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of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Madam 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.

* (1010)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This morning this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Family Services.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (b) Income Assistance Programs (1) Employment and Income Assistance on page 54 of the Estimates book.

Chairperson's Ruling

Mr. Chairperson: Before proceeding with the Estimates, I have a ruling.

On May 4, 1998, the Acting Chairperson took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It concerned words spoken by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to a question asked by the member for Burrows. The words were: "This is politics at its slimiest." When speaking to the point of

order, the member for Burrows asked that, if the words are unparliamentary, the minister be asked to withdraw the same. While the word "slimiest" is not listed in Beauchesne as unparliamentary, there have been several Speaker's rulings in Manitoba that have ruled variations of the word out of order.

I would draw to the attention of the committee that Madam Speaker Phillips ruled the word "slimy" out of order on several occasions. I would also draw to the attention of the committee that Madam Speaker Dacquay also ruled the word "slimy" be withdrawn as it caused disruption in the House.

In light of the above-referenced rulings, I would ask the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to withdraw the words.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Chairperson, I will withdraw those words.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister.

* * *

Mrs. Mitchelson: My honourable friend had asked for some information about the grants listing to external agencies the other day, and I have that for him this morning.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I have not quite got to those yet, but I am wondering if it is in the same format as it used to be whereby it was divided into sections according to the part of the department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, no, it is not. My understanding is it is the same one that we tabled last year in the same format.

Mr. Martindale: I was going back to 1994-95 where it was divided up into—for example, Community Living was the first page. Then there was Child Day Care,

Child and Family Support. I wonder if next year the minister would consider going back to the format where it was divided up according to parts of the department. It is a little easier to use if it is in a more useable format.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Certainly we can undertake to do that, but we have not mixed them all up. I think if you look through the list, you will see that the Child and Family Services agencies are all together. The support for women's services are all together. But we will undertake to do that for next year.

Mr. Martindale: I have some miscellaneous questions, I guess, before we get back to the Child Benefit. I wonder if the minister could tell me how many persons—or rather what was the average caseload on municipal assistance and the average caseload on provincial assistance in the fiscal year '97-98?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The average provincial caseload in '97-98 was 25,103 and the average municipal caseload was 14,126.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what the numbers were at March 31 for provincial and for municipal?

Mrs. Mitchelson: For the provincial caseload, just for the month of March 1997, the caseload was 25,018, and for the municipal caseload it was 13,615.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that some individual workers, and I am using provincial as an example, have very high numbers of files; for example, one worker that I talked to has 585 files, all disabled. It is always a concern when workers have that many files, and in this instance she says she gets 60 to 70 phone calls a day because it means that it is almost impossible to do home visits and keep in touch with those individuals on a regular basis.

My question would be what is going to happen with the One Tier system? Do you anticipate that caseloads are going to go up per worker or down or stay the same? What are your plans in that regard?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Presently, I guess, the average number of caseloads per counsellor would be around

245, but I do want to indicate that it is the counsellors that do the intake and that then there are also financial workers that determine the budget and the amount of payment for individuals. So, in combination with the counsellors, there are also financial workers that deal with the budgetary issues. The counsellors would do intake, and then a significant amount of other work is done by the financial workers within the system.

Mr. Martindale: So is the number of cases that I quoted an anomaly, or is the minister saying that there is also a financial worker assisting this counsellor?

* (1020)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed that there is a disabled pilot project going on right now where counsellors do have 500 to 600 files each, and that is because of the nature of the disabled community and clients. Many of them are long term; they will be on social allowance for an extended period of time. So we are determining whether this is an appropriate approach to be taking with the disabled caseload. I know that much of our focus—I mean, certainly we do not have to do as extensive work as on our Employment First initiatives.

If, in fact, there is an ability to work with a disabled client to move into the workforce, we do that, but we have a significantly more focused approach on others in developing personal job plans and determining where they are going to end up. So, if I can indicate to you, there is a little more stability in the disabled caseload than what we want to see in the nondisabled and the employable caseload.

Mr. Martindale: What is going to happen with One Tier of income assistance delivery in the city of Winnipeg? Are we going to see more than 245 cases per counsellor or less? What are your plans in that regard?

Mrs. Mitchelson: One of the goals or objectives of the One Tier system is to try to ensure that we have more people working on the front lines, working with individual clients than we do doing paperwork, so with the one system and the new technology it should make it much easier for us to focus our human resources working with the clients that need that kind of support

and service. So we are anticipating and expecting that, in fact, there will be more one-on-one support and services as a result of the One Tier system.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to see that this minister and her department are learning from the City of Winnipeg where, in recent years, they hired additional staff. I think at one point they hired 20 additional staff, and they saw a great decrease in their caseload. They believe it was because they were working on a more intensive basis with individuals, so I hope that what the minister says is a good sign of things to come.

The minister will be aware that there have not been any increases in welfare rates, in fact only cuts in recent years, whereas in the past she and her predecessors, both in her government and previous governments, usually gave an annual increase based on the consumer price index. This minister and I have had disagreements about things like the poverty rates and low-income cutoffs, and as the minister knows, while I hate to give her any credit or agree with her on anything, I would have to admit that one of the problems with the low-income cutoffs is that they are a very rough measure of poverty, because they are based on cities of a certain size. So there are no regional variations, and there are no variations as a result of living expenses being higher or lower in a particular city.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Now, there is an alternative to that, and that is the alternative that the City of Winnipeg Social Services Department used to use, and that is a market-basket approach. I am wondering if this minister would consider, the next time benefit rates are reviewed, looking at a market-basket approach which would therefore be a realistic appraisal of people's needs, and, presumably, it would include food and clothing and personal needs, household needs and shelter.

There are precedents out there—for example, the acceptable living level that the Social Planning Council did—but the minister and her department might want to do their own market-basket approach of measuring the costs of goods and services in Winnipeg. Would the minister be willing to at least consider that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know that different provinces right across the country handle the amount that they provide to individuals or families in a different way. There is not any one standard way right across the country. Certainly, the issues that my honourable friend raised around the low-income cutoffs are issues that have caused much concern, not only in our province but right across the country, around how do we measure poverty. Stats Canada themselves say that clearly. I mean, they have written to me, and they have written to other ministers across the country and have said that LICOs are not a measurement of poverty. It is spelled out very clearly, but it is the best measurement that we have, and they do lump Winnipeg into the same category of all cities over the population of 500,000, not taking into account the cost of living, the cost of housing, the cost of food and clothing or sales taxes that might or might not be applied in different provinces.

They also do not take into account any of the rebates or supports for low-income families. When you look at the GST and PST rebates, those kinds of things are not taken into account. I guess on the GST, it is similar right across the country, but PST rebates are different province to province. There are many programs that might support low-income families that are not taken into account. When you look at the child tax credit, the tax credit that we put in place several years ago in Manitoba I think reduces the income tax paid by about \$250 per child per family. At the time we implemented it, and I think it was back in 1992, we raised the threshold from \$50 to \$250 for each child. Anyway, it was a cost of about \$28 million a year to our government and to our Treasury, and those kinds of things are not included when they do the low-income cutoff.

Each province has different programs in place. I look to the support that we provide for older children. As children get older in Manitoba, we give them increased support through our welfare system. I know that in many other provinces it is a standard rate right across the board no matter how old the child is. I always look to British Columbia, and I often mention British Columbia when I say that they pay through their welfare system \$103 per child. That is in the city of Vancouver and right throughout the province. Our rates for children are anywhere from about \$116 to as

high as \$189 per month for older children in families, so we have a different system.

* (1030)

Everyone deals with it differently. I will commit today to trying to ensure that we have the ability to help as many people that are in our welfare system today move off of welfare and into the workforce. Anyone that remains on welfare for a lifetime is committed to a life of poverty. I do not think you will ever see any province that will pay what Stats Canada, through LICO, says is the low-income cutoff in welfare payments. That is not in the cards, so you will never see anyone living on welfare that rises above that poverty line as it is measured today.

I can indicate that all provinces certainly are looking. We are looking at a federal-provincial level at whether there is another way to measure truly what the poverty line might be and then determine how we provide supports from there, but, at this point in time, I am not prepared to commit to—any change we will continue to review as time as goes by, the way we are delivering our support, and, as we believe changes are necessary, we will attempt to make those changes. But I am not going to commit to anything today.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, could the minister tell me as a result of Order-in-Council changes requiring persons turning 60 to apply for CPP benefits, how many people aged 60 to 65 have received either full or partial CPP, or, I guess, another way of saying that would be partially on provincial or municipal assistance or partially on CPP benefits?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, before the policy was put in place, there were about 1,100 people on the caseload that had income from CPP. When we changed the policy and required people at age 60 to collect CPP before applying for welfare, the number increased by a hundred individuals. So it is up to 1,200 individuals now.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I have some questions about the supposedly new National Child Benefit. Could the minister tell me if she considered allowing individuals on assistance to keep maintenance payments or part of their maintenance?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, as the policy has existed and exists across the country pretty well, if people are receiving maintenance payments, that is taken into consideration as income, and then if it is not enough, they would receive a top-up from the welfare program and that remains consistent here and right across the country.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister surely knows that people who are on income assistance or receive maintenance are no better off as a result of having maintenance income. Either they receive it and it is deducted dollar for dollar, or the money just goes directly to the Department of Family Services. But in Saskatchewan, under the new benefits, the money that was clawed back, some of it has been redirected to families receiving maintenance so that they are better off, and I am wondering if Manitoba considered doing that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we have researched what Saskatchewan has done, and there is no increased revenue for people on welfare who are collecting maintenance. I think my honourable friend might be mistaking it for welfare recipients. Low-income working families who are receiving maintenance are receiving additional support through the Saskatchewan child benefit.

Our whole purpose and objective under welfare reform and Employment First is to try to assist people, wherever possible, to be trained and to enter the workforce. Anyone who does enter the workforce and has a job, certainly, would continue to see their maintenance support be in addition to or augment the salary that they might make from a job, but I do not think anywhere across the country have any governments left any more money in the hands or pockets of those on welfare.

The whole focus and the objective of the National Child Benefit is to try to help people secure attachment to the workforce, because we know that people are better off working than on welfare, or should be.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister explain the \$1.5 million for families on Income Assistance who are

making the transition to the new National Child Benefit, which is one of the items in her press release of March 10, 1998?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will start, Mr. Chairperson, to try to explain this. It is a little complicated. It was really the federal government that created this problem, or this issue. When provinces first recommended to the federal government that we look at a National Child Benefit with additional support from the federal government, we made it very clear that there were to be no losers. No one was to be worse off as a result of the National Child Benefit. That was one of the principles that provinces presented in their paper to the federal government. We believed that by indicating right across the country as provinces that we would not create any losers, that no one would have less money as a result of the National Child Benefit, we thought that the federal government, when they agreed to work with us to develop the National Child Benefit, would understand and agree to that principle.

But the federal government, who previously had a working income supplement program, prior to July of 1997 paid \$500 per family to families with earnings up to I think it was around \$21,000. In July of 1997, when they converted the working income supplement to a per-child amount—they gave \$500 per family previous to July 1997—they paid the higher amount out.

* (1040)

So because the federal government changed the payment mechanism for the working income supplement in July of 1997, prior to the National Child Benefit coming into force, families that had some income earnings and were partially on welfare received the higher amount in July of 1997. So if, in fact, dollar for dollar, we removed money from those families that had some working income, there would be people that would be worse off. So as a result we have invested the \$1.7 million into those families so that no one is worse off as a result. That make sense?

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us what the federal government plans are for the future? Because their commitment right now is time limited I believe to the year 2000. What indications have they given for the Child Benefit after the year 2000?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is not time limited. This is forever. This is a National Child Benefit that will continue. What they have done is make a commitment to another \$850 million more in their next mandate which has started. So they are talking over the next two years. They have announced \$425 million next year and an incremental \$425 million the following year.

So we should see the National Child Benefit doubled over the next two years. It will continue. There is no end that we are aware of. It would not be the first time the federal government has gone into something and withdrawn but, quite frankly, the whole end objective or intent of the National Child Benefit would be to ensure that children would come out of the welfare system completely. That would be the main objective and goal.

Certainly it is not going to happen over the next few years, but they say, as resources come available, investing more, and they have committed to another \$850 million over the next two years. So we should see the amount that we have to reinvest double over the next two years.

Mr. Martindale: I am glad the minister is willing to promise that the federal money will continue in perpetuity. My concern, though, comes from a Globe and Mail article on March 13 this year that says that in last month's budget the federal government promised 1.7 billion over the next three years if the provinces announce matching programs to get parents off welfare and take more than a million children out of poverty.

The minister has already answered my question, I guess, but someone seemed to have some doubts fairly recently about—maybe because it was only budgeted for three years, but maybe the federal government has made a commitment to continue the extra money beyond the three years.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding from the federal government and from the meetings that we have been at that this money will continue but it will continue to be incremental. So as more resources become available at the federal level, they will increase their contribution to children in low-income families, whether they be working or on welfare, in an incremental way with the ultimate end goal or objective

being to take all children off of the welfare rolls in provinces and provide extra support to working families through the National Child Benefit, so those people will have more money in their pockets and it will augment those low-income working families.

Mr. Martindale: Since the government of Saskatchewan has taken children off welfare and put them on a family benefit plan, would the minister consider doing that in Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know we can compare and use different examples from different jurisdictions, but if you look at the current basic rates in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba, and we take, for example, a single parent with two children, ages 10 and 13, we pay \$604.40, and the same example in Saskatchewan would see only support of \$550. So we are already paying more for children, and they are not receiving any more as a result of the change to the Saskatchewan child benefit if they are on welfare.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, well, I think we are talking about a philosophical shift or change. You know, it was the minister who said that the eventual plan is to take all children off welfare. I think if you think about it, there are some benefits to that. One is, and I think the major one is that there is a stigma to being on welfare, and if you change it, as they did in Saskatchewan to the Saskatchewan child benefit, then their income can be seen as coming from a different source. It is like a pension, which does not have that kind of stigma. So I would hope that the minister would consider it.

Did this minister consider improving health benefits or having a training allowance or some kind of income supplement program with some of the money that could be redirected?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think we considered all options when we looked at how we wanted to reinvest. Certainly, with our focus on the Children and Youth Secretariat and our knowledge and understanding of what early intervention can do for children, we chose to place our priority this year with the resources that we had on many of those initiatives, whether it be our BabyFirst or Earlystart programs, our additional support to the child care system so we could

have the spaces available for those people who want and have the ability to move off of welfare and into the workforce, the kinds of things that we believe needed to be reinvested in right now. We will be getting more money next year and the year after, and all of those issues are on the table and we will be looking to see how we might deal with the additional money that we will have as a result of the additional federal commitment.

* (1050)

So those are all things that we have looked at. I think we determined that our first and foremost priorities would be trying to find secure attachment to the workforce through additional training dollars, ensuring that the child care spaces were there and available as people needed those, putting money into early intervention through the BabyFirst and Earlystart programs, the nutrition program that will be announced in the near future.

So those are the kinds of things that we chose, and other provinces chose different things. You know, for instance, I know that we spend millions and millions of dollars more on child care than the Province of Saskatchewan does, so there are some differences there. I am not sure whether they reinvested any of their money into additional child care spaces. So everyone has done—no, I understand they did not, so everyone has done different things based on what they felt priorities were. I know that every province will be looking and assessing what other provinces have done and maybe move in some of those directions as they have more resources available.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I think we were going to do Taking Charge! under line 2.(c), so we may be ready to pass 2.(b).

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (b) Income Assistance Programs (1) Employment and Income Assistance \$206,053,300—pass; (2) Health Services \$19,841,400—pass; (3) Municipal Assistance \$85,419,700—pass; (4) Income Assistance for the Disabled \$9,960,200—pass.

Item 9.2.(c) Making Welfare Work \$4,460,000—pass.

9.2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: I am sorry, I was daydreaming, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there unanimous consent of the committee to revert to item 9.2.(c) Making Welfare Work \$4,460,000? [agreed]

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, for being so accommodating. I wrote to the minister, I believe, April 21, 1997, asking for a list of all of the organizations that received contracts under Taking Charge! of which I believe there must be quite a few, because Taking Charge! has sent me all their faxes on all their courses and all their programs so I can publicize them, I suppose, and there are a quite a few of them, some in the private sector, quite a few in the nonprofit sector.

