therefore, men have been used almost exclusively to deal with the important issues of heart disease and stroke. Women are currently dying and contracting heart disease and stroke problems at the same rate—actually they are a higher rate in many cases than men—but the

research has not taken advantage of that. Luckily that is changing, but it is that kind of attitude that we need to be very aware of and to work very seriously to avoid in what we do in health issues such as breast cancer.

* (1740)

Again on the research side, as the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has talked about, we need to have research that is not driven by people and organizations that have a vested interest in the outcome of that research. We have seen, historically, research done into the effects of tobacco, for example, sponsored by the tobacco industry.

We have seen right here today in Canada research—a major component of any research that is being done today dealing with the effects of breast implants are being done by an organization that is sponsored and financed by an organization that is made up of plastic surgeons, the very people who have a vested interest in the procedures and in the outcome of that research. I want to make it very clear that I am not saying that any individual person involved in that particular research is less than open and less than objective in their research, but we need to have research that is outside the venue of the area being investigated.

We need research as well that is pure research, that is not directed specifically towards finding out if this particular drug will work or if that particular thing will work, but research that is pure research that is not driven by particular aim or goal. That, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately in our economic times is best done with government funding that is open ended and says, go do this research, whatever you come up with will be helpful, or grants from foundations, et cetera. But that research is necessary and the government has to take some major say in that kind of thing.

I just read a booklet that came from the University of Manitoba today that talked about the various kinds of research in the various departments that is being undertaken by faculty members at the University of Manitoba. A woman in, I believe, the faculty of medicine is undertaking research, talking with women who have had breast

cancer, because she found out that—and she has been doing this for 15 years—she has found historically that while most people who have cancer want to be involved in determining the treatment for that cancer and want to be a real participant in discussing that cancer, women with breast cancer are far less willing, in the past particularly, to be involved in making the decisions as to their treatment.

This is the kind of research that is very definitely applied research, but it is done out of the University of Manitoba. You can see the potential positive benefits for treatment for women who have breast cancer, treatment so that you know when you are talking to a woman as a doctor or as a support person, that you have information about why women have felt this way and what makes them move towards being more of a full participant in this process. That is another example of positive research that needs to be undertaken.

We also need to talk about again, as I stated earlier, the fact that while breast cancer is most prevalent in postmenopausal women, and usually women 58 to 70, although as I said, that could be much younger, we also need to look at programs for women starting in their teenage years, prevention. If we are going to make a difference in dealing with this very serious health problem, we need not only to look at research into the causes of breast cancer and the potential treatment for breast cancer, but we need to look as well at prevention.

One of the things that is happening today, although I have not experienced it first-hand, but I plan to, is I just found—I was talking to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) who was at Misericordia Hospital yesterday at the opening of a breast clinic. I do not think I have the full title of it properly outlined, but there is a clinic that deals particularly with the issues around breast cancer, et cetera, at Misericordia. She was saying that one of the great things that they have there was a model of a breast that actually had within it the lumps that you are supposed to look for during your self-examination. She said you could put your hand on that model, and she said it was for the first time she felt what you were actually looking for,

because we have never had this opportunity to say, okay, this is what you are supposed to be looking for. A simple idea that could have far-reaching implications.

If there were one of these models available in every high school in the province of Manitoba and every doctor's office and every nurse's office and every nursing station in the province of Manitoba, so that women could say, this is what it is that I am supposed to be looking for when I do my self-examination, we could perhaps, and I would say very likely, reduce the need for the screening process that happens later on in life, or at the very least catch some of these situations before they get to the point of being more seriously advanced. So that is another thing that we know how to do.

The delivery system is already in place for this kind of prevention program. The technology would be minimal. I imagine it is a plaster model. You would just stamp it out, and maybe do some training with the people who might be in high schools or something to have the students understand what is happening there. But it is a simple idea, as is the idea of the mobile unit that is taking place in Saskatchewan.

Again, something that we know how to do is we know how to talk about diet. We know how to talk about lifestyle. We have that kind of information available to us. We know that women who live in Japan and in other far eastern countries have far fewer incidents of breast cancer, of all cancers. We think we know that it is diet that plays a big part of it, because there have also been studies that have shown that when women from these countries move to the more western countries, North America and Europe, their incidence of these diseases starts to climb and starts to get to the point where it is at the same level as women who have lived here for centuries. So you cannot say in many cases that this is genetic or it is racial in a sense of having come through the genetic structure. It is lifestyle; it is nurture, not nature. We know these things. We also have a distribution system for this kind of material.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would just like to say that while this resolution is a good start, and we

certainly have nothing but positive things to say about the process that has taken place, we do feel there is a great deal more that could be done, where we know how to do it. We could easily and very inexpensively give a lot of additional supports to women throughout the province of Manitoba and throughout their lives.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to stand and to speak on such an important resolution, because there is no doubt that breast cancer is, as referenced in the resolution, a serious threat to the health and to the wellness of women in Manitoba and across Canada.

Speakers earlier have referenced a great deal of knowledge that is available to people about breast cancer and the warning signs of breast cancer and what people may know about breast cancer. My concern is that we all do not know that. My concern is that we all do not have all of the information that perhaps we need that might help us deal with early detection or might help us on an ongoing basis with our concerns about breast cancer.

I am not quite sure why that is. I think perhaps in some cases it is a matter of this topic being just so incredibly anxiety producing to women that they avoid it, that in fact there is a denial. There are many women who have heard of the self-examination techniques who avoid using them because it is so anxiety producing to do this on a regular basis.

* (1750)

We know that the outcome of a failure to do that can be a much more devastating effect. The effect can be much more devastating in terms of the life expectancy of the woman involved and perhaps could lead to a premature death, a death which could have been avoided had proper prevention and preventative techniques been used.