I would be very interested in knowing the names of all the organizations that got contracts, how much the contracts were for and how many people were going to be trained by each organization. I also asked about the cost per person of training for each organization, and I am wondering if the minister could share that with me.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We can provide that information. Does my honourable friend want us to go right back to the beginning of '95-96 and provide a list of—what information specifically, the contracts, the costs of the contracts?

Mr. Martindale: I will table my letter to the minister. It has the information that I need.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Okay, and we will provide that once we get the copy of the letter.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister. I have a document called Taking Charge!: Strategic Initiative Evaluation Framework and Request for Proposals which I tabled the other day. The Clerk pointed out to me that I only have the odd-numbered pages, which I guess shows that you cannot rely on leaked documents too much. Maybe I only have half as many questions if I only have half the pages, or maybe I should have

only got half as excited as I did when this fell into my lap. I should maybe point out that it was not leaked to me by a civil servant; it came from another source. I do not want to get anybody in trouble here.

I was told that the evaluation of Taking Charge! would be public, and I am wondering if there is an evaluation that the minister could share with me.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This document—by the way, I have a full copy for my honourable friend, because it is a public document, which I will share with him. It is the document that was put out in the requests for proposals for companies to bid. Prairie Research was one of the companies that did bid, and they won the contract. So the evaluation is in process, but we do not have the results yet.

Mr. Martindale: When the minister does have the evaluation, will that be available to me or not?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My sense is that it would be a public document once it is completed, and I will ensure that my honourable friend gets a copy. I do not know what the process is, whether we do have to check with the board of Taking Charge! on that or not. Yes, so, Mr. Chairperson, it will be shared publicly once the document is completed, once it is shared with Taking Charge! and they have the ability to provide their comments, and then that will become a public document.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.2.(c) Making Welfare Work \$4,460,000—pass.

9.2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister could provide me with some statistics on individuals receiving CRISP, and then I have some questions on individuals receiving 55 Plus. I am wondering if the minister has a breakdown according to categories. For example, what percentage of families receive the maximum per child benefits, and what was the average benefit per family for CRISP?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have the figures for the CRISP program, and there are approximately 3,300 families that are receiving CRISP benefits. The average benefit per family is about \$62, and 75 percent of those families get the full benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, there has been a considerable decline in the caseload for CRISP, which is well documented in the annual reports. For example, in June 1987, there were 9,380 cases—I will call them because I am not sure exactly, I guess, I am talking about clients—whereas in the '98-99 Estimates book, I believe we are looking at 3,300. Now I know there was a decline in '97-98 because a large number of people were declared ineligible, but why has there been such a decline even from '87 to '95-96 when the caseload went down from 9,300 to 6,100?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My honourable friend is quite right. In 1996-97, many clients did become ineligible, and there was a significant drop that year. But all I can say is that reapplication forms are sent out, applications are out there in the community, and as people apply and are deemed eligible, they receive the support. So we are not anticipating that there will be any decline in this year's budget as opposed to last year.

* (1100)

Mr. Martindale: Since this is a targeted program for working families of low income, how is this program advertised and does the government spend money on advertising? How are people notified that this benefit is available?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Anyone who was receiving the benefit in the previous year sent a reapplication form. We have them available in all of our offices through community organizations. So they are there and available for people, should they choose to apply for the program. So that is the way we deliver the program, and we know that the forms are available and accessible right throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, so in other words, there is no advertising. If people are lucky enough to find out about the program, they apply or they phone and get an application form sent to them. If they do not

know that it exists, they do not ask for an application form, they do not apply, and they do not get the benefit, because this government chooses not to make the public widely aware that this program exists. Is that not the case?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As we do the preorientation intake sessions for those who are applying for social allowance, and as we work with those individuals as they move into the workforce, they are made available of the program, and they can choose to apply or not apply. It is an application process. Those who apply who are eligible do receive the benefit.

I just want to introduce one other staff member who was at the table. That is Gerry Schmidt, who is the executive director of Client Services.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for the introduction. It is also good to put a face on somebody, though I am aware of the name and talk to on the phone. It makes the person a little more real, I guess, when you see them in person.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, we are all real people.

Mr. Martindale: I have some questions on 55 Plus. Could the minister tell me what percentage of clients receive the maximum benefit and what was the average benefit per quarter?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The average quarterly benefit is \$97.49, and about 62 percent get the full benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what was the average benefit for those persons in receipt of OAS benefits?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Maybe we could go on to another question. We have to calculate that figure.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what percent of the caseload were women?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do collect that data, but we do not have it here. We could undertake to get it.

Mr. Martindale: I am looking at the annual report for 1996-97, the most recent annual report, page 37, 55 Plus, and I found one asterisk at the bottom of the page for '96-97 in one of the columns, and then there were two asterisks. For the life of me I cannot find where the two asterisks are on the page, other than on the footnote. I am wondering where they are supposed to go.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think it is a typo. I think that both points underneath relate to the date of 1996-97. So there are two points. I am not sure how it should have been shown, but they both are an explanation of the date.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$647,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$335,000—pass; (3) Financial Assistance \$8,335,100—pass.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$351,448,200 for Family Services, Employment and Income Assistance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Moving on to Resolution 9.3. Community Living (a) Regional Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$14,283,800.

* (1110)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I received a lot of correspondence last year, some of which was directed to staff in Community Living, some of which was directed to the minister, some of which was directed to the Premier, some of which came to me as the opposition critic, all having to do with wages and budgets of group homes. I know that the minister is very aware of this issue, and it is a rather serious one because these group homes accommodate vulnerable persons who are living in the community instead of in institutions. These organizations and their boards and staff provide a very valuable service to the individuals and to the community, but because of inadequate funding they have numerous problems.

For example, it was pointed out to me that funding rates were decreased by 4 percent in 1993 and have not

increased since and that those rates make it very difficult to attract and keep staff, to comply with labour and licensing requirements and to meet increasing costs and administrative demands. Most of the correspondence repeats all of those concerns. We are talking about people who are living on very low wages, probably a lot of young people. My guess is that a lot of the staff would be under 25 years old. I would say it would be impossible to support a family on that kind of income. In fact, even an individual would probably be living below the poverty line at those kinds of wages.

In a letter from the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers, their figure is an average of \$6.75 an hour. Those are very low wages indeed, especially when you consider that there would be deductions, and we are looking at about \$7,000 a year for these individuals. So it is no surprise, then, that they would have a high staff turnover and could not keep qualified people.

I know that there has been an increase in the budget in Community Living, and I am sure the minister is going to tell me all about it now, but I am wondering how much is going to be available for group homes because even if you have a percentage increase for group homes, a 2 percent increase in their wages is not going to make a very significant difference. So I am wondering if the minister can tell us how the issue of wages, in particular, has been addressed by her department and by her government's budget.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, just before I answer, I would like to introduce Martin Billinkoff who is the ADM in this area and Wes Henderson, executive director.

Well, I listened very carefully to what my honourable friend had to say, and, yes, I know he received a lot of copies of letters that came to me, probably copies addressed to himself, and indeed we as a government realized and recognized over the last number of years, when it has been very difficult to increase budgets and find additional resources—and one area within my department that got additional money year after year was this area because we all know and recognize that people with mental disabilities are individuals who need and will continue to need our support as governments.

But the money that we have received in previous years has just really gone to deal with crisis issues where people who are living in the community without the required support—and it went to serve additional people who needed that support—but there really was not any money for agencies. This year I am pleased to say that we certainly heard the issues that were raised in the letters, and there has been significant additional support, especially for group homes.

I know that the Coalition of Service Providers certainly met with me and my department, met with others throughout government and talked about the issues, and I am very pleased to say that we were able to address some of their issues in a very significant way this year. I did have the opportunity to meet with the coalition after the budget was tabled and indicate that the funding levels for residential care agencies had increased by 5 percent in this year's budget, which is what they were asking for and I think what we felt was certainly warranted. So they will have the ability through that funding issue to address some of the wage issues of their staff.

Also, there was an issue around employment standards and compliance with employment standards, and we have given them additional money to address those issues. It was around \$700,000, in addition to the 5 percent increase to agencies. So that should deal with the employment standards issue, plus it gives agencies an additional 5 percent, and in many instances, I think most of that will go directly to employees.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, according to my calculations, a 5 percent increase on an average wage of \$6.75 an hour is 33 cents an hour which would bring them up to an average of, well, no, I do not have the total, but the 5 percent would work out to 33 cents an hour. Some of the figures that I saw in the correspondence and in phone conversations suggested that they would like to bring the wages up to the area of \$10 an hour, and we know that there is a big discrepancy between people working in large institutions like the Manitoba Development Centre and other institutions and people working in group homes.

Does the minister plan to go to Treasury Board and cabinet for future wage increases for these group home staff?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I and our government, I think, recognize and realize that sometimes it is very difficult to recruit or retain individuals in this area of service to people in Manitoba who need support. I do want to indicate that I am sensitive to the issues. I think it is a step of good faith in working with these agencies, and we will continue to see what we can do. I cannot make any commitment today. We do not do multiyear budgeting, but I do want to indicate that we have made a significant effort to get the 5 percent this year, and as we look at what resources might be available next year, we will see what we might be able to do to further address the issue.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I think the minister said that the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers was hoping for a 5 percent increase in wages, but in correspondence addressed to members of the Legislature, on February 26, 1998, they say: we trust our concerted effort to receive an increase in our funding by 15 percent has been heard and acted upon by legislators who are preparing the budget. So I think probably the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers is going to be disappointed with a 5 percent increase in wages.

* (1120)

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, as a matter of fact, I have received a very positive letter from them and good response at the meeting I had after the budget. What they had requested was a 15 percent increase over three years, and we have made the commitment. We could not make a commitment, and I could not make a commitment for three years, but we recognized the issues.

I mean, they had asked for 5, 5 and 5 over three years, and we were able to accommodate in this year's budget the 5 percent. Quite frankly, I have received very positive correspondence from many in the community that are very pleased with the effort and the increased support that is available this year.

Mr. Martindale: So is the minister committed or going to commit to fight for further increases for these group homes in at least the next two years?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think I indicated in an answer just a few moments ago that we understand the issues. We are sympathetic to recruitment and retainment of people working in this field. I cannot make a commitment today to additional increased resources in other years, but I do want to indicate that we are very sensitive to the issues that have been raised with us and will continue to work with the coalition and those who are working in the community to be as sensitive and do what we can in the future. I cannot make any commitment today.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I have some questions under Residential Licensing so maybe we can pass two or three lines here.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.3.(a) Regional Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$14,283,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,137,900—pass.

Item 9.3.(b) Adult Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,652,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$552,300—pass; (3) Financial Assistance and External Agencies \$73,325,000—pass.

Item 9.3.(c) Manitoba Developmental Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$22,869,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,056,800—pass.

Item 9.3.(d) Residential Care Licensing (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister will be aware, because I wrote to her on February 16, about a licensed home at 2886 Ness Avenue, and also because I talked to one of the staff in the department about problems in this home that I have numerous concerns, especially on behalf of the family of a former resident there. Very sadly, this resident wandered away from this facility twice and the second time was found by a taxi driver walking near the airport, wearing only a coat and slippers in minus 25 degree Celsius weather and ended up in the hospital with severe frostbite.

When I phoned and made some inquiries, I found out that this home had been inspected four or five times since June 1997 and that the licence is in a conditional status. I also discovered that there were numerous

problems at this licensed facility, such as a padlock on the kitchen door, not serving food at the correct time, problems with windows being open or open inappropriately, providing relief duty staff for days off, hiring relief staff to do rounds at night, electronic monitoring and numerous other complaints. In spite of that, the residence was not put on a conditional status until January 1997, or maybe I intended 1998, I am not sure, after one of their residents ended up in the hospital. I am wondering why, given the numerous complaints about this operator, action was not taken much, much sooner to put the operator on a conditional licence.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know the facility that my honourable friend mentions is a facility that houses mental health clients, which are not clients of the Department of Family Services, but nonetheless we have the licensing function and authority through our Residential Care Licensing branch.

So I do want to indicate, and I think I have corresponded with my honourable friend just on March 16 of this year with a response to this individual specific case. I know that staff both from my Residential Licensing branch and from the Department of Health under the Mental Health branch or division or whatever it is have worked together with this facility to ensure that corrective action around all of the concerns and the issues that were raised has been taken. It is my understanding that corrective action has been taken and that this facility remains licensed as a result.

Mr. Martindale: Does correction action mean that all of the outstanding complaints were dealt with to the satisfaction of the department so that the conditional licence was lifted as a result?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will continue to monitor them very closely, but, in fact, all of the conditions that were placed on them have been resolved.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to go back to the original situation then. I am pleased on behalf of the residents there and their families that all of the outstanding issues have been dealt with satisfactorily, but why was this individual not put on a conditional licence much, much sooner.

In my letter I said January '97, but the correct date was January 26, '98, according to the minister's letter to me. It seems to me that if the operator had been put on a conditional status much, much sooner or if the department had been much, much more vigilant that we would not have had one of the residents leaving the facility and wandering the streets in extremely cold weather.

This individual could very easily have been on a street where there was no one driving and died, and this would have been a terrible tragedy. The fact that they now have electronic alarm monitoring is closing the barn door after the horse is out. I mean, this electronic monitoring should have been put in before people were wandering away, not after. Why was this operator not put on a conditional licence much, much sooner?

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: We had identified issues with this operator, and I think that the process that the department uses is that they make contact and try to work with the facility and the owner to see whether corrective action can or will be undertaken. If that is not successful, then we move to the conditional licence, and a requirement of those conditions being taken off would be that they conform to all of the issues that have been raised. So our process is that rather than the conditional licence right up front, we try to work with the facility very closely to see whether they will conform before the need for a conditional licence takes place. So that is the process that we use.

Mr. Chairperson, my understanding is that when we identify problems or issues with individual facilities, in many, many instances just the discussion with them and the working with them resolves the issue without having to go to a conditional licence. But if we have more difficulty with the facility and we find that they are not moving forward in a satisfactory manner, then we do give them a conditional licence and work very aggressively to make sure that they comply or lose their licence.

* (1130)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister has given me a very fine general answer about what is supposed to be the normal process in the licensing

branch, but my specific question was why, given all the problems with this particular licensed facility and its operator, the operator was not put on a conditional status much, much sooner.

For example, the individual that we are talking about had wandered away on a previous occasion, and many of these issues were outstanding not in January 1998, when the operator was put on a conditional status, but months before. It seems to me that if the department or if the licensing branch were to put somebody on a conditional status, it sends then a message that if they do not clean up their act, they are going to lose their licence and therefore lose their source of income.

An Honourable Member: Oh, that is tough talk.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the minister of something here wants to make fun of a very sad situation, the Minister of I, T and T, where someone wandered away from a licensed facility and could have died.

Point of Order

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): If the member wants to reflect what I said, he should do it properly, not improperly. I just said it was tough talk, Mr. Chairman, which was accurate.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable member for Burrows, to please continue.

Mr. Martindale: I think the Keisman family will find these remarks of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism very interesting when I send them Hansard. We are talking about a serious situation here where someone could have died. I guess I will repeat my question to the minister. Why were they not put on a conditional status much sooner, which would have sent the very serious message to this operator that the operator needed to comply immediately and not drag their feet any longer?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that we would prefer, and I do not think this is new practice just with our government, but I think in many instances we would prefer to work with operators of facilities in a co-operative way to try to get them to conform to licensing standards rather than walking in with a heavy hand shutting down a facility and turfing people out on the street with nowhere to go. I think that is the right direction to take, and we do not issue conditional licences without thinking through and trying to work through the issues with the operator. As I said in many, many instances, we find that operators will comply without the need for a conditional licence, but we have from time to time had to close facilities down because there has not been co-operation from the facility operator.

I do want to indicate that the issues that we had with this particular facility were not issues only around the individual that my honourable friend references. We had some issues with other things in that facility that we were working with them on, but there is not a requirement on behalf of facilities to have an electronic monitoring system. That is not a requirement of licensing, and we were already working with the facility when this unfortunate incident happened with this individual. I can assure my honourable friend that the facility now with the electronic monitoring device should never have this problem occur again.