So I think that this speaks to our need as women and Manitobans to also support each other. There can be an availability of techniques there. There can be the availability of measures which would assist us, including the measure the member for

Wellington (Ms. Barrett) mentioned that would show women what it is they were feeling for in a breast self-examination. But I think women also need to be able to open up the topic and be able to speak to each other about their fears and also be able to speak to those women who are survivors.

I know that there is a group of women in Manitoba that is making a very concerted effort to deal with that. There is a project which is currently underway which deals with women's feelings when they find out, when that diagnosis is first given to them, how they deal with that diagnosis in relation to their family and how they begin to deal with the treatment plan.

We have to make an effort to have women have the confidence and the strength and the courage to deal with the preventative measures, to include breast self-examination and then, very importantly, to take part in the breast-screening process.

This is something where women, with encouragement, can, in fact, participate. It is aimed at the higher-risk group of women. Speakers before me have said that this is not the only group of women that is liable or likely to have breast cancer, but this is a very high-risk age range. High risk for a number of reasons: high risk by virtue of physiological changes that are taking place for women at that time, and the likelihood of the onset of breast cancer increases. Women have to be aware of that and have to be supported by other women to take the measures of prevention that will be helpful to them.

So I am very happy that this resolution supports that, and I am very happy with the program that this government put into place, the wide breast-screening program which allows approximately 100,000 Manitoba women to access regular screening for breast cancer.

This is a very concrete measure. It is not something that is done in the privacy of your own home, such as a breast self-examination, but some women are not confident doing that and this is a measure which then goes beyond, which allows a diagnostic procedure to take place, that a woman

can then have assistance and that, I believe, would also be quite accurate.

I am very happy that this has been put forward by this government. I know that the women I have spoken to have been very pleased that this has happened because women do feel at risk and feel very vulnerable to this particular disease.

The decision to implement the screening program was based on recommendations from the Manitoba advisory committee on breast cancer screening. This committee evaluated the current state of knowledge, and this was important because the whole issue of breast cancer screening has yielded at various times various kinds of information. It was important that this committee was then able to review the most up-to-date knowledge on breast cancer screening and provide that advice to government so that women in Manitoba could benefit.

This is a very important step in the preventative end. The prevention end has been spoken about this afternoon because we know that the consequences of a lack of prevention are very serious and they lead to families losing a mother, death of an individual, perhaps a very much shortened life expectancy. The preventative end becomes a very important part in dealing with this disease.

The committee, I am told, as they evaluated the information, engaged in a two-year process which is a very significant process involving extensive reviews of the current literature, and in an ongoing consultation with women. So there was not only the opportunity to review the research, but an opportunity to actually speak to people and to find out the effects for people and women in particular in this case.

I think that that people part of the work they did was really a very important part, reviewing the literature was only but one segment. Also, there was discussion with the medical community and the scientific community. This new program is very consistent with the government's emphasis on preventive care and in keeping with the high priority that this government has placed on women's health issues. I think that it is very

important to be able to have women see that this is a signal and something that they can in a very concrete way avail themselves of.

The program will consist of breast examination by a trained nurse examiner and a mammography screening once every two years. The program will provide a prompt follow-up for women with abnormal mammograms and also provide linkages to diagnosis and to treatment. This segment deals with the feelings that a woman has when she receives the diagnosis. This deals with the feelings that a woman has when she has to make decisions about a treatment plan and when she has to deal with a diagnosis that may be very frightening to herself and also to her family.

There will also be a comprehensive education program for women and health care providers and that will form a very critical component of the program. The speakers before me have said the education part is the part that finally allows people to begin to think about the issue. It can be in some ways a desensitization. Sometimes a little bit of knowledge can be anxiety producing, and then with more knowledge people are able to deal with the information in a more effective way.

I am in agreement that we also have to make sure that young women begin to get this information so that young women begin to incorporate it into their lifestyle, into their knowledge base and do not find that they are then frightened by what may be in fact new information.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to speak on this. I offer it my full support. I know there are other speakers who would like to put a few words on the record. I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): I am not sure whether there were other members who wished to remark on this. There was an opportunity, I guess, to pass this, although I have a number of things I wanted to say.

Mr. Speaker, one of them, I want to begin by saying that this issue, although I have generally supported the resolution as proposed, I wanted to say that the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer),

who proposed this resolution, may not share the same perception of the nature of the solution proposed by the government that I do representing a northern constituency.

I presented a petition of some 1,500 names of people in Flin Flon and area, who were desperately seeking the support of the government for breast cancer screening. The government has moved, and I applaud the government's actions as far as they go, but I think its shortsighted and sort of a denial of the realities of northern Manitoba to believe that a breast-screening procedure that is offered in Thompson is going to be adequate and utilized by people in northern Manitoba.

That is true for a couple of reasons. First of all, Thompson is a four-hour drive away from Flin Flon. Thompson is not accessible other than by aircraft from many other communities, and thirdly, because of the imposition of the Northern Patient Transportation user fee, anybody accessing the mammography unit that would be in Thompson and had to fly there or had to bus there would be charged \$50. They would in fact have to pay \$50

for a process, a procedure, that other Manitobans take for granted and for whom there is no cost whatsoever.

There is a fundamental inequality in even providing a service that we all agree is incredibly important to women but to our society as a whole, and that inequality unfortunately is something that is displayed in many, many of the services that are delivered in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I will have an opportunity later to talk about some of the inconsistencies and some of the dilemmas that we face when we are talking about this particular method of screening for breast cancer, but I see that the time is six o'clock and I will have to wait until next time.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 12 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