So there has been co-operation and there has been working—and I feel very badly for Mr. Keisman's family and the circumstance that happened. I do want to indicate that corrective action has been taken in that respect, and the electronic alarm system should alleviate that 100 percent. So this facility has gone beyond what is required under licensing, and that is a result of very significant close working with them to get them to comply. They have gone over and above what they needed to do to comply with licensing, and, I think, as a result, we have a safer facility but we have not stopped monitoring. We will be working and monitoring them very closely over the next period of time.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me how many licensed facilities like this there are that her department licenses?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There are 840 licensed facilities that my department licenses, but they are licences for the mentally disabled, for mental health clients, for the aged and infirm, for child and family services. There are 32 mental health facilities, out of that 840 that are of this size, the one that we are referencing.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me, out of the 840 that are licensed by this branch, how many currently are on a conditional licence?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we would have to check that and get back to my honourable friend.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 9.3.(d) Residential Care Licensing (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$235,400—pass; 3(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$35,000—pass.

Item 9.3.(e) Office of the Vulnerable Persons' Commissioner (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$234,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$248,300—pass.

Resolution 9.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$118,630,600 for Family Services, Community Living, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Item 9.4. Child and Family Services (a) Child and Family Support (1) Child, Family and Community Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,899,800. Shall the item pass?

* (1140)

Mrs. Mitchelson: May I introduce staff first?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The minister will introduce her staff, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just wanted to introduce staff. I just have to get the real official titles for the introductions. We have David Langtry who is the ADM of Child and Family Services; Phil Goodman who is the executive director, Child and Family Support; and Fred Besant who is the divisional senior manager, Financial Planning and Review.

Mr. Martindale: I notice that in the Estimates book, under Activity Identification, staff are responsible for budgeting. I am sure that is a major function of these people at the table, at least some of them. We know that the budget of Winnipeg Child and Family Services had to be augmented through a special warrant of \$8.8 million, which I have raised before.

Now, on the positive side, we do not want to be limited by a finite budget amount and say when the budget runs out in February or March or whenever, that the agency shuts down and there is no more service. So, you know, it is appropriate that the minister went to cabinet and got a special warrant so the agency can continue to provide service.

But my questions have to do with the adequacy of the budget-planning process for especially Winnipeg Child and Family Services. I know and the minister knows that the Auditor has commented on this in the past and so has the Children's Advocate, I believe. I am wondering why this continues to be a problem year after year where either there has to be a special warrant or there is a deficit, and the department has to bail them out, I guess, in the next fiscal year. I wonder if the minister can tell me what the problem is with budgeting in this area.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know it has been an ongoing issue, one that has been going on for years and years. Ultimately, I think I want to leave on the record the fact that we have never denied the support to the Winnipeg agency, and, in fact, although it has been supplementary funding or special warrant or whatever, if there is a deficit, we have always covered that deficit. So I want it to be clear that we have never denied the support for children when the need has been there.

But it has been an issue that has been raised on an ongoing basis in many different reports. I know the Auditor has commented. I know that the Operational Review of Winnipeg Child and Family did indicate that as an issue, that we always seem to be deficit financing rather than providing what was required.

We have talked to the agency about it, to the board, many times. I think you will find that we have addressed that issue this year in the budget for the first time, that we actually are funding the Winnipeg agency

this year based on what they say their requirements are going to be. In the past, we have never sort of given them that full amount, but this is the first time ever that we have increased the budget to the dollar amount that Winnipeg believes they are going to need to provide service. So we will see what happens at the end of the year. Hopefully, we have addressed the issues that have been raised over the years by different reports and different authorities.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I am sorry, I do not have the list of grants to external agencies because I think I loaned it to my colleague, but does that mean that if we compared the budget for Winnipeg Child and Family Services for '97-98 with '98-99, we would see a big increase, and if so, how much?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We budgeted last year for \$57,843,000, and budgeted this year for \$63,336,000, including Family Support Innovations Fund and exceptional circumstances funding. I guess that would not be in the grant list. Well, you do not have the grant listing in front of you anyway, but that is okay.

Mr. Martindale: So last year they were budgeted for \$57,843,000, I think the minister said, plus they got a special warrant of \$8.8 million. This year their budget is \$63 million. But the minister is saying that that was what they asked for.

Mrs. Mitchelson: As a result of the operational review, Mr. Chairperson, we have been working with the Winnipeg agency to find out what the actual amount of expenditure should be. This is what they have asked for. This is what they believe they are going to need to spend this year.

Mr. Martindale: Since the total for last year, including the special warrant, would be approximately \$66,643,000, if my calculations are correct, and this year they are asking for \$63,336,000, the agency must believe they can get by on \$3 million less. If so, could the minister tell me why?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, we have worked with the agency as a result of the operational review on a lot of the recommendations that came forward. With the leadership now at the head of Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency being new there, going through

a strategic planning process, they have already estimated that, as a result of some initiatives that have been undertaken already, they believe that they can save a million dollars from hotel placements, close to a million dollars that was being spent on placing children in hotels. They believe there are more appropriate placement options available, and it will be at a cost saving. That is one area where they believe there can be significant changes.

They are looking at, certainly, administrative functions that might be overlapped or duplicated. They have never really amalgamated the four areas in a significant way in the city of Winnipeg with the changes. As they move to centralize program functions within the agency, they believe that they can save well over a million dollars. So those are the kinds of things that they are looking at.

As I said, they are going through a strategic planning process right now on whether there are better ways to deliver services, whether there is a way to decrease the number of children that have to come into care. We all know that we have a very high number of children coming into care in Manitoba, as compared to a lot of other provinces, so they are looking at better ways to deliver service to children and families.

* (1150)

We know that we are working with them on the family group conferencing model that we have put in place to try to work with families and extended families and neighbourhoods, where there is not a protection issue, to keep children out of care. So there are all kinds of new activities that are ongoing that Winnipeg Child and Family is partnering with us and the community on to see if we cannot find better solutions. So I think all of us would like ultimately to see families healthier, families staying together wherever possible. I think a lot of the new initiatives that we have undertaken in the early child development, some strategies around adolescent pregnancy that will, hopefully, lead to fewer adolescent pregnancies, but also less need for the child welfare system for those children who are born to young single mothers that seem to require the services of our child welfare system at six times greater degree than other families.

So there is activity ongoing. We recognize and realize there is a long way to go and lots to do. We are working at it, and they are too.

Mr. Martindale: The minister says that the agency has identified \$2-million worth of savings—a million in hotels and a million from amalgamation—and that leaves \$1,307,000. Where is the other million and a third savings coming from?

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that they have gone through their budget line by line and identified areas where there may be nonrecurring costs. There are some \$600,000 in legal fees and other nonrecurring costs that they believe can be taken right out of their budget. They are consolidating their after-hours service so they will have a more efficient and effective service. There are some savings there, so they have gone line by line, and they have identified larger amounts or smaller amounts in each line. It does add up to some over \$3 million.

Mr. Martindale: The minister is hinting at further amalgamation. Are there plans to amalgamate offices or to rent offices that are in one location instead of a number of locations? What plans are in the works?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I indicated earlier, they are right in the middle of a strategic planning process. So I would hate to try to predetermine what the agency might decide to do. I think the main focus and objective of the planning process is to try to ensure that families are served in the most comprehensive way and the best way possible in our city. They will be looking at ways to do that. I think that their ultimate end goal is to try to ensure that the resource is available, that families and children get the best service possible. So I am anticipating that the process they are going through right now will lead to a better child welfare service delivery in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Martindale: The minister cannot say on the record that they are going to save \$1 million in amalgamation and then, when I ask a subsequent question, say that they are in the middle of their strategic planning. Either they are saving \$1 million from amalgamation or they are not. If they are saving \$1 million from amalgamation, I would be interested in

knowing how, in what ways are they planning to save that amount of money from amalgamation.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The agency, in working with us through the operational review, has indicated that—I said there was \$1 million in savings on hotel rooms, because they will have better placement plans for children. That was one place. We did talk about administrative efficiencies. I indicated they went line by line through their budget and looked at where there might be efficiencies. They are going through a strategic planning process. I guess, I do not profess to be an expert in sort of the hands-on delivery of child welfare in the province of Manitoba or in the city of Winnipeg. I do not want to predetermine what those in the field, working in the field, will come up with through that strategic planning process.

At the administrative level in the agency, they have indicated as they have gone through their budget line by line that there are some efficiencies that can be found. There are some nonrecurring costs that they do not need to book in their budget or put in their budget, and they are removing those things. I think they are taking a very responsible approach, and I want to give the agency and the front line workers the benefit of the doubt through the strategic planning process, as they move to trying to ensure that they be the very best that they can be and serve the families and children in Winnipeg, the very best that they can, within the budget that they believe they need to achieve that.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

They have come up with these figures and these numbers. They are going through the process right now to try to ensure that they can deliver not only upon the budget that is approved but upon the service to the families and children that they serve. So I am not giving them any clear direction on what that should be. They are the experts. They are the people who are doing the job on our behalf in Manitoba or in the city of Winnipeg, and I want to give them the ability under new leadership to develop that plan and to look at new ways of—God knows, I mean, we have been putting more and more money into the system year after year after year, millions and millions of dollars more, and are we seeing a healthier society today? I am not sure. I do not know whether families are any healthier.

We are putting more money into early intervention. We are putting more money into programs to try to ensure that people do not need to access the child welfare system, but I want to give them the benefit of the doubt to look at the direction they are taking, to look at innovative ways of delivering service. I guess, we will have to judge them based on their desire. I know that everyone who is out there working in the system wants to see healthier families. They want to ensure that they can protect children when there is a need to protect them.

But obviously in Manitoba we are not doing everything right or we should be seeing fewer children coming into care and healthier families. I am not sure we are seeing that yet. That is one of the reasons why I said earlier, under our reinvestment through the National Child Benefit, that we focused on early intervention. All indication and all research show that there is less need for the kinds of services that we provide throughout the child welfare system if we can create healthier families, healthier children born to parents who have the tools to parent.

It is frustrating. Being the Minister of Family Services is not the easiest job in the whole world. I would love to see healthy, happy families in every corner of our province, in every part of our city. The reality is that it is not there. We have to continue to look for ways to do things better and to serve families better.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me how many children on average are in hotels in the month of March or April 1998?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we would have to get the exact figures, but I am told that it is probably an average of about 15 per night in comparison to last year, when there might have been a high of 84, so there has been significant improvement in our ability to place in other than hotels.

Mr. Martindale: I think, going from memory, the numbers were about 42 per night on average in February '97. It is down. But how many are in four-bed units?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We can obtain that information from the agency. We do not have it.

Mr. Martindale: How many are in other kinds of temporary placements?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will undertake to get that information also.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 12 noon, I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of Routine Proceedings.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs. Does the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs have an opening statement?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs): I do.

Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to present the 1998-99 Estimates of Manitoba Northern Affairs. We have had a year of change and progress and expect to tackle some important challenges in our efforts to fulfill the department's vision. I am guided by and see—and guide our actions along this vision statement which is to improve the quality of life of northern and aboriginal Manitobans to a level consistent with that of all Manitobans. Our priorities, which like our vision transcend the limits of fiscal years, are to do things differently than we have in the past. The priorities are closely linked to basic facts about the North.

Northern and aboriginal Manitobans rank among our most disadvantaged citizens with respect to quality of life and participation in Manitoba society. We cannot truly enjoy a high quality of life until all our citizens participate fully in society. Our efforts to secure this status for the North must be supported by skilled human resources, long-term viability of essential social programs and services and investments in infrastructure and community development and innovation. Exercising control over local governments is a crucial part of the process of having community leaders take

responsibility for the health of their communities. Accordingly, in the next three years we will assist up to 29 Northern Affairs communities to become more self-reliant and take charge of their own local futures to a greater extent. The communities will be given the control and decision-making responsibility for their own administration and the resources they need to be self-reliant.

* (1010)

My department conducted an extensive study of the future requirements to maintain the current infrastructure and to continue to operate the present level of municipal services in northern communities. As part of this process, we examined the municipal systems of four other provinces, federal Indian Affairs and Manitoba municipalities. Our priorities for implementing self-reliance to a greater extent are to ensure that responsibility and control is placed at the local level and at the same time that communities will have the capacity to provide sustainable municipal services in the future. Our guiding principles are intended to be simple and understandable. In the next few months, we will be shaping the way we will work with the communities in this Sustainable Communities initiative. We will be determining what expertise we will need to obtain and proceed to meet these requirements as soon as possible.

Mr. Chair, I have met with mayors and councillors of a number of individual remote communities. In addition, I met last summer and just before Christmas with northern mayors and councils in a body in a workshop kind of format. I believe, and said, that governance is not just about municipal infrastructure, the equipment for municipal services, but also, and especially, is about personal development and education and involves many different disciplines in the process of moving towards a healthy, vibrant community. It is about social conditions in communities, the health of the citizens, the education of the children, recreation and other human things that produce and sustain a community's quality of life. It is also about taking charge of the machinery and responsibility for administering communities. It is about ownership of and responsibility and accountability for decisions that are made and processes that are established.

We have identified eight communities. The eight communities involved in the initiative in the first fiscal year are Bissett, Camperville, Cormorant, Island Lake, Pikwitonei, Pine Dock, Wabowden and Waterhen. Through higher Treasury Board allocations, we are increasing overall municipal grants by \$500,000. The funding will be sufficient to ensure the sustainability of municipal services for the following areas: competitive salaries to attract or retain qualified staff, capability for staff development to meet ever-changing technology, adequate funding to ensure environmental health and safety standards are met, and flexibility to meet unexpected expenditures and emergencies such as water main breaks. Councils will assume a shared responsibility for the costs of services. They will develop and monitor accountability and performance standards.

In the past year, Mr. Chair, my staff have worked to prepare the communities for autonomy. They provided support to train community employees. As examples, 27 persons qualified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first-aid. More than 200 hours of one-on-one training was given to community clerks to improve job knowledge and skills. A community constable was given a week of special training. Several water and waste plant operators attended a special seminar to upgrade their knowledge and skills and attain provincial standards in their fields.

Mr. Chair, 90 percent of the capital projects approved for last year were executed directly by the effect of communities with some help from the department. This represents a major achievement in communities taking on capital responsibility. In addition, 95 percent of them are already participating in long-term planning which will provide the basis for them developing their own business plans in the coming years.

In the past, the department monitored the administration, finances and staff of the northern communities, but my intent is that the traditional historical role of the department, and specifically the Local Government Development Division, will shift. As the community grows, the division will become more the adviser, facilitator, motivator and liaison with all provincial government departments and other governments and organizations and less the hands-on doer. This is a natural process of vision, evolution and

change, and through it I believe we in our northern communities can accomplish great things together.

In addition, a co-ordinated effort and commitment from other government departments and agencies will help give communities the ability to determine priorities and develop economic initiatives and strategies for community development. My department will work with northern residents, communities and other stakeholders to build a strategic approach to northern development through individual community development and partnerships. This approach is intended to work in conjunction with the sustainable community initiative.

In support of this goal, Northern Affairs and Rural Development will host a special northern community development workshop on April 30 and May 1 at the 1998 Rural Forum in Brandon. The seminars at the workshop comprised presentations and discussions on northern challenges and opportunities. They also focused on potential strategies and process that may provide for community input in northern development decision making and priority setting. It was quite interesting, Mr. Chair, that there was very significant representation from the Northwest Territories, and in particular the emerging territory of Nunavut, both youth and political leadership and community leadership.

Mr. Chair, I believe one of the most important things we can achieve together is the building of social capital for the future. We need to ensure a healthy sustainable future for all our communities—northern, rural and urban—in economic and social terms. Our government has decided to develop policies and programs that focus on building social capital in communities and has adopted a set of guiding principles for such initiatives. I would like to outline them.

An initiative must have a community-driven focus and be designed to put the community in the driver's seat; in other words, the service or program must be driven by the community it serves and meet needs as outlined by the community. The service, program or initiative must have sustainable outcomes. It must enhance the ability of the group or community to function independently and ensure that this state of affairs can continue in the future. The government's role in this matter must be that of facilitator or resource

provider. We can support an initiative, and we can help bring potential partners together and help put together a service, program or solution to a challenge, but we should not be and will not be the one solely responsible in financial or operational terms.

The primary focus of the initiative will be on individual and community development, which I will call the fundamental solution. The secondary focus is on specific issues relating to the initiative.

Programs and policies must incorporate a holistic strategy; they must have economic, social and spiritual elements. The community must be invited to participate in policy development at the beginning of the initiative in order to be a true partner.

Services must be inclusive, accessible, effective, comprehensive, responsive, and accountable to children, families and communities.

The focus of a service, program and initiative is to be prevention and early intervention. If we can act to prevent a problem or tackle it at an early stage, we can reduce the costs of that problem to society in general and the community in particular and devote resources and efforts more productively.

* (1020)

Finally, all possible areas of partnership should be explored. This means aboriginal communities and organizations, departments and agencies of the provincial and federal governments, other levels of government, the business community and other parts of the private sector.

I want to note some pertinent comments Royal Bank Executive Vice-President Charlie Coffee at the recent Metis National Council symposium in Winnipeg. He said there is much to gain from building relationships between aboriginal peoples, governments and the corporate sector. To this he added that we need to find new ways to forge partnerships among the leaders in our community to achieve shared goals and tangible, measurable results.

I would now like to turn to specific policies and programs in my department and other departments that

focus on building social capital and forging partnerships to achieve results.

Partners for Careers is one example of an attempt to develop a partnership with the corporate sector. It is a partnership of the Native Affairs Secretariat, Education and Training, and Human Resources Development Canada. It has placed over 325 aboriginal graduates in careers in its first year and expects to increase this number in the coming year, while strengthening partnerships between the business community and the aboriginal community. The program is operated by two aboriginal organizations: the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. Partners for Careers is a significant achievement, something we hope to build on this year.

Mr. Chair, I would like to share some quotes taken from evaluation interviews with a grad placement and a business where a grad was placed. First from a placement: We must get the message to students that there are so many opportunities out there. Partners for Careers helps students realize they can benefit from opportunities and resources. It feels good to go into a business and see an aboriginal person working there. Having aboriginal people provide service is very positive for businesses. It also helps to broaden awareness in the larger community by having aboriginal workers in the workplace.

And from a business: We recruit on an ongoing basis and are always looking for quality candidates. Partners for Careers provide good-quality resumes. They respond quickly.

The Aboriginal Single Window Initiative in Winnipeg is a partnership between Manitoba and the federal government to provide more co-ordination of programs and services to aboriginal peoples. The Native Affairs Secretariat co-ordinates the provincial input for this initiative.

Since it began last year, Aboriginal Single Window has produced a number of partnership initiatives. Here are two examples: a \$5-million program for training aboriginal people living in Winnipeg; and working with Children of the Earth High School to sponsor the development of a book on aboriginal health issues from

an urban perspective, *Healthy Visions for a Healthier Future*, which was launched April 9, 1998, and I commend this book to all of you. It is written by Richard Courchene, and it is what I call the first baby born to the Single Window Initiative that has a real tangible aspect and has been developed by a member of the younger generation and is designed to make a contribution to other young people particularly. It is based on elders and cultural teachings.

Mochikitahwak offers sport and recreation programs and leadership training in remote northern communities over the summer months when children are out of school. Over 1,150 young people participated in last summer's program, and we expect that a similar number will benefit again this summer. The program is supported by the Justice Initiatives Fund, as it has a significant crime prevention benefit for the communities.

In the matter of aboriginal gaming, we have negotiated to establish 29 gaming commissions, representing 31 First Nations. We have also entered into video lottery terminal siteholder agreements with 15 First Nations, involving a total of 331 VLTs on reserves. These VLTs are generating annual net revenues of over \$12 million for the participating communities.

In partnership with Industry, Trade and Tourism, Northern Affairs will support a SEED Winnipeg project designed to combat poverty and assist in the renewal of inner-city communities through services that help low-income groups and individuals become financially self-supporting. A major focus will be in assisting aboriginal individuals and groups in developing businesses.

My department works closely with the Children and Youth Secretariat in developing policy and programs or initiatives that will assist aboriginal children and youths. I am pleased that my department has seconded an aboriginal employee to the secretariat. Margo Thomas of our Selkirk office will assist in advancing programs and initiatives that are culturally appropriate for northern Manitoba and aboriginal people.

The department has assisted the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy in the development of the urban aboriginal strategy. This will be a

guide to government for policy and programs related to inner-city Winnipeg and for all other individuals, families, agencies, and other governments who relate in any way to the aboriginal people in the urban area of Winnipeg.

Our government has pledged financial support to the Manitoba Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Council in their bid to bring the North American Indigenous Games to Winnipeg in the year 2001 or 2002. The site selection committee is expected to make a decision this summer and will be visiting the city the weekend after next, I believe, with a view to doing due diligence with respect to the Winnipeg bid.

Manitoba continues to support the Winnipeg Native Alliance outreach program to help aboriginal youth to avoid gangs and seek more positive lifestyles. The founder of this initiative, Troy Rupert, received an award in 1997 for his efforts in assisting aboriginal youth in Winnipeg.

Manitoba experiences the second highest rate of missing children in Canada as well as the highest runaway rate per capita in Canada. A large proportion of these children are aboriginal. We are assisting the Ganawenimig, which means taking care, Safety and Prevention Program of Child Find Manitoba. This is a multifaceted program of preventive measures, education, advocacy, searching and reuniting children, where appropriate, with family, social and psychological supports.

My department hosted a three-day community recreation assessment and planning workshop involving staff and partnering the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and 16 community leaders and recreation directors. The workshop provided important direction and recommendations upon which we can continue to improve this essential community-based program.

Benchmarks and key indicators is a department-led initiative to develop a system of macro level benchmarks and key indicators in partnership with provincial, federal, and civic government departments which reflect our collective progress in Manitoba toward a better quality of life for aboriginal Manitobans.

The Employment First initiative is helping to improve opportunities for persons to becoming employed and to reducing welfare costs. The program helps employment and income assistance clients find opportunities to work and achieve their potential. Through partnerships with Family Services and community councils, we use social benefits to help clients develop job skills, gain work experience, and contribute to their community. As a result of the programs, 74 recipients have found work with community councils, four have found permanent jobs, and 12 have left social assistance.

We have three tables or forums for tripartite negotiations. The Native Affairs Secretariat leads in those negotiations that involve the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg for the city, and Sioux Valley, in a community-based self-government process. The federal government is represented at the MMF and ACW tables by the Privy Council office and in Sioux Valley by Indian Affairs.

Mr. Chair, the tripartite process with the MMF and the federal government deals with a wide range of issues of concern and priorities identified by the Metis people in Manitoba. They include economic development, education and training, housing, children and youth, family services, health, justice and natural resources. The goal of this process is consistent with the provincial policies of enhancing sustainability and building capacity in social capital.

We are also proud to participate with the MMF in establishing the Louis Riel Institute. This is a unique institution that emerged from the tripartite process. It was incorporated by provincial legislation, and its authority includes advocacy, education and training. The tripartite process with the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the federal government is a new initiative which began in 1997-98. This forum will address issues identified as priorities by the aboriginal people of Winnipeg in consultations conducted by the ACW and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. These are employment training and economic development, children and youth, health and wellness, and justice. The objective is to develop practical, effective solutions to the priority needs of the urban aboriginal community. Some aboriginal institutions have already been developed and are providing unique and innovative services for their

clients in Winnipeg. Examples are the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, Aboriginal Legal Services of Winnipeg and the Aboriginal Business Centre. In 1998-99, one of the priorities is to develop a proposal for a multipurpose youth centre in the Winnipeg core area.

* (1030)

The Sioux Valley process involves Manitoba and Indian Affairs with the Sioux Valley First Nation in community-based self-government negotiations. Manitoba is guided in this process by the Manitoba policy on First Nations government. The objective is to achieve a self-governing community through federal enabling legislation which would replace the Indian Act.

Mr. Chair, as members know, we made important progress in the past year in treaty land entitlement and Northern Flood Agreement negotiations. In TLE, we have taken a proactive approach toward resolving outstanding entitlements and related Manitoba obligations under the 1929-1930 Manitoba Natural Resources Transfer Agreement. All 26 bands in Manitoba with validated outstanding claims have now entered into agreements with Manitoba and the federal government to address their claims. Since 1994, seven bands have signed individual TLE agreements. Last May 29, Canada, Manitoba, and the Treaty Land Entitlement Committee of Manitoba, which represents 19 bands, signed a TLE Framework Agreement in Opaskwayak. These bands are now in the process of ratifying this agreement.

Six bands have ratified the agreement to date. Of these, Rolling River, led by Chief Dennis Whitebird, and Buffalo Point, led by Chief John Thunder, signed individual treaty entitlement agreements under the framework agreement, March 1998. The other four bands are expected to sign similar agreements in the near future. The implementation of the framework agreement will see up to 1.1 million acres of land transferred to Canada by Manitoba to be set aside as reserve land.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I can ask the minister how long he is going to be in his opening statement, because he has been at it

for over half an hour now, and our intention was that we were going to try and finish this department by the end of the workday. So I do not mean to be disrespectful. Just maybe we could hurry it up a little bit.

Mr. Chairperson: We have gone on for 20 minutes.

Mr. Newman: I will be another five minutes maximum.

The implementation of the framework agreement will see up to—this amount represents less than 1 percent of Manitoba's land base. In addition, up to \$76 million will be provided by Canada as a cash component of the settlement. It is expected that this agreement will provide TLE bands with an opportunity to become more self-reliant and will increase their capacity to establish partnerships with other bands, communities, companies and other Manitobans. These settlements are expected to facilitate increased and improved economic and social development with a view to building healthy and sustainable communities. The settlement of these outstanding land issues will also result in increased opportunities for businesses and companies, especially those in the mining and forestry sectors, by creating an improved environment of certainty in land tenure in Manitoba.

Under the Northern Flood Agreement, Mr. Chair, four comprehensive settlements relating to outstanding claims have been completed to date. The signatory bands are Nelson House, Norway House, Split Lake and York Factory. The agreements are in the implementation stage with settlement proceeds flowing to the bands. The total settlement proceeds related to the agreements are approximately \$220 million, of which about \$125 million will be maintained in band trusts to fund NFA implementation from investment income. The funds are spent on community-approved initiatives such as infrastructure, social, cultural and economic development programs. These agreements will put the capacity to be healthy communities in the hands of the four NFA bands by giving control of the settlement funds directly to the people.

The compensation land given to the bands totals about 160,000 acres which will be transferred to reserve, adding to the band's land base. In addition,

4,800 acres in fee-simple land is being selected by the bands to be held by land corporations established under the agreements. Several institutions and boards have been created as a result of the implementation work of the various bands. These include development corporations and resource co-management boards. Three resource co-management boards have been created as part of these settlements and the fourth is in the process of appointing representatives. These boards are joint efforts between the bands and the province to develop and recommend land use and resource management plans for the specific resource management areas established under each of the agreements.

Manitoba is working towards resolving its NFA obligations to Cross Lake as we have done with the other four First Nations. In a March 16, 1998, letter to Manitoba Hydro, Cross Lake indicated that they were engaged in further community discussion, consultation and strategic development and felt it would not be productive to meet. Mr. Chair, I have communicated to Cross Lake that I am prepared to wait for the results of this process and review any reasonable proposal that may result from the community review.

At this time, we are waiting to learn from the First Nation their views and ideas for NFA implementation pursuant to the 1977 agreement. We are also working to resolve longstanding issues with Fox Lake First Nation, including land and hydro development impacts. We have entered into discussions with the band regarding these issues and propose that a framework for negotiations be developed so that the parties can understand what has been discussed to date and what still has to be covered.

Mr. Chair, I would like to express a personal point or two about the future. Bringing northern residents and aboriginal peoples into the mainstream of our economic, political, policy making and social processes is a challenge. I welcome it personally, and as a Manitoba minister know that it is consistent with our history as the bridge between peoples, geographic sections and ideas in Canada. This, we should remember, is a function we inherited from the Metis people.

I intend to build on the roles I have assumed and apply my own style to the tasks I have taken on: things

like meeting, talking with and working with northern aboriginal leaders with a value-driven vision and those who want to move forward; developing and maintaining effective working relationships with federal ministers; working with organizations, communities, other departments and other governments to break down or bypass barriers to achieve realistic solutions to current challenges; facilitating relationships and partnerships with the business community; developing and expressing a vision of where we are going and where we should be going and where our partners want to go; facilitating the unleashing of the enormous unrealized potential in northern and aboriginal communities, especially in aboriginal youth that could be used to build sustainable communities for future generations.

Mr. Chair, the programs and process I have outlined will lead to sustainable community development in an integrated holistic way. We are confident that enabling the citizens of these communities to take an active role in meeting the economic, social—including health, education and employment—and environmental needs will improve the future for their children in northern Manitoba.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my new deputy minister, Oliver Boulette, and his staff for their dedicated work in the past year as we prepared and embarked on processes that will produce great changes in northern Manitoba. They have helped me to communicate my points of view to northern residents and to learn the views and life experiences of the North and aboriginal peoples. I look forward to building on the work we have accomplished and strengthening the initiatives now in progress.

I would also like to recognize the excellent work done by Harvey Bostrom and his team at the Native Affairs Secretariat and Jeff Polakoff in agreements and administration who has now become the Assistant Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs replacing Oliver Boulette, who has been promoted to deputy minister of both Energy and Mines and Northern Affairs and responsible for Native Affairs. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Northern Affairs for those comments. Does the official

opposition critic, the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), have an opening statement?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I do not really have a text that I can read from as far as making an opening statement goes. Well, first of all, I wanted to also thank the minister for his rather lengthy opening statement. I would also extend congratulations to Oliver for having been appointed deputy minister. Oliver and I went to the same school in Cranberry, and I am not going to say too much about how he behaved in school other than to say that he was a good student, I think, Oliver? And Harvey, I have known Harvey from even before I came here eight years ago. I also thank him for his dedication to his work at Northern Affairs and also congratulate Jeff for having been promoted to the ADM level.

I just wanted to say, Mr. Chair, that Oliver probably remembers some eight years ago, when I first sat here in 1991 and I am going through my first Estimates, it was a new process for me at the time, but I was very interested in listening to goals and objectives, statements and mission statements, and how things were going to be achieved and so on. Certainly the planning documents were there, the mission statements were there and so forth.

Of course, I am not entirely immune to that kind of process, having done it myself at the band level, at OCN, when I was chief, making long-term plans and medium and short term and having to develop our own mission statements and goals and objectives and so forth. So I was at the time impressed with all these varying good statements that were put on record by the then Minister of Northern Affairs Mr. Downey. I thought maybe I was a little bit naive too at the time, but I thought this kind of stuff that I see here will be good for aboriginal people, particularly those who reside in the North.

Mr. Chair, like I give credit where credit is due. I give credit to the government for having entered into partnership programs with aboriginal people and other levels of government within the city of Winnipeg, because everyone knows that that has been long overdue. So I give where credit is due; I am not afraid to do that.

* (1040)

I would also bring to the minister's attention again the statements that I have read in this year's budget documents. I have even listened to him again this morning, lots of nice words, working to bring aboriginal people into the mainstream, value driven, except I had listened to those words, and I had read those words in the spring of '91 when I first had to sit through this process.

In a little while we will be going through the budget, but I was going through some historical information and preparing for this process here this morning. For me, if we were really going to tackle the problems that face our people up North, particularly those who are Metis in the community councils, I have always said to the people that the community councils of the Metis people have been the ones who have kind of been left on the sidelines while First Nations might have been making a lot of progress in their development.

So I have always viewed the Department of Northern Affairs as being a critical department hoping that it will, for example, increase in budget, maybe broaden its scope of responsibility, perhaps decentralize more and more responsibility to the communities—and I will get into that a little later on. But let me just say that I want to co-operate with the minister as he goes about in his job as Minister of Northern Affairs. I would also like to say that just because I am willing to co-operate with him does not mean that I have to keep quiet like a nice little boy and be afraid to upset him, because as I see it—let me put it this way, I see myself as not just a member of the Legislative Assembly representing a riding which happens to be largely aboriginal. I see myself as a representative of my people here in this Legislature, the aboriginal people, First Nations and Metis people, because we all consider ourselves as being one. So whenever I discuss issues from time to time, yes, I will disagree with a minister because there are issues, I think, that have been outstanding for a long time and they need to be resolved.

The last thing that I want to say, Mr. Chair, is I do not know if you were here last year in Estimates, but I had asked then that the format that I am more comfortable in following is just to go through general questions, and then at the end go through the budget line by line. So I would ask the minister again this year to see if he would allow us to do that so we can get into general

questioning right away. I would like to give my colleague a little bit of time to make his comments. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic of the official opposition for those remarks.

Mr. Newman: Thank you for those remarks. I was here last year, and we agreed on that approach last year. I certainly am prepared to agree again this year. I think that is a very useful approach to follow.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? [agreed] Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line.

Before we do that, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce his staff present.

Mr. Newman: I would like to introduce my deputy minister, Oliver Boulette; Assistant Deputy Minister Jeff Polakoff; director of Native Affairs Secretariat, Harvey Bostrom; and Lorraine Macauley who is budget administration out of the northern office.

Mr. Lathlin: I think where I would like to start this morning is with Manitoba Hydro. I know the minister referenced the Cross Lake chief and council, but I would like to ask him to maybe give us just a little more information as to what the status is between Cross Lake, Manitoba and the issue of Northern Flood Agreements.

Mr. Newman: The status is that the Cross Lake band, through its leadership, has not yet come forward with a proposal pursuant to the consultation process they identified in their March 16, 1998, letter, but they have initiated or participated in a discussion as recently as yesterday through their vice-chief and councillors and several elders. Involved in that discussion were the chairman of the board of Hydro, the president of Hydro and myself.

* (1050)

Mr. Lathlin: Perhaps I do not really have too many questions on the Northern Flood issue, but I would just like to maybe ask the minister—I asked the question once in the House when I was querying him on, I believe negotiating in good faith was the subject. I had asked him a question something to the effect that if he was negotiating in good faith, how come, for example, the issue of the all-weather road, the bridge, had been appealed I think for the third time now. I know I asked this question of the previous Minister of Northern Affairs, Mr. Praznik, in one of our meetings. As a matter of fact, I think my colleague from Rupertsland was here at the time when, right in the middle of our discussions one of his senior staff came in with a piece of paper, gave it to the Minister of Northern Affairs, after which the minister happily made the announcement that it appears now we are on our way to getting an agreement. What we will have to do now is ask our people to get their heads together and iron out an agreement, which I was led to believe, rather than having to resort to going back to the arbitrator or appealing the arbitrator's decision. So we left it.

I felt confident that the issue was going to be resolved for all—the minister at the time was quite jubilant here when he made the announcement—only to find out later on that, instead of being negotiated, it had gone to the appeal stage again. So my question this morning would be, and I know he has answered this in the House once before, but it is a little different, I think, answering questions in the House, but today I would like to ask him: What is the real issue there in terms of not agreeing with the arbitrator and having to appeal it time and time again? As I said to the previous minister, are we going to appeal this till the end of time, or is there ever going to be a point where a decision will be made as far as that bridge goes?

Mr. Newman: I am glad that you have brought this into this forum because it allows the opportunity for more discussion than Question Period does in the Assembly because of the constraints of time there.

Let me give a general answer first to say that I have told the leadership of Cross Lake that this is an issue that, under my leadership as minister, has not been, with my direction and my knowledge, addressed at the table. I have invited this issue, if it is a priority issue, in spite of the court process, which is intended to

clarify the quantum, the methodology for determining the quantum of compensation which is at hand—and that is the forum chosen by the parties to do that—but in spite of all of that, which can run its course and play its appropriate role, I have indicated to all of the people negotiating for the Province of Manitoba that I am prepared to have them discuss and try and come to a resolve on all of the issues relating to what I call the “all-weather road issue.” So, if the leadership of Cross Lake in their considered proposal, after consultation with the community, says that is something that they want to look at and that they do want a bridge, we will look at that.

I understand from my discussions with the community members who have spoken to me voluntarily, that they may or may not be where they want that kind of amount of resources directed, because my understanding is that a bridge would cost in the order of \$10 million to \$12 million. They may or may not want that to be the priority to which those kinds of resources are directed. The short answer is I welcome that issue to be brought to the table and discussed when the community is ready to discuss it and have prioritized that and indicated that is what they want.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chair, perhaps I can ask the minister whether this issue of the bridge is still with the arbitrator. Where is it at now? I mean, if it is at the arbitrator's level and if he is willing to discuss that with the community, what implications will that have on any proposed discussions?

Mr. Newman: The matter is currently before the Manitoba Court of Appeal. The principal grounds of appeal would be that the arbitrator failed to determine the extent to which one of the recommendations under the agreement constitutes compensation for adverse effects of the project. So it is before the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Lathlin: Okay, it still has to do with Hydro, Mr. Chairman. I would like to now go over to Grand Rapids and ask the minister: how many Hydro employees are there in Grand Rapids approximately? I do not want the exact number.

Mr. Newman: I am going to have some difficulty with this because I of course do not have Hydro people here.

This is not part of my Northern Affairs budget or Estimates. Normally when I am questioned with respect to Manitoba Hydro and the employees in their budget, that is done under another standing committee, as you can appreciate. So I do not have that information readily available to me, and I would not want to guess at the numbers of employees of Manitoba Hydro there. Maybe as you proceed with questioning, that may or may not become relevant in terms of accuracy, but that is the best I can do.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chair, I realize that the Hydro staff are not here. The minister is still responsible for Manitoba Hydro. In that regard then I would maybe ask him to see if he would mind getting back to me with that piece of information. That information that I was asking for was the number of employees there are in Grand Rapids. Maybe while he is doing that, the minister could also categorize in terms of how many permanent employees and how many casual or rotating employees. So I will go on.

* (1100)

Mr. Newman: I will take that under advisement.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chair, in Grand Rapids, there is a place called the hybord. It is like a little Hydro town or a village. I know, because I was there once on summer employment when I was a student. One of my jobs was to mow the lawn on those 24 houses that are in hybord. It was always a big job, because there were 24 houses. I lived in the staff house. There is a staff house there right close to the hybord, and that is where I lived when I was working for Hydro as a summer student. That is quite a while ago too.

Since then, there has been another building that has gone up at the hybord. I have seen it, and it is a pretty impressive building. When I first drove in there, at first I thought it was a big church. I started asking around, you know, like what it was, and I was told that it was the staff house. Of course my first reaction was: staff house, why do these guys need a staff house here? There are 24 houses here already, and there is an apartment block right across the road from the hybord as well as four other individual houses. So besides the 24 individual houses plus the four across the road from those 24, plus the apartment, we have quite a bit of

housing there. So my question was why did Hydro build this additional staff house?

Mr. Newman: Once again, I do not consider this to be relevant to the discussions that are here, in a technical sense. This is not the proper forum to be dealing with matters which Hydro would normally be available to answer on their own behalf through me in the standing committee mandated to deal with that. I do not want to be technical, and I am prepared to hear these questions without making it a point of order, but I simply am not in a position to answer these questions.

If your purpose, by putting them on the record, is to raise them as matters which cause you and the aboriginal community concern, or even as a stakeholder as one of the consumers and owners of Manitoba Hydro, I can assure you I will be looking into any issues you raise in that respect, as I always do, and respond to you and at the same time formulate my own judgments as to the desirability or propriety or whatever might be an issue. I will do so wearing my hat as the representative of the owners and consumers of Manitoba Hydro, namely, all the people of Manitoba and, in this case, apparently the people of the Grand Rapids area.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairman, I apologize to the minister for raising those issues. Perhaps I could raise them in Question Period or write him a letter, and hopefully he will give me the answers in that forum.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I do have a few questions of the minister. I appreciated his comments on some of the things that he outlined for us for the department that he is responsible for. The communities that he was talking about, the eight communities that he was talking about, particularly interested me. I wonder if he could further describe exactly what these eight communities have embarked upon with respect to, as I believe the minister said, taking charge of their own communities. I wonder if he would describe as to how these communities, including Bissett and I believe he said Waterhen and others, are going to proceed in achieving just that, taking charge of their own communities.

Mr. Newman: I will try and be efficient in the way I respond to what is a very big question. As you know,

there are presently 52 Northern Affairs communities with a population in total of about 8,000 people, and approximately 29 of those communities have populations that are 75 or over. Of those 52, 38 communities are in self-administering status; 14 communities are in trust status. Significant gains have been made in terms of services and facilities in the Northern Affairs communities. We are talking about basic infrastructure facilities. A value of over \$108 million has been invested to improve infrastructure and local facilities. A yearly municipal grant of approximately \$5 million has been provided towards the delivery of municipal services.

The background, I think, is the other important part of the context before I get directly into your question. It was in 1966 that the commission of The Northern Affairs Act was enacted by the Manitoba Legislature. The act provided the appointment of a commissioner who was given power similar to a municipality and the responsibility to co-ordinate activities to government in relation to northern Manitoba. Part of that role involved the provision, maintenance and improvement of local services for the benefit of Northern Affairs communities.

It was in 1974 that a new act was passed, and the act charged the Minister of Northern Affairs with responsibilities previously held by the commissioner. The major purpose of the new act was to allow northern communities to become incorporated, self-governing local entities. Although communities did not take advantage of incorporation in the past 23 years, they have, in some cases, proven a capacity and a desire to manifest their increasing independence by seeking to be incorporated, meaning that they would become an entity with obligations and responsibilities on behalf of the people of the community.

* (1110)

Now with that background and with three sorts of creative tensions—one, the motivation of some communities to become incorporated; secondly, an increasing capacity of communities to become more self-reliant through incorporation; and, thirdly, the philosophy of our government to get better results in terms of healthy, sustainable, more self-reliant communities in the Northern Affairs area and, frankly,

in all communities of Manitoba a renewed commitment was made to fill the deficiencies in the legislation of 1974 and the policies that emerged out of that legislation since 1974, to fill the deficiencies which precluded, which mitigated against the emergence of successful incorporated communities. So we opted, rather than having a top-down process, to have a community-driven process. We began by having consultation processes. These were done through the department, driven by members of the department developing an approach, after researching other communities and other jurisdictions and other government policies in other jurisdictions, and then taking that kind of background knowledge and research and going to the communities and consulting with them.

The communities, themselves, expressed the following kinds of priorities towards sustainability: one was concerns about funding for sustainability; another was about economic development; another about community planning; another about land base; another about long-term commitment; and another about funding arrangements being constant for a predictable period of time so that they would have the comfort, that they would have the support system necessary to move forward in a process towards increased self-reliance.

Most recently, we have put together a presentation, pursuant to these consultations, which was launched, given its inaugural showing at the Rural Forum—first of all in a preview way to the communities themselves, and then more broadly at the forum. I might say that I have instructed my staff—and I believe a meeting is being set up so that this same presentation can be delivered in a nonpartisan way to any interested members of the Legislature and their staff in the very near future. My deputy minister assures me that that is being set up and it will be some time during this legislative session, and the sooner the better, so that you will get a full appreciation for the approach that has emerged from the process so far and, indeed, will have input into it because we do not purport it to be perfect, and it can be refined and improved.

The eight communities were selected by the department on the basis of criteria of readiness. Pursuant to that criteria of perceived readiness by the department, based on things like their capacity to

administer the budgets within budget and appropriately and their demonstrable capacity to be most likely to be successful if they became incorporated, eight communities were selected, and they have been named. I might say that because of improvements in some of the other communities, I have been urging my staff to take a look at South Indian Lake and Norway House Northern Affairs communities with a view to either adding them to the list or to the extent that some of the eight of those communities do not continue with the same motivation to move forward. They would be replaced with those communities because those two communities have come forward like gangbusters recently in terms of trying to improve their administration and also showing their desire to move toward an incorporated status.

Mr. Robinson: I forgot what I asked the minister. That was quite some time ago. The partnership agreements I am familiar with and also the Partners for Careers. As my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) indicated, we certainly do commend the efforts whenever it is warranted to the minister and the department that he is responsible for. He also described the other initiatives that are occurring elsewhere in other parts in Manitoba.

There is an initiative, and I do believe that the Native Affairs Secretariat, which the minister is also responsible for to a degree, is working with Nelson Sanderson and others in co-ordinating some workshops to deal with racial discrimination or racism, if I may term it that. I believe it is this Saturday in Brandon and on the following weekend, the 16th, in Dauphin, and the weekend after that in The Pas. I wonder if the minister could describe for me—I know that the province to a degree is also participating in this initiative—perhaps the minister could inform us as to what the intention of these workshops are in these different Manitoba communities?

Mr. Newman: I believe that we are speaking of the same thing, and if we are not, please do not hesitate to interrupt me, but we invested as a province, through our department, \$5,000 in an antiracism initiative which was begun at the Friendship Centre at 45 Robinson. I was there at the launch and spent an evening with Nelson Sanderson and the participants. The understanding which caused us to invest the \$5,000,

which I confirmed at that event, was that this was not just an awareness building process of the still existence of and prevalence of racism directed negatively at aboriginal people, but in addition to just being an awareness building, it was a skill building.

* (1120)

There was a wonderful skit put on at that particular forum which was an example of what they were going to be doing involving Tina Keeper and others which demonstrated how an aboriginal person who is the victim of what may or may not have been deliberately racial conduct or expression, how to deal with it, not only in terms of skills and deflecting it and perhaps educating a nondeliberate victimization, also showed, if it were obviously deliberate or were going to be persistent, how you could seek recourse through the Human Rights Commission and other means. So it was an awareness, a skill building and an education as to what to do in the event of a perpetration of racism against you or someone you know.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, perhaps, specifically what does the minister and the Native Affairs Secretariat have in mind? Or through this partnership arrangement, which I think is a great idea, what will become of the results on their findings at these Manitoba towns and communities at these workshops that are occurring? The findings, I guess more specifically, what will become of these?

Mr. Newman: I have been advised by my director of the Native Affairs Secretariat that we have not had any requests for any participation or funding in the results which might be received by and be owned by the aboriginal organization. But if we were asked to invest in the publishing or dissemination of a product of this kind of process, that is the kind of thing that we would be very interested in looking at, with a view to supporting a broader dissemination of the successful program.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, the minister also described proactive activities like the Mochikitahwak program based out of Thompson and also some other initiatives that are occurring. He also very adequately, I believe, described the health and social conditions of aboriginal people in most communities in the province of Manitoba.

I would like to come back to the urban community, particularly Winnipeg. For a long time, we have had discussion on an urban aboriginal strategy. I am just wondering, based on last year's dialogue we had on this issue, if he could bring us up to date on the latest initiatives with respect to dealing with the urban aboriginal, I might call it, problem, but certainly the dilemma faced by a lot of aboriginal people who had moved to urban areas in Manitoba for one reason or the other. I know he described some initiatives that were occurring, and I just want him to further elaborate on some of these programs that are currently in operation in the city of Winnipeg, for example.

Mr. Newman: The urban aboriginal strategy process, which was initiated under the auspices of the Round Table on Environment and Economy, as it then was, now called the Round Table for Sustainable Development, through a subcommittee called a task force of that round table, has completed the process. The task force was made up of George Campbell as chair, Mary Richard, Professor Thomas Henley, the mayor of the city represented by Danny Vandal, a councillor of the city, and myself.

We completed a process of public gatherings where we got input in a workshop kind of format, and the views of the community were recorded by the community on flip charts. These were all consolidated and then were published in a document called a What You Told Us document. The What You Told Us document then went back to the committee through another gathering process, and what has emerged out of that is a Priorities for Action document, which will be emerging and published over the next month. It is a document that is directed at individuals and families and aboriginal organizations, the city government, the provincial government, the federal government, all the different departments, all charitable and business organizations, and whoever interacts with the urban aboriginal people. So out of that will become a document which is owned by that community and will be an important tool for developing public policy and personal and family approaches to issues affecting aboriginal people in the Winnipeg urban context.

Specifically what is being done for that strategy is published, and what has been done over the past year, I gave a summary of some of the initiatives that have

taken place in the city of Winnipeg and can give a more complete listing if that is the intent of the question with an expansion of what some of those programs are about. Is that the wish of the member?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, if the minister would just provide that, I believe we could leave it at that. I am sure there is accessibility to that report.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the direction of the member for Rupertsland that he would just like the member to provide it or give it to you now?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, as I understand it there is a prepared document already outlining some of these initiatives.

Mr. David Faurshou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Newman: The Priorities for Action document, as I say, will be published some time in the next month, if all goes in accordance with the intentions of the task force. That is done through the auspices of the—the secretariat to that task force is the Sustainable Development Co-ordination Unit. Because I am a member of the task force, I am aware of this, so I am aware that it will be published within the next month. So it is not available at this time for public dissemination.

* (1130)

In terms of the actual programs, I can certainly speak to Partners for Careers that I have already spoken to. I can speak to the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre. I can speak to the Aboriginal Legal Services program, which is a restorative justice program, which was announced in the city. I know that you and I were there at the announcement in the Aboriginal Centre when it was one of the most successful events I have ever been at, at the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg. You were the very competent emcee, and I was representing the government. It was a celebration of the aboriginal community in the city of Winnipeg being given the freedom and capacity to do, in effect, criminal justice resolutions within parameters in ways that were consistent with the values and aspirations and restorative justice ways of aboriginal people. That kind

of thing, I think, is just a wonderful beginning, supplementing the work done by justice committees and diversion projects, where there is a large aboriginal clientele and participation on them. But that would be, in the justice area, the most significant thing that we have lent our support to, and I would say enthusiastic support to.

In the area of health, the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre has done a similar kind of thing in the health area that Justice is doing in the justice area. It is bridging the excellence of European medical science with with the excellence of alternative approaches to healing, which are the products of thousands of years of aboriginal history. That office in the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg and the effort and the commitment of funds which are just starting to bear some fruit is another, I think, very significant approach, because it tends to mix the best of the modern recorded history world with the best of the unrecorded history teachings and experiences of thousands of years of aboriginal history. So that is another major thematic kind of initiative which is underway with our enthusiastic support.

In the area of economic development, the federal government we have, through the Single Window office, has like our government made available all departmental programs and funding opportunities which are accessible by the aboriginal community, and not only available to them through that office but we have people that are working there representing the provincial government, people there representing the federal government who provide very proactive and very customer-friendly service to anyone that comes in—as a matter of fact, to a degree that I know that I just approved a dedication of time of one of our staff down there to work directly in assisting the Metis, the MMF, virtually on a seconded basis from time to time on a dedicated time period to spend two days of work helping them with their projects and putting them together and gaining an understanding. So that is the kind of outreach, the kind of working partnerships that we are trying to build.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I showed you when you spoke to the Healthy Visions for a Healthier Future, or when I spoke to it, by Richard

Courchene, it was of great significance to me when I said that this was a baby born to the Single Window. It was of great significance to me to find that in the foreword to the book on page 1, it is stated by Elaine Issac, BSW, on March 2, 1998, as follows—I quote: in September 1997, Aboriginal Single Window Initiative, a co-operative federal-provincial partnership between Human Resources Development Canada and Native Affairs Secretariat, the provincial government began its auspicious work by funding and supporting developmental projects that would demonstrate an urban aboriginal strategic plan. This book is the culmination of one of the many projects to which they provided valuable endorsement. A special accolade has to be lauded to Lawrie Barkwell for his unflinching guidance and skabe, which in Ojibway traditional tenets means a helper of unconditional faith role to the author.

I really do commend this book to the members. In fact, I will ask Jan Smith of my staff to see that you as the representative of Rupertsland and the representative from The Pas are given a copy, thanks to the taxpayers of Manitoba, but more importantly thanks to Richard Courchene of this book, so that you can see the approach in holistic ways, acting almost like a medium on behalf of elders and cultural teachers. He offers his thoughts as to how the gang problem and other challenging urban issues might be dealt with.

* (1140)

Another issue of great significance to Winnipeg that we are very much involved in through a variety of ways with our guidance and our staff support is the Niganin project, the Our Place project, which is, you probably are aware through the media, something that Joe Bova and Mary Richard, the president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, are very much working towards—putting together a design and a concept to convert parts of the downtown core, which have a large aboriginal population, into areas for the celebration of aboriginal people, healing of aboriginal people, homes for aboriginal people, and a centre for aboriginal people to gather. So this, I gather, is emerging towards announcement stage, again, over the next month.

The programs that I mentioned involving SEED Winnipeg are of particular interest because we have supported that as a department, as has Industry, Trade

and Tourism. What we are doing there is investing in truly the development of social capital by funding microenterprise projects in sharing circle and lending circle kinds of ways. The Mennonite Central Committee and Assiniboine Credit Union are very much involved in that kind of project, and we have invested in that on behalf of the people of Manitoba. That kind of investment, we believe, is sound and is investing truly in community development and the emergence of not only businesses but the self-esteem and personal development that goes along with being part of working together with others to earn your own livelihood.

Another thing that we have been actively involved in, and I alluded to it, is through sport and recreation. We think that that is a very important way to get youth involved in constructive ways and also to develop skills of citizenship, character-building exercises, truly personal development, and we do that through the programs like the Native Alliance, the Urban Sports Camp. Again, that is a very exciting process because it is a community-owned kind of process. The WDA has funded that kind of program, again, with our providing our support to make sure it is done in appropriate ways in relation to the aboriginal people, and that program will be taken over by the community. A service organization has made the commitment to be the creator of the funding, the body that will ensure sustainable funding once the five years of WDA funding is gone, so it will be then a community-owned approach. The other—[interjection] The honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) is getting impatient with my answer. That is why I said interrupt me if I am not hitting the target.

Let me just conclude by saying—so you can put another question—I am also particularly enthusiastic about the North American Indigenous Games, which the aboriginal people of Manitoba are seeking, I might say, collaboratively because this is MMF, it is AMC, it is the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and certainly MKO are seeking collaboratively to bring to Winnipeg. It would attract 10,000 people. It would be a tremendous motivational thing to have communities around the province of young people work towards, and that is indeed being done.

There will be a Games in 1999 in Fargo as well, so there is a strategy, a program, developmental, which is

being directed for the most part with our support and respect by the Aboriginal Sports Council of Manitoba operating out of 200 Main Street, which derives an enormous amount of support from Jeff Hnatiuk and his Sports Manitoba group.

That is a very exciting area of collaborative progress being made towards a very worthy goal, and the Province of Manitoba has, as the first demonstration of financial commitment to this when they went to Florida to file their application to be considered as a site for the Games, they were competing against Ontario and Quebec. We committed that we would commit to \$1 million of funding towards those games, on condition that the feds would match us, and what is enormously powerful about those games is they see them capable of running those games at budget with a budget of \$4 million.

We have also indicated that we will work very closely with them to help them raise the funds necessary to make them the most successful games ever held in the North American Indigenous Games history and will also leave a legacy behind in Manitoba that makes enormous contributions to the young people emerging as leaders of the future.

Mr. Lathlin: I am afraid to ask the minister a question here, Mr. Chairman, maybe advise the minister that we normally go for lunch at 12, so should I ask him the question now or—give it a shot. Well, let me ask him a short question then.

In the press release it had said that an additional \$1 million for '98-99, for a total of \$3.6 million for capital projects were funded, infrastructure development including a water treatment plant at Cormorant and a lagoon at Dawson Bay. My question for the minister would be: No.1, I thought that the project at Cormorant had been finished. It was no longer a capital project, so perhaps the minister was referring to maybe the ONM dollars that is required to maintain the plant at Cormorant.

In any event, I was going to ask him: just exactly what is the status of the Cormorant project? Is it complete, and, if so, why are we calling the funds being allocated as capital? Because to me you give capital funds to build a capital project.

Then the other question, I guess is: this million dollars that is identified in a press release, it mentions two projects; is that just for the two projects from the \$1 million?

Mr. Newman: I will be very brief here. The Cormorant project was a multiyear project and my understanding is it will be finished this year. That is just one project which will derive some benefit from these additional capital funds. The simplest way for me to respond to this question very concisely is to give you what is the draft departmental plan as to how to spend the \$1 million. The breakdown is between Cross Lake water treatment plant, Dawson Bay sewage lagoon Phase II, Granville Lake water treatment plant and water lines, Ilford water treatment plant upgrade, Nelson House water treatment plant upgrade, South Indian Lake water treatment plant upgrade, Thicket Portage new intake for water, Norway House water treatment plant upgrade, Camperville reservoir fill system, Bissett sewer and water lines Phase I. There will be engineering and design requirements of course for these, but that is the draft allocation and beneficiaries of the \$1 million planned.

Mr. Lathlin: I would like to ask the minister, not that long ago I was in Cormorant and an issue was put to me whereby the community council was running short of ONM funds to operate the new plant, I guess, that had been installed in Cormorant. I talked with the community council and they felt that, you know, they were going to wait till maybe the budget time to see if the money that is required to maintain whatever facility exists there now—they were going to wait for the budget year, but I would like to ask the minister: when you install a facility or when there is a capital project like that in Cormorant, of course it runs and you start it up and it requires hydro and needs maintenance, does that automatically follow the project? I mean the ONM funds?

* (1150)

Mr. Newman: In the case of water and sewer, the answer is yes. With respect specifically to Cormorant and the future ONM funding under the self-reliant communities initiative, of which Cormorant is a part, there will be funding made available to ensure that they will be able to maximize the advantages afforded by the new capital enhancements.

Mr. Lathlin: Maybe one last question for this segment, Mr. Chairperson, and that is—I will make it a short question; I have other questions here, but the minister talked about these communities who are supposed to be at an advanced stage of development and therefore are eligible to go to the next step, and there are certain criteria used for that. Once you get to that, whatever it is, advanced stage, you are eligible to do certain things—like I think you said, salary increases, staff training and development, environment, unforeseen expenses.

So when a community council is at that stage of development, how does the funding work? Does the minister decentralize the funding and the community council then administers the funds, or how does it work?

Mr. Newman: Yes, through agreements.

Mr. Lathlin: Okay. The other question I had was, for example, in staff training and development, again, how would that work? Would those training dollars be transferred to the community, or do you simply ask community council staff to come to places like Thompson, Dauphin or wherever to get training?

Mr. Newman: Consistent with the self-reliant community whole philosophy and value system, they will be given the money. They will be delivered the money, and they will spend that money on training in ways that are most appropriate to give them the training that they need with our full co-operation and support.

Mr. Lathlin: So for a community council like Cormorant, those funds, not just staff training and development, but other things like environmental components, the budget is transferred to the community council, and they administer the funds themselves. For example, in staff training and development, they identify their own training needs and they go and purchase from wherever. Is that right?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Mr. Lathlin: The other question I had was—I think when I came in here in '90-91, the total budget was \$19.582 million, Northern Affairs, and it went up slightly the following year. Then from there it went

steadily down. Last year it was \$16.9 million, and then because of the million dollars capital that the minister just referenced, the total budget for this year is \$17.5 million. Then, of course, prior to 1990 we had total budgets that were \$42 million, for example, and then the very next year it was cut in half.

My question would be: if your total budget is going down steadily, does that mean you have a corresponding increase in terms of productivity, and by that I mean trained staff, and you know there is infrastructure in a community and everything is improving on a yearly basis? If the minister is going down in funds, my thinking would be, well, why would the funds go down if there is so much work to be done in terms of development, or is development happening so well that the funds would naturally have to go down because there is nothing there to be paid any more?

Mr. Newman: There are some factors that you have not addressed in your analysis of the different funding over the years. Two factors I will add to that, one is the brokering done by the Northern Affairs department of funds sourced through the Northern Development Agreement in significant ways, and those came through Northern Affairs and flowed through to other departments of government. So that is one factor. Another factor is, because we have now fulfilled more of our Northern Flood Agreements through comprehensive settlements, 80 percent of them, there is less funding through the department in respect to Northern Flood Agreement commitments.

Another factor which you have alluded to is in the transition process. The communities are definitely taking on more responsibility and providing more services themselves, which is a sign of great success of those communities. The whole strategy towards increasing sustainability, funded in this bridging way that we have talked about by the department as they move forward, the goal is to get them up to the 20 percent level of revenue support generated by themselves. That is the expectation that we have; that is the goal to help them achieve that kind of level, and we are doing it by building social capital, by building the capacity of those communities to better do their own services more effectively, but we have no intention of diminishing the department's role by changing it.

Mr. Chairperson: The time being 12 noon, I am interrupting proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of Routine Proceedings.

* (1000)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time. We are on Resolution 16.2. School Programs (c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Chairperson: Before we start, could I bring to the attention of all honourable members, we have seated in the gallery today from Oakgrove School in Fargo, North Dakota, seventy-three Grades 7 and 8 students under the director of Miss Lori Garbe.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today. And they know what high water is.

* * *

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, at yesterday's sitting, the member had asked us to table some documents, salaries or contracts on Assessment and Evaluation, and I have three copies for the House here this morning. As well, we have brought back to the table, at the opposition's request, Mr. Greg Baylis, because the opposition wishes to question us today some more on Systemhouse, so we have got that staffperson back.

I have, as well, the fee for service for the special ed review for '98-99. We said yesterday we would bring that. I have three copies here for the House. We said it would be approximately 75,000; in fact, it is 60,000

and those are for the House and for the members opposite.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, when the government as a whole went into the Systemhouse contract, it would be my assumption that each department would be asked how this contract could benefit them, and how it could add to what was already being done in the department. So I wonder if the minister could table the cost benefit analysis that was done in this department when it was presented with the option of the Systemhouse contract.

* (1010)

Mrs. McIntosh: I have indicated in previous sittings that the contract is with Government Services. It is a government-wide contract. The overall benefit to government comes from having a government-wide contract. It may be that some departments will benefit more than others. Overall, it is government that benefits, and it is government that has the contract.

Ms. Friesen: So is the minister telling me that no evaluation was done in this department when they were presented with this overall government contract?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, at each sitting when we have been asked this question, we have answered the question with details about the costs and the benefits to the Department of Education on a line-by-line basis. We have tabled our financial costs, the services available as well as the services that we retain in our own right, but I come back to again the cost benefit is a government-wide cost benefit. We have said what our needs are; what are financial costs are. Government Services has developed a government-wide contract. We benefit as a partner in that by reduced overall cost to government and better cost benefit to government overall, which in turn then of course benefits each department.

The benefits to government is that we have one plan that all government departments participate in. We have a system-wide approach which provides for equality across government departments and allows government to organize and plan for all departments and the benefits to the Department of Education, a common platform for us to work with and to

communicate with all other government departments. The benefits accrue in the long term with respect to the renewal of equipment, but in terms of a summary of the information that has been provided or tabled regarding Desktop Management in Education and Training, we have already tabled the chart which was dated, I believe, March 19, which was entitled Education and Training Desktop Management Costs.

That provides a complete disclosure on a program-by-program benefit basis, as identified in the Estimate Supplement of desktop services, of the costs of desktop services for the '98-99, which is a partial year, not a full year; the costs for desktop services for the remaining years of the contract, which are full-year costs; the costs from the old way of providing those services that have been redirected from the '98-99 to offset the new costs; the costs related to the implementation of desktop services for staff training.

We have tabled the rate structure used in preparing our Estimates for desktop management, including a list of the services provided. We have confirmed that capital costs are not included in these fees. We have confirmed that we expect to be fully included in the contract by the end of the summer. We have identified that two staff were impacted, one was transferred to MERLIN, and one had moved on the staffperson's initiative to the private sector. The two staff years were redirected to Applications Development and have been assigned to priority projects in support of training and continuing education. We have identified that not all work stations in the department will be necessarily covered by the contract. We have identified that in all likelihood the Manitoba School for the Deaf will be excluded and technical services provided by MERLIN.

We have identified that support for transferred employees under the LMDA agreement is under discussion with the federal government, so it is not known yet the ultimate conclusion there, but with the above two exceptions, the costs for desktop management, as identified in the Estimates Supplement, are based consistently on the information we have provided.

We have stated many times that the Department of Education and Training is not a signatory of the contract, and therefore does not have a copy of the

contract and has not done the government-wide, cost-benefit analysis. We have stated repeatedly that requests for those kinds of fine details should appropriately be directed to the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) in Supply and Services.

We have undertaken a series of internal government reforms, including Better Methods, Better Systems, desktop management and year 2000. We expect the total of these initiatives will provide the tools necessary to provide more efficient government and better service to the public as we move into the next century, but our department is not the lead on any one of those initiatives. Even though we are not the lead, we are committed fully to participation in order that we may harvest the benefits that accrue government-wide in the ensuing years. So, in short, the desktop management initiative is about building a better infrastructure for delivering government programs to the people and businesses of Manitoba. With any infrastructure, the benefits that derive are chiefly from the new applications that are made possible through the availability of the new infrastructure. That kind of initiative, as I say, has the details of the government-wide cost benefit resting with another department. We have identified what we need and what it is going to cost, they have provided. They will reap the overall knowledge in terms of cost benefit.

I do not know how else to put it except to say that she needs to get that fine detail from the appropriate department, the one that holds the contract.

* (1020)

Ms. Friesen: Last time, I raised the issue of the large number of employees in this section of the department and the relatively small amount of money in the desktop appropriation. So, obviously, there are a fair number of people in the department as a whole, including in this section, who are not covered by the Systemhouse contract. The minister has already mentioned the Manitoba School for the Deaf and the federal transfer employees. So does the minister have a number of those employees who are using computer and desktop services, who are not covered by the Systemhouse contract. Obviously, we seem to have probably about 40 or 50 in this section of the department who are not.

Mrs. McIntosh: I think the member is misunderstanding. She seems to think that the number of work stations is equivalent to the number of employees, and I think there is a misunderstanding in that regard, because we do have work stations that are not assigned to employees, as in the library, for example, at 1181 Portage, and the contract is by work station, not by the number of employees.

So the assessment unit, we budget 79.6 for 51 work stations, which comes out to \$29,000 per station, and this is the figure already tabled—\$2,900, I am sorry, per station, and this is the figure that is already tabled. They are related to the 45 as opposed to the 61. The existing staff years and six extra stations for term and casual, they are related to projects. The 16 additional employees, if approved in this Estimates, the capital costs to equip them are identified under the Capital line as we stated here on Tuesday, and the capital costs are not in the SHL contract.

So the short answer is that we do have work stations that are not assigned to employees. So the assumption that there is one work station per employee is an incorrect assumption, and the cost per station remains that \$2,900.

* (1030)

Ms. Friesen: I thank the minister for that. I had been working on the assumption that the work station costs were \$2,000. I accept that they are \$2,900, and, yes, I had assumed that in a section like this there would have been a greater equivalency between the number of professional and technical employees and the number of work stations. So I accept the minister's numbers. I would have thought that in assessment there would have been a greater congruity between the two.

What I had raised last time was also the issue of capital and how many computers were being purchased under that Capital line. Our general question was was that the case also for other Capital lines in the department's budget? That is why I understand Mr. Baylis is here so he can tell us about the capital acquisitions of computers in these Estimates in the budget, and also, of course, the ownership.

One of the difficulties we are having is determining what is going to be owned by whom. Who is to do the

servicing? Who owns things? The Systemhouse contract is not clear to me yet, and we will be asking, obviously, other questions in other departments. Sometimes the best way to understand any contract is to look at how it functions within the context of one department, which is why I have been pursuing it here.

So the issue is then, the number of computers that are being bought by the department, who owns them, who will be supplying service to them, and how does that apply across the whole department, not just on this line.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we have answered this before, and it will appear in other parts of Hansard. But I am pleased to provide the information again, and staff confirms that it is indeed the correct information. The member is correct in her questioning to me, asking to have confirmed that the computers are bought out of the Capital line. We own them. We will buy 16 for equipment for 16 new employees, and the capital includes things such as desks and chairs, et cetera.

The SHL contract is for service, not capital, and, as stated earlier, it provides desktop management service, such as help lines, phone access, networking for all areas of the department. Of course, the Manitoba School for the Deaf and the Labour Market people are not included in this the way the rest of the department is, and that remains the answer. It is, I believe, confirming what the member had stated in her question as asking if she is correct in the assumption, yes.

Ms. Friesen: How many new computers will be purchased by the department this year? We have 16 in this section of the department. How many others?

Mrs. McIntosh: As I just indicated, we will be purchasing computers for new employees, and we will have 23 new computers that we will be paying for because they are new employees. The other computers are going to be supplied by Government Services to the department as a whole, but the Department of Education will be paying for those for the new employees, which we would have had to do in any event because they are new employees.

Ms. Friesen: How many will be supplied by Government Services?

* (1040)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we have already tabled that information for the member a couple of sittings ago, but I am pleased to provide it to her again that for the rest of the department would be 791, and she will find it in the information that we provided a couple of days ago when she asked that question phrased a little differently.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, that 791 is in addition to the 23 that the department will be purchasing for the new employees.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is correct.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me where these 791 computers will be deployed in the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: I can provide that breakdown for the member, and I should indicate just as I begin that, that, of course, as the member knows, with our wonderful new computers in the School Programs that schools in Manitoba will be the ultimate beneficiaries, because, along with the federal government, it is anticipated that computers that are no longer required by government will, in the main, be made available for school divisions. We have a potential of up to thousands of computers here that can be made available to schools.

But, in answer to the member's question, all work stations that require upgrading to meet government functions will be receiving them, and they are, as the member requested, as follows: for the Native Education Directorate, three work stations; Human Resource Services, 17 work stations; Financial and Administrative Services, 33 work stations; Management Information Services, Administration and Finance, 71 stations—[interjection] Oh, I am sorry. Reading down the list I have given the total. Beg your pardon. The 71 is the total of three: 17, 33 and 18.

Division Administration, 7; the School for the Deaf, of course, is not in this category; Assessment and Evaluation, 51 work stations; Program Development, 56 work stations; Program Implementation, 133 work stations; Student Services, 46 work stations; Official Languages Program and Administrative Services, 59 work stations; Bureau de l'éducation française Library

and Materials Production, 22 work stations; Schools' Finance Branch, 20 work stations; Education Administration Services, 27 work stations; Schools Information System, eight work stations; Schools Grants, PSFB, 14 work stations; Management Services, 16 work stations; Labour Market Support—is that included? Yes, it would be—nine work stations; Adult Literacy and Continuing Education, seven work stations; Youth Programs, 25 work stations; Workforce 2000, 13 work stations; Stevenson Aviation, 18; Apprenticeship, 35; Employment and Training Services, 93; and Council on Post-Secondary Education, 15; Student Financial Assistance, 46.

Mr. Chairman, that is basically the breakdown. I do not think I left anything out. As I say, these will provide upgraded service to the departments so that they can better serve people in the public, and for the opposition critic we can get her information faster and more completely. Those computers not required by government in some form will, in the main, be destined for schools, for students in the schools.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the last time we did talk about this I think the minister indicated that the old computers would be going to Government Services and then a portion of them would be going to schools.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that is consistent with what I just said, that those computers not required by government would, in the main, be destined for schools. Those required by government would include some of the old ones. I am not sure of the exact number, but it will be many thousands that end up going to the schools.

The reason for that, of course, I indicate that those not required by government would be that Government Services is the owner of the computers, and so we cannot automatically say that every one will be going to the schools. Although we do anticipate the majority will be, they may still have some use for some of the old computers in government. As long as they are still useful for the people of Manitoba here, they will be used here. But there are potentially 7,000 that could be available for schools and, hopefully and likely, will be, but I cannot categorically say that.

Again, it is like the contract rests with Government Services. So while we know that there will be

thousands going to schools, we cannot say for sure the exact number because some may still be of use to government in other areas, in areas in which they are not currently being used.

Ms. Friesen: Well, we have gone from thousands in the main to a majority, when it seems to me all the minister really knows is that a portion will and that she does not have control over that portion. So it would seem to me more objective, more neutral to say a portion of those are going to schools. I am sure that we both hope that many of them will be going to schools but to make the larger claim seems to me not defensible at the moment. It may well be in the future, so perhaps we could stick to an objective criteria here.

Mrs. McIntosh: No, the member is incorrect in saying that only a portion, which implies a small portion. [interjection] Well, I estimate, Mr. Chairman—for the member's clarification, we estimate that would be a—

* (1050)

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: A portion means a portion. It means a part of. It does not mean small; it does not mean large. I have often great difficulty in convincing the minister of the use of some parts of the vocabulary, but that does seem to me very clear. A portion is a portion. It is a defensible argument the minister can make.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to conclude her statement.

Mrs. McIntosh: For clarification then, a portion is a portion, and I should indicate, then, that a substantially large portion of the computers, probably around 90 percent of those computers, will end up in schools.

The exact percentage and the exact number I am unable to provide, but as I have said, in the main, the majority, a very large portion will be ending up in the schools. I make that clear so that there is no impression

left—when most people say, could I please have a portion of that, most people tend to think it is a small portion. I want to indicate it is a large portion, just for clarification because I want the record to be clear.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us how many new computers were bought last year? I understand the department was working on a 25 percent rotation or updating of the computers. Could we actually have the exact number or approximate number of the number of computers that were bought in the last year?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not have the exact figure. It would be, we estimate, between 180 and 200. If the member wishes to have Mr. Baylis go back and pull all the purchase orders out of the file to try to get to the unit count, we can do that, but we would not be able to do it today. But we estimate between 180 and 200.

Ms. Friesen: No, I do not think that would be necessary. The approximate number is fine because I think what it does show is a considerable difference between last year's purchases and this year's purchases. Can the minister explain what the reason is for that sudden increase in the number of computers purchased? Last year, you bought 200; this year you are buying approximately 790, so what is the difference?

Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the answer is really quite simple in that we used to be on an annual basis replacing around about 25 percent of our work stations, and when we had the Systemhouse come in—it is going to do an overall government initiative—we stopped our program to opt into the provincial.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, could the minister give us an approximate cost or perhaps she would prefer to table a precise cost next time of last year's computers, the 180 to 200? Maybe it would be simpler to table that next time or another time.

Mrs. McIntosh: If we estimate 180 to 200 computers at an average cost of about \$2,600, then we would have a range from a low of about \$468,000 to a high of \$520,000 as the ballpark range that we estimate would have been spent.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask some questions about Education Information Systems. Now there is a section of the Activity Identification for this line that does deal with that. Is this the appropriate line that the minister wants to deal with it on or should we look at a later line, EIS?

Mrs. McIntosh: I think we would be better to do it under 16.4.(c) because at that point we would have not only Mr. Baylis, who is with us today, but also the EIS project manager could be here, and that is Suzanne Adnams, and we could get more detail, if the member wishes to, with both of them here.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, okay, we will do that.

I wanted to ask the minister about the new method that she is proposing under her guidelines or her addition, her update for school divisions and superintendents, and that is local marking of exams at the Grade 6 and Grade 9 level. Does the minister have anything in this section of the budget that allocates money to school divisions for provisions of that local marking?

* (1100)

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: We are not directly targeting funds for specifics of marking exams although school divisions, when they have local exams, have always marked them locally within the funds that are given for the general block grant in Education, which includes in many divisions some form of assessment. That form of assessment has always been included in the monies provided to educate a child and ascertained by the divisions. Of course, the divisions lobbied us very hard to get local marking. Up until I saw an article in the paper this morning, which is probably why the question is being asked here now—

Ms. Friesen: I have not read the paper yet.

Mrs. McIntosh: Oh, well, there is an article in the paper this morning that indicated that Anita Neville of the Winnipeg School Division is really upset that we are going to be having local marking because they did not budget any money, but that is sort of odd because

the trustees have lobbied very hard to get permission to do the local marking and as an acquiescence to them we are permitting it.

It is certainly not our first choice. We prefer the central marking, and for the central marking, of course, all the costs are picked up. But at the specific request of school divisions, we are going to permit some local marking in the middle years in Grade 6 and Grade 9, so I would be very surprised if any of them then came back and formally requested money to do something that they had lobbied so effectively, so long and so hard, to have the ability to do. As the member may recall, at the time the Grade 3 province-wide pilot was conducted in 1996, where they had local versus central marking, we did a study and others were aware that divisions were asking for local marking because they could see the following benefits, and these are the dollars that divisions do not have to spend now as a result of having local marking.

They were asking for money for professional development in assessing. At the same time, they said if they could have local marking for province-wide exams, more teachers could participate in the marking, hence would achieve a greater understanding of the outcomes, why they are what they are and what the province is looking for in terms of the outcomes. Universally, teachers who have participated in that have said it has been the best professional development exercise that they have ever experienced in anything, in any subject area. We have many, many hundreds of written comments to that effect on the general forms teachers fill out at the end.

So local divisions began asking, local teacher associations began asking, superintendents began asking for the ability to have some local marking, so that more teachers could participate in the professional development exercise, and they would not have to spend so much money training them outside of the actual experience. So while it is not direct money provided for marking, it is direct money they will now save on professional development and not just those involved in central marking will get that since we have agreed to their request to allow local marking in some areas.

So it leads to an improved understanding of the curriculum, of the assessment and marking practices,

the opportunity to see student work from other schools, which is a large part of it, other schools, other classrooms. It gives a better sense of students' potentials. These are all things teachers who have marked have told us. These are not things that I am saying, I am saying what teachers have told us. They have also told us it provides valuable insight into students' strengths and weaknesses so as to improve their own instructional planning.

We believe them. Like, we recognize the truth of what they are saying. We did a lot of soul-searching when we agreed to allow some local marking to meet the requests of those who will benefit from this; i.e., teachers, trustees and superintendents who all made formal requests for local marking. We have had the experience in the past whereby the department has supported local divisions by analyzing locally developed tests, providing analysis of the content and design and curriculum congruency of the locally developed tests, and with our '98-99 schedule, we will be auditing a 20 percent sample and providing information back to the schools with respect to the reliability of their marking processes.

In the year 1999-2000, school divisions will be marking the Grade 6 LA and the senior math locally. Divisions are now aware of that. They are in the main extremely grateful, Anita Neville notwithstanding. Maybe she did not know how hard her division had been pushing for the opportunity to have local marking through the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, but I am sure she probably knows by now.

They wanted to know this so they could have lots of time to do their local planning. I know that Winnipeg 1 is already examining the cost of their high operating costs to see if they can bring them down, and school divisions who are doing that expect to have money for other initiatives, maybe to help with the partnershiping they have requested in exams.

School divisions will benefit from local marking not just from professional development, but they will also need to look at the total assessment program they have at the local level. We are not asking divisions to duplicate local testing approaches where the provincial standards test are administered. As some have their own exams, they can now use ours, and so they will

save money of developing their own local exams, and that money can be redirected towards marking as well. As an example, teachers in Senior 1 would not be developing a local Senior 1 final examination. They would use the provincial standards test. They would mark it and not a locally developed test, and they could use this as one component of the schools overall grade for that year.

So there are a lot of ways school divisions can save money because we are doing this, and we will be providing a training program very similar to that one provided for the Grade 3 pilot. So the short answer is no, not directly for marking; the long answer is yes, absolutely. There will be lots of money freed up in the system that school divisions can use to pay for local marking because they will not have to do some of the other things they currently do, but direct money, no. We do provide money for the education of a child, per pupil. That per-pupil grant includes teaching, assessing, et cetera. Assessing is part of it. The request to mark locally came from the school divisions and, when they made the request, they did not ask for extra money, they asked for it for the extra benefits they could get. We agreed to allow them to do that.

Ms. Friesen: Well, the minister's argument might hold water if there had been parallel requests from the school divisions for provincial testing. I am not sure that is the case, so that her argument—

* (1110)

Mrs. McIntosh: I tabled it.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister—did she say there were?

An Honourable Member: She said there were.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I had not heard that. I gather the minister interjected that indeed school divisions had requested the provincial tests, and I wonder if the minister could table those requests that she received from school divisions.

Similarly, I was also interested in the general evaluation she spoke of that teachers had made at the end of the exams and on their marking experience. The

minister said that she had a considerable number. I did not write it down, so I cannot remember whether in fact she said hundreds, but the intent I think was to suggest that there are a large number of evaluations, hundreds of evaluations, and I wonder if the minister could table those evaluations.

I think at the beginning of her answer she said that the department had done a study, and I was not quite sure what study she was referring to. It sounded as though it was a study of the possibility of local marking. I wondered again, could the minister table such a study that the department might have done on looking at local marking versus centralized marking?

Finally, the minister said that the divisions will be able to save money because many of them now have divisional assessments that they will no longer need to use or to compose because they now will be able to use the provincial ones. I wonder if the minister could tell us how many divisions now use a division-wide test? I know that St. James does. How many other divisions do? Can the minister tell us which ones so we can see where those cost savings will be?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the member is asking for information that we will be able to gather for her. She has asked if we could provide the comments made by teachers who found marking to be a professional development experience worthy of repeating. She said that I said hundreds, and indeed I did say hundreds—hundreds and hundreds, I might say. The reason I can say that is that after every marking we have an exit sheet that teachers can put comments on. We have had hundreds and hundreds of teachers marking, and almost universally those hundreds and hundreds have said this was the best professional development experience I have ever had. I am willing to provide—now, as I say, I do not want to give the teachers' names because all the comments they give to us are confidential, but I will provide the comments with the names blacked out.

In fact, I will ask for 500 comments to be provided to the member if that is possible, around that volume, that you might like to read. I do not want to have to have them go through—I believe we would have that many people that have marked so far. Probably more than that have marked so far, but I will ask for a sampling of

about 500 to provide to the member in support of marking as a professional development experience, and we will table that for her.

The member asks for a study of local versus centralized marking, and that information will show clearly that our rationale for preferring the centralized marking as providing the most consistent comparisons is the right way to go and that our acquiescence to the field to allow some limited local marking at six and nine is being done because of the professional development benefit teachers say they get from it. We are willing to do that, but we will not publish those marks because we do not feel they will be as valid as the centralized marks. So we will provide that document to the member.

The member asked about who made the requests for local marking. I can tell her that it was the executive of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the executive of the Manitoba association of school teachers, the Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. At every regional meeting the staff has attended, the request has been brought forward. It has been brought forward several times at the implementation committee.

Just to indicate what the implementation committee is, the implementation committee was struck by the Minister of Education at the specific request of the presidents of MTS, MASS and MAST. They asked me to form an implementation committee so they could advise me on the implementation of educational change. This I agreed to do, and we have met regularly since. I have added to that representatives of principals and parents. That committee meets approximately once a month for half a day, and that committee makes requests and provides advice.

* (1120)

That committee represents all stakeholders, and on numerous occasions that committee has made the request to allow some local marking for the following reasons. One, it provides a professional development experience for teachers that, unless they can participate in a centrally prepared test which has province-wide outcomes sought, they miss, and teachers and trustees and superintendents have asked for it for the

professional development experience so that they will not have to provide that professional development experience in other ways that are less effective and cost them money. The parents asked for some local marking so that teachers would not have to leave the classroom for as long as they do to go into the city to do centralized marking.

We felt both of these positions had merit and value, and when they were raised in the implementation committee on several occasions, borne out by repeated requests from the stakeholder groups, we did some soul-searching. We determined that those two points had merit sufficient that we would, at least for the intermediate grades, allow some local marking for those two reasons but would retain the centralized marking which we think gives a more accurate comparison across the province for the entrance grade which is the most important fundamental foundation year, and all educators agree that the early years are the single most important years for building a firm foundation. It is critical that at those years you be tested and at the exit in Grade 12 for post-secondary studies, workplace, et cetera.

So I can tell the member, those are the organizations that she asked: how do the divisions save money? I have indicated they save money by not having to provide specialized professional development. Local marking provides that experience. That is one way they save money. Secondly, for those divisions that do their own testing, and many do, they can use our tests instead of running parallel tests. We will provide to the member some divisions that we know of that do testing. We would have to do a telephone survey, which we are prepared to do if the member wants, put everybody back on the phone to phone and find out, division by division. We know there are many and will prepare to table as many as we are aware of that do testing.

Ms. Friesen: I want to, just to clarify for the minister, I am interested in the exit sheet evaluations of the teachers. Five hundred is a lot to xerox. I will be quite prepared to come and read them at the department's offices, as I did with the responses to the boundary review. That might make it difficult to hide the name—

Mrs. McIntosh: I would like to table them. I want them on the record. Thank you anyhow.

Mr. Chairperson: Carry on. The honourable member for Wolseley has the floor at this time.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then I look forward to the minister tabling all of the exit sheet, the entire sheet that the teachers have filled out. What I am looking for is their evaluation of the whole exams. The minister seems to be—I do not know if it is aggressive or defensive on this. I can quite believe, and have said a number of times, that I believe that the marking is an interesting professional exercise for teachers. I have talked to teachers who have done it in British Columbia, so the minister does not need to be particularly aggressive about that. What I am interested in is how they have viewed the experience and the full exit reports of the teachers. If the minister wants to table them, then that is fine, I appreciate that, and I am sure other people will as well.

I had asked a specific question because the minister was pointing to the amount of money that could be saved, or the potential for saving money, by doing local marking. One of the points that she raised was that divisions which did division-wide testing would now no longer need to construct those tests. So my question was very simple: how many divisions do division-wide testing? I know St. James does. I know the minister is familiar with that, but it would seem to me surprising that the department would not have that information readily available, not necessarily here but without the phone canvass that will be needed. But I would think that would be useful information in any case for both the minister and for the opposition.

So, yes, I do look forward to knowing how many divisions in Manitoba have been constructing and using division-wide tests, and that we will be able to see that, at least, in those divisions there will be a change for them.

Mr. Chairman, my colleague for St. James would like to proceed with some questions in this area.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My question is related to the student profiles that we talked about the last time I was here. I believe it was called student profile. It is related to the exam or an assessment of how the student did on that exam is prepared for each exam. Would it be possible to get an example of a

student profile done by a marker and with a copy of the exam? I do not need to have a name, just to become familiar with the detail of the process, so that we can understand the value of that and whether we can go back and look at the exam and look at it as a learning tool.

I am wondering if it is possible to do the different grade levels, the 3, 6, 9, and 12 or the 3, 6, S1 and S4. I would really appreciate it, and I guess there is also an English and a French and then the different subjects, so that we can understand, especially if this is going to be a regular process for parents. I would really appreciate that and thank the minister and the department if they could do that.

* (1130)

My other concern—I can wait—but this relates to my previous concern about the math exam in Grade 10 based on the three streams, the curriculum. There is precalculus.

Perhaps the minister would like to respond to the first question first, and then I can go on to the second. Would that be preferable? Yes? Okay. Mr. Chairman, let us deal with the first one which was to get the information on student profiles.

Mrs. McIntosh: Certainly we would be pleased to do two things. One, for the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), we will table all the comments about marking instead of just 500. I do not know how many there will be, but that actually might be easier for us because then we can just photostat the whole thing and bring it in. I would like to bring it in and table it, so that everybody in Manitoba can see the good news, rather than you see it privately in an office where it is not shared with the public. I would prefer that that be tabled for all Manitobans, as you say, through this record to all Manitobans, so they can see.

Secondly, we are also delighted to provide for the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), if I am understanding the member correctly, a copy of the exam, plus a copy of the student profile that goes with the marking in English and French in the exams that we have done so far. Now, so far, it has been math, Grade 3; and math and LA Senior 4. We have not yet done

exams in Grade 6 and Grade 9. We are still introducing new curricula or pilot stage curriculum.

So for those exams that we have done as full status standards exams, we will provide that information. We are just discussing here, I think we can either—I am very, very conscious of confidentiality with both of these requests because the comments made on the report cards, of course, are private to the student and the comments made to me as minister came confidentially from the teachers. They were not told their comments would be shared with the public, so, therefore, it is imperative that the names be taken off in some way, either by blacking them out or simply by reprinting what they have said minus the names.

But we certainly will provide that information in English and French as soon as we can. I am not sure if all of this can be here tomorrow, but if we can get it here tomorrow, we will. That is a very good request and one I am pleased to provide to the member.

Ms. Mihychuk: I want to thank the minister for providing that and getting that together. I hope it is not too complicated. I am going to save my math curriculum thing until the next session because it relates to programming.

But I do have another question, and that is the government has recently announced that it is basically reducing its provincial exam schedule by 50 percent. By that, I mean in Grade 3 there were originally four subjects that were going to be tested annually. Now it is two. In Grade 6, it is going to be two exams annually. One is English LA and the other one will be a rotational exam. So it is about two exams per year in the four levels, and in Grade 12 they made no change.

Can the minister explain why she has decided to cut her provincial exam program by 50 percent in those three levels, Grades 3, 6 and S1?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, the member is correct. They will be taking two standards exams in each of those four grades, 3, 6, 9 and 12—I do it, too—Senior 1 and Senior 4. I have to indicate to the member, back up a little bit and indicate what we were seeking as a government in the Blueprint.

We knew and felt and believed, and still do, that there are four points during a student's academic career that assessment should be done in a very rigorous way, those being the four grade levels that I have just mentioned. So one of the firm points we made was that it is very important that at those four points in a student's career there be an external evaluation and assessment to ensure that every three years the student's work is examined to make sure that progress is continuing on a good strong learning curve.

We also identified four subject areas—language arts, mathematics, science and social studies—as being four subject areas that we felt needed to be tested. It was imperative that those four be examined.

We identified further two years that we felt were key years in terms of literacy and computation. All years are important. I do not mean to negate the others, but since we knew we were not going to be doing province-wide testing every grade, every subject, every year, we had to make decisions as to what were key points. Language arts and maths were deemed as something that had to be tested at the exit point, because it would be the level of measurement the student graduating could present to post-secondary institutions or employers, essentially certifying that they knew information to a measurable level.

* (1140)

So hence in Grade 12 we said language arts and mathematics will be standards exams. In fact, they will be the only two, and they will be done annually by all students in Grade 12. That, of course, we have not changed, but in looking at the kindergarten to Grade 3 span of learning, we have said that at the end of Grade 3—originally we had said at the end of Grade 3 we would test all four subject areas: language arts, mathematics, social studies and science. As we moved into the implementation stage and did what we said—we would do—we said as we went into implementation we would always be looking, continually looking to see if we can improve our blueprint, blueprint being just that, a blueprint.

We had many long conversations with the implementation committee, as well as taking a look at the teaching that was going on in the schools in terms

of some of these subject areas, et cetera. We have determined to modify the plan at Grade 3 and zero in on language arts and maths in Grade 3, as we do in Grade 12, that the emphasis on literacy and computation had to take prominence over everything else at that grade, and that we wanted the adults in the students' lives to focus in on those two subjects, knowing that if those two are highly understood and easily applied that the other subjects will fall into place more easily.

So we said we will not test social studies and science in Grade 3. As we move to implementation we will focus in just on language arts and maths. At Grades 6 and 9, however, we do know that we wanted to, as we had said in the blueprint, assess knowledge of science and social studies also. So we said in Grade 6 we would do science every year, all students, standards exam, centrally marked. In social studies at Grade 9, we would do the same thing and rotate the other subjects every other year, so that we know then that we have tested on a centrally developed, centrally marked provincial standards test, LA and maths at Grade 3 and Grade 12; science and social studies at Grade 6 and Grade 9; and in the middle years the other subjects start on a rotating basis with every year there being a 20 percent audit by the province. All of the exams, whether marked centrally or locally, would be prepared centrally.

Part of this rotation has come about as a result of our acquiescence to the request to have local marking, because in our discussions on that topic with the members of the implementation committee, which are the stakeholders in the field, they said they needed and wanted local marking for the reasons I went through in my earlier answers. We said, well, we understand those benefits. We see there is merit in your argument. However, local marking does not give us the same consistency that centralized marking does. So, if we allow local marking at the middle years' grade levels, we cannot count them as full standards tests for marking purposes, even though they are centrally developed and are using the same rubric and so on, because the consistency will not be as high as it would be if it were done centrally.

We know this because we did pilot testing at the field's request. Last year we tried some pilot testing,

pilot local marking rather, because they were asking and asking. We said, okay, well, we will try it. We will try a pilot with local marking, and we tried it for some subjects last year. When we did the examination of the consistency of the results, we found that, within the division where they were marking, there was tremendous consistency. For example, in division A, the marks in division A, comparing school to school to school, there was great consistency. Similarly, in division B there would be great consistency between and amongst the schools in that division. But, when we compared division A to division B, the consistency was gone. So we have said that we will let you do this for the good reasons you have identified, but we will not do it for all because we cannot count those now as bona fide standards exams, even though they are centrally developed and there is much about them that will have the merits of a provincial standards exam, but the centralized marking piece will be missing in exchange for these other components the field asked for.

So they still will be having, as I say, four subjects, four grades, centrally developed, centrally marked, but two per year instead of four per year—well, there only were going to be two at the end anyhow in Grade 12 that were compulsory, but we feel this is in keeping with some of the requests we have had. We had told the field all along that we would be willing to make adjustments if they were practical and pragmatic and made sense to the implementation and the scheduling, provided that they did not impinge upon the integrity of the provincial exam and provided that our hallmark years and hallmark grades would still be assessed centrally.

So we looked at a balance of factors. We examined the core subjects, the four benchmark grades. We wanted the highest quality of exams that matched the principle of fair assessment, because the principle of fair assessment is fundamental in all that we do here. It is our highest principle. Research about standards tests and the curriculum, and we also recognized that in some of the grades, say in Grade 6, for example, that there might just be one teacher teaching all the subjects. The workload on that teacher, then, became a factor, if they are teaching science, social studies, language arts, and math. The teachers were saying they were finding it very difficult to ready students for exams because they, in some cases, were not used to following the

curriculum that closely and they would be going along developing their own things to teach. So it requires a different style of teaching, a lot of differentiated instruction. We are providing material for teachers for that, but when they move to differentiated instruction and they have some teachers teaching four of those subjects, we felt that they had made some points worth listening to. We felt some points they made we did not agree with, and so where we were able to agree, we have been able to adjust the schedule. Where we were not able to agree, we thanked them for their advice and carried on with our plans.

But the capacity of the system to administer the number of exams originally planned, we heard from people that in order to provide teachers for marking, they were having to release teachers from the classroom for a certain number of days, and some places they could readily get substitutes, some they could not, et cetera. So we listened, we conferred, as we said we would do; we listened as we said we would do. Where we had valid points made to us, we accepted them as we said we would do; and where we disagreed with the field, we thanked them for their advice and proceeded with our plans as originally set.

* (1150)

I want to thank the implementation committee members. [interjection] Yes, and I have to indicate that I thank them for having provided me with the advice, and I am very pleased to say that our last implementation committee which was last week, two weeks ago, that the implementation committee members thanked me most profusely for having listened to their concerns and having responded positively to them, and it was a mutual thanking time. They recognized that we are still going to have standards tests, and it will still be those four grades and those four subjects, but they very much appreciate the ease with which they will now be able to implement this initiative and the revised schedule which will lighten their load a little bit.

Mr. Chairperson: 16.2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,089,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$4,785,700—pass.

16.2.(d) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,790,400.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicates in this section that she is going to develop parent materials on issues for senior years programs and outcomes. I wonder if the minister could give us a more specific indication of what she will be preparing.

Mr. Chairperson: Can we crank the volume up just a little bit? We are not hearing you very well.

Ms. Friesen: I was asking about the development of parent materials on topics and issues related to senior year programs, and I wonder if the minister could tell us more specifically what is intended to be produced this year.

Mrs. McIntosh: We intend to produce parent materials related to senior year's graduation requirements and the credit system which would include the transition to New Directions requirements.

Ms. Friesen: This section of the department, I believe, deals with professional development or, at least, has some responsibility for it. One of the criticisms, I think, the minister has been hearing, and calls for help essentially, is for professional development, particularly in the new mathematics curriculum.

The government has taken the—I am quoting, I think, from the minister's own advisory committee, or perhaps it was from the Students at Risk report. I am not sure which one, but one of them talked about Train the Trainer is not working. They need more. That is basically what people are saying to the minister. So I wonder if the minister could tell us whether she has heard that cry, whether she is going to respond to it or whether the Train the Trainer will remain as the model, whether it can be expanded. What response is the minister making to the request and desire for more professional development, particularly with the math curriculum?

Mrs. McIntosh: I have not heard anybody crying. The member uses some pretty strong language sometimes in her request. Have I heard crying? No. I have heard some requests, some reasoned requests for assistance, but the emotive language used by the member does not translate into what I am hearing. No, I have not heard people cry for help, but I have had some requests for

assistance. I think phrased in a more realistic way, rather than with the emotive language, is probably a more professional way to ask questions in the Chamber, because unfortunately she gets the kind of response from me that one would expect when emotive language is used instead of realistic or appropriate language.

Having said that, no, nobody has cried, but they have made some requests, and we have responded to those requests. We have two things to remember, one is what each of our jobs are. Our job is to make sure that curriculum is properly prepared. The field's job is to implement the curriculum, so we each do have our own jobs. Having said that, we are prepared and we are helping some of the divisions with doing some of their job with them, because we know that in some cases they have gotten out of the habit.

Program Implementation will be hiring another math expert to work with the field. This is a priority that was identified in the Winnipeg region in the north. We are providing a range of different opportunities for professional development related to do curriculum.

We provide regional orientation sessions, and I will complete the number of things—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 12 noon, pursuant to the rules, I am interrupting the proceedings of the Committee of Supply with the understanding that the Speaker will resume the Chair at 1:30 p.m. today, and that after Routine Proceedings, the Committee of Supply will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 1998

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